

The Parables

Palm Sunday

“Seek Humility”

Luke 14:1-24

Neighborhood Underground was amazing!...

(next) Pray for Stuart

Today is Palm Sunday

- For the last 4 weeks, I’ve been making my way through Luke’s parables.
- Today, we land in Luke 14 – a parable fit perfectly for Palm Sunday
- As followers of Christ Jesus, we celebrate Palm Sunday as a day when both Gentiles and many Jews welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as *perhaps* Messiah - the anointed one of God, come to save the world and usher in His Kingdom on earth.
- Before I get to the parable in Luke 14, let me read about that day from the book of John:

Joh 12:12 (Six days before Passover) a large crowd heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

Joh 12:13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

Joh 12:14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

Joh 12:15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

Joh 12:16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

Joh 12:17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.

Joh 12:18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

Joh 12:19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

Joh 12:20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

Joh 12:21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Joh 12:22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Joh 12:23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Joh 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Joh 12:25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Joh 12:26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Joh 12:27 "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

Joh 12:28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

Joh 12:29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Joh 12:30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.

Joh 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

Joh 12:32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

PRAY...

Our parable today is about **SEEKING HUMILITY: self-identifying as a humble servant.**

- Quite appropriate for Palm Sunday.
- Let me pick it up by giving some context, starting in Luke 14:1...

Luk 14:1 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

Luk 14:2 And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.

Luk 14:3 And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"

Luk 14:4 But they remained silent. *(and Jesus said under his breath, 'I love messing with these guys.')*
Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.

Luk 14:5 And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" *(IOW, you guys didn't think this man-made law through very well, didja?)*

Luk 14:6 And they could not reply to these things.

Luk 14:7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them,

Luk 14:8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him,

Luk 14:9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.

Luk 14:10 But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

Luk 14:11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Let's split this passage up into two related parts:

- **Part 1: verses 1-6**

V1-6, at first glance, doesn't appear to be all that related to the parable.

- However, let's take a closer look:
 - Healing on the Sabbath was – at the time – unlawful among the Jews
 - ***Dropsy, by the way, is edema = water retention, swelling***
 - Jesus heals the man, and basically says, "What is wrong with you people???"
- Have you ever stopped to wonder about this whole "healing on the Sabbath" issue?
 - Before Jesus, were there a bunch of people trying to miraculously heal people on the Sabbath so much so that they made a law about it?
 - I googled this, and found NOTHING.
 - After the initial shock that Google couldn't answer my question, I did some more digging.
 - In fact, no. There were NO Jewish leaders trying to miraculously heal people on the Sabbath.

- And yet, there is clearly a Pharisaical law found in the oral torah, prohibiting healing on the Sabbath.
 - So what gives?
 - Well, it's the miraculous part about healing that brings in the confusion.
 - The OT records just 11 miraculous healings in all 40 books.
 - Jesus healed more than that on a single day, on several occasions!
 - The "healing" the Pharisees and scribes referred to was the work involved in creating **healing ointments, herbs, and other natural cures**.
 - The crushing of herbs, the mixing of lotions, and yes, even the applying of such things – because most natural cures needed to be applied immediately, or they lose their healing power by sitting too long.
- **(next)** So along comes Jesus, using no lotions or herbs, but simply His word coupled with the faith of those coming to him.
- And to further confound the Pharisees, Jesus even called His brand of healing "work" (John 5:17)
 - And each time He healed, the Pharisees were ticked.
 - After healing a man with a withered hand: Mat 12:14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.
 - Luk 13:14 But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath...
- Which leads us to the reason I believe this healing incident is related to the parable about humility.
 - It's not that Pharisees didn't want to see sick people healed. They weren't completely heartless men.
 - But they felt their new rules about Sabbath keeping were more important.
 - **Pharisees attitude: a person could wait until sundown to be healed.**
 - Why didn't Jesus just wait?
 - They've been diseased or sick all this time, what's another day gonna hurt?
 - This attitude is born from those who are simply not suffering.
 - If a Pharisee was sick or diseased, I guarantee he'd be totally cool with Jesus healing him on the Sabbath.
 - But Pharisees who contracted diseases were dishonored by their peers because clearly, they sinned and were being punished by God.
 - And they were subsequently removed from public places, disgraced and considered frauds.
 - So they didn't consider putting themselves in the shoes of those sick or diseased, because they didn't sin enough to worry about it.
 - The first 6 verses set up the parable very well:
 - The Pharisees had placed themselves WELL ABOVE anyone who might need healing – on the Sabbath or any other day.
 - They had self-identified as HIGHER than others.

