

Luke 14:1,7-14.

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸“When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. ¹¹For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” ¹²Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Watch Jesus closely.

- ❖ See humility that changes us.
- ❖ See humility that changes how we see others.

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. And what did they see? They were watching for a slip up, some work that Jesus would do or some word that he would say, some movement, even some gesture that they could catch him in and condemn him for breaking a Sabbath or ceremonial law. They watched him closely and what did they see. If they were *really* watching they would have seen what we see with Jesus so often, they would have seen humble service that put the needs of others at the forefront. Let us therefore, **watch Jesus closely. See humility that changes us. See humility that changes how we see others.**

Our theme for worship today very much has to do with humility and so the assigned readings for today skip ahead from Luke 14 verse 1 to Luke 14 verse 7. As we hear about the parable that Jesus teaches about the places of honor and sending out invitations as a host who is not to look for anything in return; in these parables we certainly learn about humility. But I would like to go back and read those verses for you in order to set an even clearer stage for the lesson that Jesus is about to teach and to pick up a few other important points. We read verses 1 – 6 of Luke chapter 14.

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ²There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy.

³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" ⁴ But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away. ⁵ 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?" ⁶ And they had nothing to say.

As these Pharisees, these important people, were watching Jesus they saw Jesus act in compassion and kindness toward a man suffering from a disease called dropsy, which often included painful and embarrassing swelling. Jesus knew that this act of kindness, healing this man, would draw the ire of those Pharisees watching him because it was on a Sabbath. But in compassion he healed the man and sent him on his way because it was the right thing to do. And his follow up question to them presented the same type of truth. *What is the right thing to do? Do you help your son if he is in trouble, do you rush to help your ox if he fell into a well even if it is on a Sabbath day?* Of course, it is not only the right thing to do, it's just common sense.

And so Jesus' lessons here about humility have a lot to do with common sense as well. I don't think anyone here has rushed to the place of honor at a wedding banquet when it was not your wedding. That would not be good common sense. But here's the thing; pride - the opposite of humility - pride attacks our common sense. C.S. Lewis, who was a very insightful Christian author, once put it this way. ***"For pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense."*** (Mere Christianity, page 125)

Again, consider that strange scene, in that no doubt fancy house, with prominent figures all gathered about and in walks a man who needs help and all the gathered guests can do is glare at Jesus that he would consider healing this man on the Sabbath. Consider how they watched Jesus so closely, but when he shows them how to act in humility and love they learn nothing. When he corners them with a question that shoots an arrow at the heart of their sin of pride, and their outright lack of common sense, they remain silent and they say nothing. You can almost imagine how they milled about in their little cliques trying to ignore and brush aside the words and actions of this man who was trying to teach them a lesson. Pride infected this entire group and they were unable to love, or be content, or exercise good common sense because of that sinful selfishness that pride breeds.

Before we simply write off the Pharisees as a group of self-absorbed ego maniacs and move on, before we point out all the others in our world today that seem to act this way, we must recognize that this cancer of pride infects and affects us too. This is an ailment of the entire human race. Pride, even for the Christian, is something that infects and corrupts our personal nature and so often we see it's sad effects so often. As Christians we regularly look to Jesus and look at Jesus closely. We gather in God's house. We invite our Lord into our home. We read his word and see his acts of love, his deeds of kindness. We see him act in humility, we hear him teach about the dangers of pride and the virtues of humility and yet that lesson, that example, has such a hard time getting through to us and it has an even harder time sticking. Putting ourselves first, being prideful and selfish is something that we all do on a daily basis, really on a moment by moment basis.

And before you say, that's not me, consider if someone was watching you so closely, who was a constant guest in your house - I suppose you could liken it to your own reality show. If we were watched so closely how many times wouldn't you or I appear to speak and act in selfish, sinful ways. And honestly if we look at it many times that pride interferes with our common sense. Looking back on a typical day how often doesn't our pride makes us act irrationally with our kids, with those that we deal with at work, with our spouse, with our neighbor, with our family and friends. We may try to be humble and serve for a while; as Christians we know that this is something that Christ calls us to do, but then that pride erupts and emerges and takes over. Our patience runs thin and we ignore the needs of others, we fail to act in love, instead in our own little ways we insist, we may even demand, that our needs are met as we want so badly to be treated as number one. God reminds us that we are made to serve others. Christ calls us to repent of such selfish and hurtful pride, but many times we don't want to hear it. In that moment we don't want to change. Like those Pharisees, we remain silent, we stubbornly have nothing to say and we continue to go about in our prideful ways.

