

Honor at the Banquet

Luke 14:7-11

PPT Title

Honor at the Banquet

Main Point: Think of others as better than yourselves.

Key Verse: *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.* – Philippians 2:3

Props: Six chairs, arranged in a row before the lesson begins. Six pieces of paper labeled #1, #2, #3, #4, #5 and #6 and taped to the chairs.

BACKGROUND

Say: Jesus loved to tell stories to help people understand big ideas about the kingdom of God. Who remembers what these stories were called? *Parables*. Right. Parables were told as simple stories, but they contained big truth, and Jesus knew that everyone—from the youngest child to the most educated Pharisee—would understand His teaching better if He gave them examples and stories they could relate to.

Jesus told these stories in many different situations. Sometimes, a person in the crowd would ask Him a difficult question, and He would answer it by telling a parable. Sometimes the Pharisees would try to get Him to say something embarrassing, and He would use a parable to point out their own wrong thinking. And sometimes—like in the parable we will look at today—Jesus saw people behaving badly because their hearts were far away from God, and He told a story to show them how their attitudes and actions were not what God wanted.



In Luke 14, Jesus was invited to eat dinner at the home of an important Pharisee. Many other people were there, too—important people as well as people who were hoping to become important. As the guests took their seats at the table, Jesus watched them very, very carefully. And He didn't like what He saw. They were behaving very badly, as we will see. So Jesus decided to tell the Parable of Honor at the Banquet to show them how important humility is in the kingdom of God. Let's read together in Luke 14:7-11.

Teacher Note: The behavior of the banquet guests in this parable seems to show that a "good" seat at the table didn't just reflect social standing, but might actually create it. For example, if you snagged a seat next to someone very important, you were guaranteed several hours of that person's attention. You could sell yourself or your ideas without interruption, and you could be seen doing so by others. This behavior must have been particularly disappointing to Jesus in light of the miraculous healing that He performed right before the guest began their game of musical chairs. Luke 14:1-6 says this:

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, He was being carefully watched. There in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, He healed him and sent

him away. Then He asked them, "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?" And they had nothing to say. (NIV)

It is sad to think that their silence might not be the result of contemplation of Jesus' merciful healing or provocative words, but rather a result of their own ruthless mental strategizing over seats at the table.

JESUS OBSERVES THE BANQUET GUESTS

Say: Jesus noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table. – Luke 14:7a

Teacher Note: Even Jesus' own disciples were fixated on the honor and prestige that came with procuring the best seat. Mark 10:35-37 says, *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him. "Teacher," they said, "we want You to do for us whatever we ask."*

"What do you want Me to do for you?" He asked.

They replied, "Let one of us sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your glory."

Consistent with this parable, the places of honor at Christ's moment of glory on the cross didn't go to the disciples who sought them, but to two lowly thieves.

Say: Before we read any further in this parable, we're going to attempt to act out what was going on at the Pharisee's banquet. We can't understand what Jesus says next unless we can imagine exactly what Jesus saw as He watched the guests choosing their seats.



Raise your hand if you have ever played musical chairs. Almost everyone has played that game, haven't they? Well, as Jesus watched the guests at the dinner party, He saw them playing a game that was a lot like musical chairs, only without the music!

I need five people to help me recreate what the dinner guests were doing. **Select five children and have them stand in a straight line next to the arranged table and chairs.**

Say: This chair that has the #1 written on it represents the seat where the most important banquet guest was sitting. Maybe that person was the Pharisee who was hosting the party. Maybe it was a very wealthy man. We don't know exactly who the most important person was, but at our banquet, he is sitting right here! **Have the first volunteer sit in the chair marked #1.**

Say: Now it is time for the banquet guests to be seated. Everyone at the party wants to sit near the most important guest. They want the HONOR of being seen with him. In just a moment I'm going to ask the rest of my volunteers to pick which seat they want to sit in. Let me remind you, volunteers, that everyone wants to sit as close as they can to the person in chair #1. **Have the second volunteer choose which seat they want. If for some reason they don't pick chair #2, remind them that the goal is to sit as close to #1 as possible and have them move to chair #2.** **Say:** What do you think the next person is going to do? **Sit in chair #3. Try to get #2 to give up their chair.** OK, volunteer #3, pick your chair. **Continue having the volunteers select their chairs until the first five chairs are full.** **Ask the child in chair #2:** Who is the most famous person you can think of? *Hannah Montana. Tiger Woods. etc.* OK, let's pretend you are sitting next to _____. How does it feel to sit right next to _____? Isn't it great? Do you feel important? Don't you feel more important than those other kids at the table?

Say: Our volunteers were very polite in choosing their chairs. But the guests at the banquet were probably a lot less well behaved. They might have tried to trick another guest into giving up his seat. Or perhaps they argued with someone over the seat they wanted. They may even have tried to force someone into giving up their chair.

Application: But here is something very important that you need to know about any banquet or party. The guests may think they are free to sit anywhere they want. But in reality, the host can rearrange people however **HE** wants. It's kind of like the seating arrangement in your classroom at school. There might be one desk that everyone wants. Perhaps it's the one closest to the window so they can look outside. Or maybe it's the desk closest to the door so they can be the first one in line for lunch. One kid in the class might think that they're special because they got that seat on the first day of school. But the truth is, teachers can rearrange the seating charts any way they want, any time they want. The teacher knows each child in the class and will rearrange them according to where each child will learn the best. If someone else earns the privilege of sitting in that special seat, the person who got it first might just find themselves sitting somewhere else entirely.

