



Honor at the Banquet

Luke 14:7-11

In Luke 14:7-11, Jesus taught the importance of being humble. That means not to thinking highly of oneself. People who think highly of themselves will be made humble. But God will lift up people who have the proper view of themselves. This week we will study why God feels so strongly about the subject of humility.

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. - Matthew 23:12 (NIV)



Day #1: The Best Seat

Have you ever been to a wedding reception? At a formal sit-down reception where a meal is served, there is usually what is called the "head table." The bride and groom are seated at the center of this table. Next to the groom is his "best man"; next to the bride is her "maid of honor." On either side of them are the wedding couple's other close friends. Other tables are set around the room. Usually, the closer the guest's relationship to the bride and groom, the closer he or she would be placed to the head table.

This is similar to the custom in Jesus' day. Meals were of great importance. At a banquet, reclining chairs, called *triclinia*, were usually arranged in a U shape around low tables. The host would be seated in the center of the U, and the most important guests would sit closest to him. The less important the guest, the further from the center he would sit.

When Jesus went to this particular banquet, He noticed people trying to grab the seats closest to the center. The guests were trying to prove how important they were. Jesus told them a better way to behave. He explained that it is not wise to take a seat of importance. The host might move you down to make room for someone who is wealthier or more popular. You would be embarrassed when everyone at the party saw that you were not thought of as important. It is much wiser to take a seat of little importance. Then the host might come and move you closer. Then you would feel honored in front of the other guests.

Jesus' was NOT telling people to have false humility just to get what they wanted. He was warning them not think too highly of themselves. Remember, when someone at the banquet grabbed a good seat, he was actually taking that seat from another guest. He was putting himself in front of someone else. Believers should seek to lift other people up, not themselves. Put others first and God will lift you up in His timing.

✝ *Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be free of pride. Think of others as better than yourselves. None of you should look out just for your own good. You should also look out for the good of others.* - Philippians 2:3-4

* Think of times when people try to put themselves first - choosing a seat in the school lunchroom, choosing the biggest piece of cake at the dinner table. Pray and ask God to remind you not to lift up yourself, but to put others first.

Day #2: Pride

Fill a glass to the top with water and set it in the sink. Now what if you were told to fill that same glass with juice? Would it make sense to add the juice to the glass while it was full of water? Try it. (You can use juice or colored soda). What happens? **There is no room for the juice.** The juice can't fill the glass unless the water spills out. In order to fill the glass with juice, you would first have to empty the water out completely. Let's see how this relates to pride.

The dictionary says *pride* is having an extremely high opinion of oneself; conceit; arrogance. We could say that it is having an opinion of oneself that is too high, or higher than it should be. Few people would accuse a state champion swimmer of pride if she said, "I think I am a good swimmer." Pride would come in if she said, "I think I am the best swimmer that has ever lived." We would all agree that opinion is too high.

Pride is a very dangerous sin. C. S. Lewis, author of the Narnia book series, called pride "the great sin." Some people have said it may be the root of all other sins. Does this seem like an overstatement? Consider this: whenever we sin, we are deciding that we know what is best for our own lives. When we choose to ignore God's Word and go our own way, we think we have greater wisdom than the all-knowing God of the universe.



God, who reads the hearts of all men, saw the proud heart of the king of Tyre, a beautiful city on the Mediterranean Sea. God declared: *"In your proud heart you say, 'I am a god. I sit on the throne of a god in the Mediterranean Sea.' But you are only a man. You are not a god. In spite of that, you think you are as wise as a god."* - Ezekiel 28:2 That king was brought to ruin. And consider Satan. Once an angel in good standing, he decided he wanted to be praised above God. He was thrown out of heaven and God has promised he will be crushed (Isaiah 14:12-17).

The reason God hates our pride is not because He is in competition with us! God is immeasurably greater than us in EVERY way. Rest assured there is no competition! God hates pride because **it comes between Him and us.** When we are puffed up and full of ourselves, we do not have room for Him, and we do not depend upon His Word.

In his pride, the wicked does not seek Him; in all his thoughts, there is no room for God. - Psalm 10:4 (NIV)



* You must have a proper view of yourself in relation to your Almighty Creator. You must empty yourself of your pride in order to fill yourself with God's wisdom. *Proverbs 11:2 says, "When pride comes, shame follows. But wisdom comes to those who are not proud."*

Day #3: Correct View

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:



"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." - Luke 18:9-15 (NIV)

Pharisees were respected Jewish leaders that believed a person could get to heaven by following God's laws. (But the Bible says no one can follow all of the laws. We are saved only by grace through faith in Jesus - Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16.) Pharisees knew a lot about the letter of the law, but they did not know the heart of God. They were very proud of their own efforts, but Jesus said their belief was empty (Matthew 23:27). In contrast, tax collectors in Jesus' day were not well-respected men. They often cheated people out of their money.

