

Come and Listen:
Humility and the Gospel
Luke 14:7-14

June 10, 2018

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Text Introduction: We are in a series for the summer on the Parables of Jesus. Jesus was a master story teller. People of Jesus' day were not really any different from people of today in the sense that they related to stories. Jesus took these stories using the familiar things of everyday life in the first century to capture the attention of His listeners.

When we encounter parables in the Gospels, there are a few basic interpretative principles that we must employ in order to get the real meaning of the text.

1. Understand the purpose of all parables. The literal meaning of the word parable is "to throw beside" or "to set beside." Jesus used parables to throw beside a teaching or an instructive principle. That leads us to the second consideration.
2. We must seek to understand what that principle is. "What is the main point" is the question we should be asking. Most times, if not all times, there is something in the context that reveals precisely what the main point is and the story simply illustrates that main point.
3. Because we are looking for the main point, it is also important to understand that we need not press the details of the story, but rather seek to get the main point.
4. I also want to remind us that often times we will discover the main point in the unusual detail of the story. Remember, this is the hook that would grab the attention. (And, we must do that from a first century perspective, not a twenty-first century perspective.)

Come and listen to the Parable of the Honored Guests.

Text: ⁷ He told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they would choose the best places for themselves: ⁸ "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, don't recline at the best place, because a more distinguished person than you may have been invited by your host. ⁹ The one who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in humiliation, you will proceed 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 say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' You will then be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

¹² He also said to the one who had invited him, "When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. ¹³ On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Introduction: I think one of my favorite stories is an alleged story of Muhammed Ali. Ali, the boxing Heavyweight Champion of my early childhood, said one time, “I’m so fast, last night I turned off the light switch and got in bed before the room went dark.” Well...here is the alleged story.

Ali was travelling by plane. He had not put his seatbelt on when the attendant came by for check. She kindly asked him to put his seatbelt on.

Ali said, “Superman doesn’t need a seatbelt.”

The attendant wisely shot back, “Superman doesn’t need an airplane.”

As I observe life today—problems in our world, nation, state, city, church, Southern Baptist Convention, and families—many could be immediately solved if we were not so filled with pride.

A slice of humble pie, we call it.

I’ve eaten some slices of humble pie.

When I was in Seminary, I had written a paper that I was now going to present to the class. I had the paper open to the first page of the body waiting for the professor to signal “Go.” When he did, he said, “Steve, why don’t we begin on the title page? Read your title to us very slowly.”

I began, “An Intoduction to . . .” And that’s when I saw it. I had left out the “r.” I was humiliated.

And then with absolutely no compassion to my dilemma, the professor said, “When one makes an error in the title, it is a foreshadowing of multiple bad things to come. You may present your paper.”

I don’t know what the opposite of “brimming with confidence” is, but that’s where I was.

In Luke 14, Luke tells us that Jesus was eating at the house of one of the leading Pharisees. It was the Sabbath. Jesus healed a man that day much to the dismay of the Pharisees and law experts. It is in this scene that we get the saying from Jesus that has become rather proverbial, “ox in the ditch.”

Then, with little else for context Jesus launched into this parable.

A Parable and Picture about Pride

Jesus observed something not becoming a disciple and seized the opportunity to relate the truth of His kingdom. Jesus first does this through a parable and then does this through an imagined scene that has to do with the parable he has just told. In the parable and the picture we get two different perspectives.

1. Pride in the form of self-serving attention—The scene in the parable would have been a familiar one. The guests would have been seated at a U shaped table. At the middle of the table would be the host. To his immediate right and left would have been seated the most honored guests. Then, in descending fashion, the rest of the guests would have been seated. How would you like to attend such a dinner where you knew your rank of importance? This seems bizarre to us. Imagine having to move when someone else of greater importance arrived.

2. Pride in the form of subjective humility—The picture that begins in verse 12 is what I might describe as false humility. False humility describes a person who uses the appearance of humility to actually advance his or her pride.

Both of these pictures and all forms of pride are never becoming of a disciple, so then we get the principle of pride.

A Principle about Pride

The principle is in verse 11. “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

This is a principle that can be traced throughout God’s Word. Consider the Proverbs as one place.

Proverbs 8:13 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

¹³To fear the LORD is to hate evil.

I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct,
and perverse speech.

Proverbs 11:2 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

²When arrogance comes, disgrace follows,
but with humility comes wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

¹⁰Arrogance leads to nothing but strife,
but wisdom is gained by those who take advice.

Proverbs 16:5 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

⁵Everyone with a proud heart is detestable to the LORD;
be assured, he will not go unpunished.

Proverbs 16:18 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

¹⁸Pride comes before destruction,
and an arrogant spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:19 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

¹⁹Better to be lowly of spirit with the humble
than to divide plunder with the proud.

Proverbs 18:12 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

¹²Before his downfall a person’s heart is proud,
but humility comes before honor.

Proverbs 21:4 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

⁴The lamp that guides the wicked—
haughty eyes and an arrogant heart—is sin.

Proverbs 26:12 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

¹² Do you see a person who is wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

And then, the Proverbs of the New Testament, as I have sometimes called it.

James 4:6-10 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

⁶ But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says:
God resists the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.

⁷ Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Can we get God's clear word on the matter of pride?

There are two kinds of people in this world—those who are humble and those who are about to be humbled.

The Problem with Pride

If God's Word is so clear, why is there so much struggle with this issue?

- Pride is hard to detect in ourselves. Our pride won't let us see our pride.

Humility will come. Humility comes in a hard fall. We will humble ourselves or we will be humbled.

The Parallel to the Gospel

The final lesson that I want us to see this morning is that this teaching mirrors perfectly the Gospel. Humility is the heart of the Gospel.

The humility of Jesus is the reason that we can be reconciled to God.

Paul's language in Philippians 2 is the best on record to describe this.

⁵ Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, existing in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God
as something to be exploited.

⁷ Instead he emptied himself
by assuming the form of a servant,
taking on the likeness of humanity.

And when he had come as a man,

⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death—

even to death on a cross.

⁹For this reason God highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow—
in heaven and on earth
and under the earth—
¹¹and every tongue will confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Our humility in receiving God's plan for our salvation is the only response which produces reconciliation.

Our nation is in trouble if we do not humble ourselves before the Lord.

Our church is in trouble if we do not humble ourselves before the Lord.

Our Southern Baptist Convention is in trouble if we do not humble ourselves before the Lord.

We are in trouble if we do not humble ourselves before the Lord.

So What?

Think of yourself less often. C.S. Lewis once said, "True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less." One way to foster humility in your life is to stop thinking of yourself so much. The Gospel should not make us prideful, but humble. We are thankful for what God has done in our lives, and we consistently and regularly point all glory to Him and as a result point all others to Him and away from us.

Think of others more often.

Think of God most often.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

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