*In your heart you
plan your life.
But the Lord decides
where your steps will
take you.*

- Proverbs 16:9

It's that way with God, too. So often we think we're in control of our own lives. But our heavenly Father may have different plans for us than we have for ourselves. Proverbs 16:9 says, *In your heart you plan your life. But the Lord decides where your steps will take you.*

Now let's keep reading in Luke 14:7-11 to see what Jesus says next in His parable.

JESUS TELLS A STORY ABOUT PEOPLE WHO SEEK HONOR FOR THEMSELVES



Say: *Jesus noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table. So He told them a story. He said, "Suppose someone invites you to a wedding feast. Do not take the place of honor. A person more important than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come to you. He will say, 'Give this person your seat.' Then you will be filled with shame. You will have to take the least important place. — Luke 14:7-9*

Randomly select another child from the class to come up to the front. Say: All of our guests have selected their seats. They have tried their hardest to sit close to important people. They want everyone at the party to think that they are important, too! And what better way to do that than to be close to the people who are powerful or wealthy or popular? At this point, the guests in the best seats are feeling pretty good. They are probably planning out all the jokes they are going to tell and all the ways they are going to impress the other guests at the banquet. But something unexpected is about to happen. Another guest has just arrived at the party. He (she) is late because he (she) is a really, really important person and has been in important meetings all day. **Point to chair #6 and Say:** If I'm the host of this banquet, am I going to put this really important guest in the worst seat? No! I'm going to put them in the best seat! That means this guest (**indicate the volunteer in chair #2**) has to move. The only empty seat is the worst one that nobody wanted to sit in. **Have the volunteer in chair #2 move to chair #6 and seat the new volunteer in chair #2.**

Say: This banquet guest has gone from the best seat at the party to the worst seat at the party in just a few seconds! How do you think he (she) feels? Embarrassed. Disappointed. Ashamed. All this guest's plans have fallen apart! How embarrassing. He (she) was proud of how important he (she) looked in the best seat. But now he (she) is the least important looking person at the banquet. **Thank the volunteers and have them return to their seats.**

Application: So far in this parable we have seen what Jesus says NOT to do. He says don't try to be the most important person, because if you do you might end up feeling



ashamed and embarrassed and disappointed. And this doesn't just apply to parties, like the example in the parable. It applies to all parts of your life. For example, some kids always have to act like the most intelligent person in class. They think they are better and smarter than everyone else. You probably know someone who is like that. Maybe they raise their hand for every question and laugh when other people say the wrong thing. They might even think they know more than the teacher sometimes! While it's good to study and know the answers, a student who seeks honor for themselves will try to prove they are better than everyone else. According to this parable, they shouldn't do this, because a time will come when they will be humbled.

Jesus said, "Do not take the place of honor because you may have to take the least important place." A time will come when you will be humbled.

If we're not supposed to take the place of honor, then what ARE we supposed to do? Let's read the end of the parable to find out, and let's look more closely at what it means to be humble.

IN GOD'S KINGDOM, THE WAY UP IS DOWN



Say: "But when you are invited, take the lowest place. Then your host will come over to you. He will say, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests. Anyone who lifts himself up will be brought down. And anyone who is brought down will be lifted up." — Luke 14:10-11

What Jesus said at the end of the parable sounds like a kind of upside down thinking, doesn't it? He says that when you try to make other people think you are important or better than them, then you will be humbled against your will. But if you humble yourself, then God will honor you!

HUMBLE
"thinking that other people are more important than you"

What does it mean to be humble? Well, people who are humble don't think that they are better than others. In fact, they think just the opposite. They see others as being more important than they are. And they don't just think that, they act like others are more important, too.

Philippians 2:3 says, *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.*

It is hard for people to do this though, isn't it? We like to think that we are better than other people. We like to think that we are smarter than a younger brother, or more popular than certain kids at school. But over and over in the Bible God says that He doesn't like it when we act proud or better than others. In fact, the Bible says that it is a sin to be proud. And like any sin, the sin of pride separates us from God.

Psalm 138:6 says, *The Lord is in heaven. But He watches over those who are free of pride. He knows those who are proud and stays far away from them.*

Proverbs 18:12 says, *If a man's heart is proud, he will be destroyed. So don't be proud if you want to be honored.*

And Romans 12:16 says, *...Don't be proud. Be willing to be a friend of people who aren't considered important. Don't think that you are better than others.*



Application: Even though it is hard for us to be humble, we have an excellent role model to look up to, Someone who shows us what it means to put others first and be a friend to those who aren't considered important.

That role model is Jesus. Even though He was God's own Son, Jesus was a humble

servant to others. Did you know that on the night before He was crucified on the cross, Jesus humbled Himself enough to wash His disciples' feet? Jesus, the King above all kings, showed us what it means to think of others as more important than ourselves when He scrubbed the dirt and grime off of His friends feet. And when He was done, He said, "*I have given you an example. You should do as I have done for you.*" — John 13:15

Does this mean that we have to wash people's feet to be humble? No. But it does mean that we have to be willing to put them first. We have to be ready at all times to show others that we think they are more important than us.



The next day, after He washed His disciples' feet, Jesus did something even more amazing. He humbled Himself enough to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus—the Son of God, the King above all kings, the only person who has never sinned at all—suffered and died so that we could be forgiven for our pride and all our other sins that separate us from God.

Say: When we consider what Jesus did for us on the cross, and when we look at Him as our role model, we can start to get rid of our pride. He will help us be humble. And when we are humble, God promises that He will honor us.

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