Why was the tax collector considered righteous while the Pharisee was not? What made the difference? It was not what the men did for a living, or how they looked on the outside. The Pharisee looked great on the outside, and even had a "religious" job. It was not how many laws they followed. The Pharisee was a pro at following rules, while the tax collector made a practice of breaking rules.

The difference between the two men was their view of themselves. The Pharisee thought he was better than other men were. He thought he *deserved* God's favor. The truth is, NOT ONE OF US deserves God's favor! We are ALL sinners (Romans 3:23), and we all need God's grace and mercy. The tax collector was so sure of this that he admitted his guilt and begged for God's mercy. He was humble. He had a correct view of himself and his need for God.



Where do you place yourself - closer to the Pharisee or the tax collector? Think about Romans 3:23 and ask God to help you understand that we are all equally guilty and equally in need of His forgiveness.

Day #4: Moses



When we think about people in the Bible who did great things, one of the "biggies" is Moses. Moses was chosen by God to lead the Jewish people out of captivity. God used him in a mighty way. At one time, Moses even raised his hand and divided the ocean in two! Being chosen to lead God's people and doing things that were miraculous might make anyone feel all puffed up and full of himself. But what does the Bible tell us about Moses? Numbers 12:3 tells us, *"Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth."* (NIV)

How could this be? How could he remain so humble? The secret to Moses' humility was this: **his relationship with God**. It is no coincidence that the most humble man on the face of the earth was the man who had the closest relationship with the Living God. In fact, **his relationship with God was the key!**

Day #4 continued:

God called Moses by name (Exodus 3:4, 33:12), and Moses followed God's instruction. Moses returned time after time to God's presence. God spoke to Moses (Exodus 33:11), and Moses begged to know God more (Exodus 33:13). Moses refused to move unless God went with him (Exodus 33:15). God called Moses into an intimate relationship (Exodus 24:1-2), and Moses basked in it.



God also calls you into an intimate relationship with Him. Repeatedly Jesus called to those around Him, "Follow Me." (Mark 2:14, Luke 9:59, John 1:43) It is the same invitation to you today. He wants you to spend time with Him. Jesus said, *"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends."* - Revelation 3:20

Humility is not feeling bad about yourself or thinking that you are worthless. In fact, you have great worth in God's eyes! (Luke 12:7) Humility is having the **proper view** of yourself in relation to the One who created you. This only comes through our **relationship** with Him. When we seek to know God more, He will answer our request. When we truly know who God is, in His perfection and goodness, then real humility will be our natural perspective.

Day #5: Our Role Model

Jesus offered good advice in this week's story, but it was more than just good party manners. Luke 14:7 calls the story a *parable*. That is an earthly story that teaches us something about God's kingdom.

Through this story, Jesus was explaining what He had done and what was yet to take place. In truth, **He was the One who chose the humble seat**. Jesus, the Son of God, deserves all honor, but He gave it up to hang on a cross. There could not possibly be a more extreme example of humility.



In His very nature, He was God. But He did not think that being equal with God was something He should hold on to. Instead, He made himself nothing. He took on the very nature of a servant. He was made in human form. He appeared as a man. He came down to the lowest level. He obeyed God completely, even though it led to His death. In fact, He died on a cross. So God lifted Him up to the highest place. He gave him the name that is above every name. When the name of Jesus is spoken, everyone's knee will bow to worship Him. Every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow to worship him. Everyone's mouth will say that Jesus Christ is Lord. And God the Father will receive the glory. - Philippians 2:6-11

Jesus left the throne of heaven (John 6:38) where He sat right next to God (Acts 7:55-56). He came to the earth He created (John 1:3) in the form of a poor human baby (Luke 2:7). He left the angels who bowed at His feet to come where men spat in His face (Matthew 27:30). He left God's side to come to our aid. The Creator put His life in the hands of the created. But He will be exalted. James 4:10 promises, *"Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will exalt you."* A time is coming when **everyone** will admit that Jesus is the Lord. **Everyone** will bow down to worship Him! (Romans 14:11)



When you remember that the One who deserves all praise made Himself the most humble for our good, you should be very willing to give up your "rights" for the good of others.