Pride leads us to do things that we if we look back contradicted good common sense. You probably have never tried to sit at the place of honor at somebody else's wedding, but there have been plenty of times that your pride, my pride, has plagued us in that we have done something that is unloving, that lacked contentment, or hurts others as we failed to act in love, as we failed help, to serve, to act in humility. Our pride has led us to ignore the will of God and his call to act in love. We put ourselves in front of him and his will. But our Savior steps right into this hostile environment of our pride and he acts, he speaks, in such a way that we are changed. Through the power of his word he breaks down our pride. He rebukes our selfish pride with his life of compassion and service. He shows us the error of our ways, and in his love and his compassion he heals us and changes us through the good news of his humble life, his innocent death, and his glorious resurrection. He softens our stubborn and prideful hearts through his humble sacrifice and his teachings of humility and service. And as our faith is built up by his Word and his Holy Spirit, he blesses our lives. He blesses our relationships, our marriages and our families, our work and our attitude as he changes us from prideful, selfish people, to those who serve each other in love and humility. He daily sets us free and heals us from that cancerous sinful pride so that we can do things that just make good sense, like doing what is good and right, like caring for and loving those he has placed in our lives, by being a good worker, being a good husband or wife, father or mother, a good neighbor or friend. The good news of his humble sacrifice forever changes our hearts and lives.

Think about that strange scene at the get together at the house of that prominent Pharisees. Think about how Jesus stood there so boldly and he put himself on the line for the sake of those who would listen. And even when they moved to the table and learning nothing from Jesus' example or his miracle, even when many of them continued in their pride to jockey for position and the place of honor yet Jesus does not give up, but he continues to teach, to instruct with heavenly wisdom and with good common sense. ⁸
"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a

person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

As Jesus speaks to people who are prone to the sin of pride - like you and me - he speaks so that we may consider how our prideful attitude contradicts good common sense, and then he encourages us to go beyond that as he wants to think of others before ourselves. And that will change the way that we look at others. Instead of looking at practical connections and how another person can be *used* for our own selfish gain we should think of others and their needs. As he speaks Jesus then encourages us to do something that goes beyond common practice. We should even consider how we can serve and help others even if that means we won't receive much of anything in return.

There is certainly an important lesson for us to learn as individuals, and it is also a lesson that is beneficial for us as a congregation. As we reach out to others we may reach out only to those we think may have something to offer to our church or our congregation. We may develop a tendency to reach out only to those who seem to have everything in order, should we not instead reach out to anyone who God places before us in our community, even if things in their life appear to be all out of order? We ought to act in compassion and kindness and reach out with the gospel and help people that are right in front of us in our communities regardless of what we may receive from them in return. That's the kind of humble service that Jesus teaches us about through his teachings and his example.

As we look at Jesus this morning, as we watch him closely, as we hear him speak of helping those who really have no way of fully repaying good that was done for them, how can we not think of how he came down for each one of us? There is no way that we can repay him fully. There is nothing that we have to offer our God who came in such humility to serve our needs, to live and die for us. He put us first, I suppose as Christians it would only make sense for us to put him first, to listen to his word, to do what we can to follow his example thankful for the humble way that he has saved us and serves our every need.

May the LORD lead us to continue to watch Jesus closely and to learn from him. Our Savior's message of salvation and his example and his teachings of humility will continually change and shape the way that we treat others, the way that we see others, and the way that we live. For in his grace our Lord Jesus daily chases away our pride and he helps us to be humble in a world of constant self-promotion and foolish haughtiness. Our Savior's goodness and love helps keep that pride from coming back and taking over so that we not only do what makes good common sense, but we go above and beyond and love and serve with uncommon Christ-like humility. Although we can never fully repay the LORD for all the goodness he has shown to us, let us learn from him as we serve him, and serve one another in the type of love and humility that Christ has first shown to us. Amen.