So now, let me read the parable again:

Luk 14:8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him,

Luk 14:9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.

Luk 14:10 But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

Luk 14:11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Let me pull out a few words in the Greek to give us more clarity:

- **Place of honor = prōtoklisia (proto-klis-EE-ah) = reclining first (in the place of honor) at the dinner table, preeminence at meals: - chief (highest, uppermost)**
- **Lowest place = eschatos (furthest) topos (location)**
 - Notice two things here:
 - 1) Not just “a high seat” and “a low seat” – but the highest seat, and THE lowest
 - Don’t see yourself as “above everyone else”
 - In fact, humble yourself to the very lowest place
 - 2) Jesus gives no caveats here.
 - There are some in the room who – by societal norms – “deserve” the place of honor.
 - Even them, Jesus says, go to the lowest place. Every time.
- **With shame = aischunē = disgrace, dishonesty, shame.**
 - “You begin with shame to move down”
 - Everyone staring, glad they’re not you
 - “That poor dude.”
 - “The only one who thinks he deserves a higher seat is him.”
- **Honored = doxa = glory, dignity, honor, praise**
 - Usually translated “glory”
 - KJV translates it “worship” here in Luke 14:10 – the only time in all 168 times it’s used in the NT (165 times “glory,” 3 times “dignity, dignitaries”)
- **Exalt = hupsoō = to elevate: - exalt, lift up.**
- **Humble = tapeinoō = to depress; humiliate (in condition or heart): - bring low**

5 Related Lessons in this Parable:

1) **A first-glance contradiction** in this parable. Do you see it?

- **Humble yourself...**
- **and you will be exalted.**
- **Because being exalted is awesome.**
- **But be humble. Wait... what??**

Jesus does say “he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

- But not today.
- Not in this life.
- The first-glance contradiction is only noticed if we misapply the parable and/or stop reading.
 - Jesus Himself was not exalted in this temporary, earthly life.
 - 4 days after Palm Sunday, He died a criminal’s death – the lowest of the low
 - He lived as a servant – even as he taught, he served the broken, the sick, the diseased, the blind, the poor...
- God does not **promise** exaltation on this earth for a follower of Christ ANYWHERE in the Bible.

- On the contrary, he follows up this parable in v12-14:
 - **Luk 14:12 He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.**
 - **Luk 14:13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,**
 - **Luk 14:14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."**

2) By looking at the 6 main phrases, we can see Jesus' pattern:

- **Highest place and lowest place**
- **Honor and shame**
- **Exalted and humbled**
 - Throughout Christ's teachings, the overarching theme is this:
 - If on earth you wish to be in the highest place, have the greatest honor, and be exalted, don't follow me.
 - Because where I'm going, you'll need to volunteer for the lowest place, ignore the shame, and humble yourself.

