

The Parables of Jesus #24
The Parable of the Chief Seats
(Lk. 14:7-11)
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INTRODUCTION

A. Story of the boastful frog

From Mongolian folklore comes this helpful little fable of the boastful frog. Two geese were about to start southward on their annual autumn migration, when they were entreated by a frog to take him with them. One of the geese expressed their willingness to do so if a means of conveyance could be devised, the frog produced a long stalk of grass, got the two geese to take it one by each end, while he clung to it by his mouth in the middle. In this manner the three were making their journey when they were noticed from below by some men.

The men loudly expressed their admiration for the device and wondered who had been clever enough to discover it. Whereupon the vainglorious frog opened his mouth to say, "It was I," lost his hold, fell to the earth, and was dashed to pieces.

B. Humility is a hard thing to come by

1. We have to "look out for number one"
2. "If we don't brag on ourselves, who will?"
3. "It ain't braggin' if you can really do it"
4. "Sometimes you have to toot your own horn"

C. In the parable we will study today, humility is presented as a trait that produced far more than all the pride of man

1. Pride and self-promotion are often such ordinary ways of behaving that it is likely we don't realize it's a problem
2. That's one of the reasons the story Jesus told is so powerful, for he forces us to rethink what is "normal" for us

I. THE BACKGROUND

A. Lk 7:1-6 Jesus dined at the home of a Pharisee on the Sabbath

1. His enemies were watching him closely to see if he would do or say anything for which they could find fault or accuse him
2. Jesus threw out for discussion the issue of healing on the Sabbath
3. When they wouldn't commit, Jesus healed a man of dropsy

B. Jesus then challenged the inconsistency of their own behavior

1. Would they pull a donkey or ox out of a pit on the Sabbath
2. Why did they have such a problem helping one who needed healing?

C. There was something even more inconsistent with their behavior

1. Jesus was a constant observer of the behavioral habits of people
2. He evidently was in frequent attendance at these large meals (or banquets) held in homes of the religious leaders
3. No doubt they held some of the same meaning and opportunity as the popular "dinner party" we are accustomed to
 - a. a chance to be seen with the "in" crowd
 - b. an opportunity to make social and business contacts
 - c. a way to enhance one's social or economic position
 - d. an opportunity to hear the latest news and conversation (gossip) about current events
 - e. an opportunity to brag about one's wealth, achievements, possessions, intellect, political power, social impact, etc.
 - f. in short -- they are tailor-made opportunities to demonstrate all that creates the prideful things that so greatly appeal to us

D. Jesus knew that the Pharisees had some real problems with pride

1. He challenged their use of long prayers as nothing more than efforts to draw attention to themselves
2. He challenged their long robes and phylacteries as little more than whitewash with nothing behind it
3. He challenged their traditions
4. He challenged their pursuit of places of honor and esteem as evidence that they were corrupted on the inside
5. It was this understanding of Pharasaic motivation that led to the parable

II. THE PARABLE

A. This parable is more in the form of instruction than it is a story

1. Note the motive for the parable: "He noted how they chose the best places"
2. This was a direct challenge to their behavior
 - a. more than just a challenge -- it attacked their belief system
 - b. it challenged those who thought they were close to God with facts that proved they weren't close to him

B. Important points of the parable

1. When you're invited to a wedding feast, don't sit down in the best place
2. Reason: the host may have invited someone more honorable than you
3. Then the host would have to ask you to move and you would be shamed
4. Instead, sit in the lowest (most humble) place
5. Reason: the host may invite you to move to a place of greater honor
6. Then everyone would see you exalted, not shamed
7. The principle: Luke 14:11 -- "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (NKJ)

C. A second, related parable

1. When you give a dinner or supper, don't invite just your friends, family or social equals
2. They will just invite you to their dinners and you will be repaid
3. Invite the poor, lame, maimed and blind -- people few want at such "high-brow" occasions
4. They can't repay you with an invitation to their dinner parties (they probably aren't going to host one anyway)
5. Instead, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just (or as we might say, the judgment day)

D. Jesus knew how to hit right at the heart -- the motives of man's actions

1. With a few brief words, Jesus managed to identify the crumbling foundation of the religious standouts
2. There was nothing godly or spiritual in their behavior at all, just a worldly concern for self-promotion, pride and self-glory

III. LESSONS TO LEARN

A. Bad things happen to people who pridefully promote themselves

1. Pride puts other people down
 - a. degrades others by downplaying the other person (their ability, position, achievements, etc)
 - b. demeans others by shaming or humiliating them
 - c. debases others by damaging or tearing them down

2. The person being prideful will eventually be abased
 - a. he will eventually be displaced -- perhaps in this life, but definitely at the judgment
 - b. he may find all other positions close to him already taken by others, and the only position left is one far from where he started
 - c. his embarrassment and shame will be magnified

B. Good things happen to people who are humble

1. Humility seeks to avoid displays of pride and self-promotion
 - a. he promotes others and plays up all that's possible about them
 - b. he raises the esteem of others
 - c. he values others by building them up

2. This person will eventually be exalted
 - a. since he has taken no place on his own, he will be recognized and appreciated by others of their own volition
 - b. though other positions may be taken by others, since he has only taken the last position, then any given to him is a promotion
 - c. instead of shame and embarrassment, he will be honored and respected for what he has given to others

C. Humility is neither understood or sought after by most people

1. What it means to be humble
 - a. A freedom from arrogance that grows out of the recognition that all we have and are comes from God. The Greek philosophers despised humility because it implied inadequacy, lack of dignity, and worthlessness to them. This is not the meaning of humility as defined by the Bible. Jesus is the supreme example of humility <Matt. 11:29; Mark 10:45; John 13:4-17; Phil. 2:5-8>, and He is completely adequate and of infinite dignity and worth. Biblical humility is not a belittling of oneself <Matt. 6:16-18; Rom.

12:3>, but an exalting or praising of others, especially God and Christ <John 3:30; Phil. 2:3>. A humble person, then, focuses more on God and others than on himself.

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- b. true humility, then, is an awareness of both God, and others, and self, based on truth and righteousness

2. Let's avoid textbook definitions and consider few Bible verses

- a. Prov 16:18

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (NKJ)

- b. Prov 21:4

A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin. (NKJ)

- c. Obad 1:3-4

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," says the LORD. (NKJ)

- d. Gal 6:3

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (NKJ)

- e. Rom 12:3

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. (NKJ)

D. To the world, humility looks like weakness and cowardice, but to God it is the power of faith

- 1. Matt 18:4

Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (NKJ)

- 2. Luke 22:25-27

And He said to them, ""The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. (NKJ)

3. 1 Pet 5:5-6

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, (NKJ)

4. Phil 2:3-4

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (NKJ)

5. James 4:10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (NKJ)

CONCLUSION

A. In the final analysis

1. The humble man will receive recognition by God as well as other men
2. The humble man will receive honor and respect
3. The humble man will ultimately be rewarded by God

B. Look closely at how you treat yourself compared to how you treat others

1. It may reveal a lot about humility or pride
2. One of those is God's will for you, the other isn't

C. Invitation