

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.
“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 12:24.

Luke 14

¹One Sabbath day, when Jesus went into the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat bread, they were watching him closely.

⁷When he noticed how they were selecting the places of honor, he told the invited guests a parable. ⁸“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline in the place of honor, or perhaps someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him. ⁹The one who invited both of you may come and tell you, ‘Give this man your place.’ Then you will begin, with shame, to take the lowest place.

¹⁰“But when you are invited, go and recline in the lowest place, so that when the one who invited you comes, he will tell you, ‘Friend, move up to a higher place.’ Then you will have honor in the presence of all who are reclining at the table with you.

¹¹“Yes, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

¹²He also said to the one who had invited him, “When you make a dinner or a supper, do not invite your friends, or your brothers, or your relatives, or rich neighbors, so that perhaps they may also return the favor and pay you back. ¹³But when you make a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. Certainly, you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous.”



Ever feel hatred, envy, and jealousy for Jesus?

He’s got everything. He can do anything. He is eternal and changeless. He knows everything; He has on the tip of His tongue all the answers to life’s biggest questions. He’s truth; He’s love; He’s life. The Pharisees today had a main problem, watching Jesus closely on the Sabbath. They hated and felt jealous toward Jesus. They wanted to discredit Jesus.

Maybe we don’t exactly envy God. However, in our sinful hearts we too would like to discredit God for a great many things, just to be right and not wrong. But Jesus teaches us humility, and humility teaches us that we have no business being envious of God. In fact there are a good many reasons we may not wish to be like God after all.

So today Jesus teaches a class which He might call “Feasting 101,” using the bad table manners of His time. He uses those bad manners NOT to describe the table manners of the time, but the attitude of His disciples in His kingdom.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMILITY AND HUMILIATION

I. THE KIND OF GUESTS GOD EXPECTS

In this lesson there was a banquet, and there was also a rush of guests to get the good spot. The tables for such an occasion would have been set up in a U-shape, intended for reclining rather than sitting. The best spots would have been closest to the center of the U.

We get an example of this from John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, on Maundy Thursday. He leaned back at Jesus’ breast, because they weren’t sitting. They were reclining, and you would lean forward or back to speak to the person next to you.

Even we can get the humiliation of someone tapping us on the shoulder and asking us to move to a less honored seat. It would be silly to set ourselves up for humiliation by sitting so close to the host that we would be demoted to a lower position.

Jesus essentially explained that ... it doesn't matter how we view ourselves. What matters is how our host views us.

There was a big difference in those days between humility and humiliation. Humility was self-acknowledged and self-imposed. Humiliation was a pitiful, shameful thing done unto you.

Jesus taught His disciples to be content with humility, lowliness, self-deprecation, and self-abasement. Jesus knew that if this humility is done, then fewer people would attempt to step on His disciples and put them down. Further, Jesus knew that if this humility is done, His disciples wouldn't be surprised and humiliated when people wish to step on them and put them down.

Jesus wants you to be content with humility and lowliness, self-deprecation and self-abasement. Are you sitting in the place of honor at church today? (I say this in jest; there are no bad seats in Bethlehem.) What matters more in God's kingdom today is not where you sit, but whether you squirmed in your seats as you pondered over a holy God who holds the wicked accountable. Do you feel an uncomfortable weight as you confess your sins?

Do you take a position of humility and lowliness, mindful that you deserve nothing more? Your sins have separated you from your God, and the guilt of your sin has weighed your heart into humiliation.

It may help to know that is how humiliating it was for your Savior. As it were, He was the guest of high honor when God the Father tapped Him on the shoulder and told Him to move **way** down the table ... down past the angels; down past the wealthy and middle class; down past the farmers and shepherds; down to the feeding trough of animals.

He was lowered to be like one of us.

The glorious Son in heaven was told to become the heavy-hearted Christ, Savior of the world. He was to take on your sin. He was humbled to be born of a virgin and feel sin's consequences in this life. Then, as innocent as He was, Jesus was humbled to feel the weight of your guilt.

Here is a good reason to not envy or discredit Jesus: He had to suffer and die for you. He certainly didn't want you to suffer and die, so He took on that burden so that today you might have relief. Did you come to this feast, squirming about being in the presence of a holy God? This holy God is also your Friend and Brother, your Father and Lover of your soul. He has prepared food for your soul, that of forgiveness and salvation.

The kind of guest God expects is a sorrowful guest who is humbled by our imperfections. In this way, God means to honor you with a greater seat than you imagined in His very own kingdom at His very own banquet. He was tapped to move down so that YOU could move up in the eyes of God the Father. You, with all your sin? Yes, you, with all your sin forgiven by Jesus Christ's very own humiliation. Honored. Fed. Forgiven. Filled. Nourished. Redeemed. Renewed.

Then Jesus turned His attention away from the behavior of the guests. He would now focus on ...

II. THE GODLY HOST WITH THE MOST

Jesus tells His apostles something even more counter-cultural: Do not invite the rich friends or close neighbors and relatives. Otherwise, they will pay you back, and you'll expect to gain something.

There are a couple of times in the Bible when it is very clear that Jesus isn't a teacher of networking for personal advantage, when it would seem right to the world. This is one of those times.

Instead of those who might pay us back, Jesus recommends that we invite the useless of society. In Jesus' day, these were the sick, crippled, blind, and the weak and infirm.

God favors this kind of banquet host. After all, God is that kind of host. He invited you, didn't He? He brought in a sinner, unable to repay Him? No sinner could. God wasn't lost without us. And we don't complete Him. He's very capable of life and prosperity on His own.

Why not seek to gain something by inviting the right people? This is the same question, basically, as why not envy God?

Answer: It doesn't solve our problems. Self-exalting never will. Humility does.

Humility brings all people together. It intermingles upper classes and lower classes. It unites us as one whole-hearted family, looking to share the good news with those who have no means, no money, no expectations, and no sweat in the game. God means to extend His kingdom to those who are crushed over their sins and realize they can do nothing but trust in the Lord Jesus. For that, we cannot attempt to copy the world's class systems or categories. We can only attempt to copy the humility of our Lord.

If you are looking for the kind of guest God wants in your heart, you must look to the humiliated God. Do you seat gods in your heart that repay you in this life? Everyone worships something, as we demonstrate by those things we spend the most time on. Other than Jesus Christ, what do we secure in our hearts? What has taken His place?

Believe in Jesus and Him alone, and let all other objects of our attention be swept away. Believe in Jesus and Him alone, and let all that would get us ahead in this world be thrown off. Only by seating in our hearts the God who humbled Himself by faith will we be truly selfless. Only by seating the Son of God born of a virgin will we be eternally blessed. Only by a faith invested in the God of the resurrection will we also rise.

God is faithful, and He will do it.

In Jesus' name, Amen.