3) Let another praise you (and not your own mouth) (Prov. 27:2)

- A) With this parable, Jesus says he recognizes something in the human condition: ***that we tend to compare ourselves to others in any given room***
 - We size up the place, primarily to make us more comfortable with our surroundings.
 - His challenge: Size yourself up as the servant everywhere you go.
 - If the Lord desires you to play a larger role in that situation, He'll move you up, so to speak.
 - Let another praise you.
 - Sizing up the room and considering how you best fit is ***just a subtle way to judge others.***
- B) When someone praises him/herself, it's often a sign they rarely get praised by others
 - In a brotherly love context, the church (and parents) bear some responsibility for a self-exalting person
 - **When my boys were growing up**, every now and then they'd toot their own horn
 - One week, it seemed to be happening a little more frequently, and just when I was about to say, "Hey, let another praise you," the Spirit of God stopped me and clearly said, ***"The 'another' needs to be YOU, Dad."***
 - IOW, the increased frequency of self-exaltation I was seeing in my sons wasn't because they were self-absorbed.
 - It was due in large part to their father being so self-absorbed, he wasn't praising and encouraging his kids.
 - We like praise!
 - Those who get very little of it, default to giving hints to others
 - That week, I learned a good lesson.
 - **(next) *** fun fact:** while I was typing this very part of my sermon yesterday morning, I got a text from Ron Smith – the principal here at DC – saying he went to the Gaslight last night and a certain cast member reminded him of me the

whole show. He checked the credits, and read Jake Coffin, and just had to tell me what an awesome job Jake did.

- I beamed, text Ron back about how proud I was of Jake – that he was also our worship leader here and I was surprised they hadn't met yet, and then went right back to working on my sermon notes.
- Once again, the Spirit of God stopped me and said, "Ahem....!" Tell Jake what Ron said!!!

4) Self-exaltation results in public shame

- By judging where you think you "deserve" to be classified among your peers, you invite shame upon yourself.
- Jesus says you'll get it wrong because you'll develop an ego, and the next thing you know, ***you're doing the shame walk down the social staircase.***
- We have a real "**shame problem**" these days
- And it's nothing new – shame has been around since the Fall
- And it's a great tool of the devil and his angels
- ***But it is often totally avoidable*** – because we often bring it upon ourselves.
 - If you've lived in Tucson long enough, you've heard the public service announcements that start coming out every May or so about **Infant Drownings**.
 - They go something like this: ***"Every summer in Arizona, dozens of toddlers drown. And the saddest part is, they are 100% avoidable."***
 - Then they go on to give advice about fences, not leaving them alone, never turning your back...
 - WHEN YOU'RE AT A POOL PARTY WITH YOUR TODDLER, DON'T TAKE YOUR EYES OFF HIM/HER.
 - 48 years ago, my mom lost track of my then 19-month old sister Kerri for about 30 seconds.
 - Every parent's nightmare
 - She turned and found her at the bottom of our apartment complex's 8-foot deep pool
 - She was 8 months pregnant with me.
 - She screamed, dove in, and pulled her to the surface, heart racing.
 - Thank you Jesus, Kerri was fine.
 - But I digress...
- **Self-inflicted shame is 100% avoidable.**
 - Self-identify as the humble servant of the others in any given room, and shame is eliminated.
 - Not all shame is self-inflicted, but I'd suggest much of it is.

5) v7: Jesus looked around the room and saw a bunch of guys who considered themselves worthy of the highest place of honor.

- Pharisees and all kinds of officials in the church, jockeying for position.
- **What a paradigm shift the church would represent if we actually obeyed Jesus in humility**
 - ***If we sincerely jockeyed for the lowest seat.***
 - Like playing **musical chairs**, and all the seats are marked "servant"
 - And 10 people want a seat, but there are only 9 chairs.

- I don't know about you, but before I got arthritis, I was the guy you didn't want to play musical chairs with.
- I broke chairs.
- I dove.
- Totally reckless.
- Imagine if the church played musical "servant seats" with the same fervor
 - If you're the one left standing, you have to sit in the highest place of honor, and everybody else GETS to serve you.
 - 9 winners, 1 loser who has to suffer through being served.

Finally, I'd like you to **Consider the social situations where humility can be SAUGHT every day:**

- **Home life**

- In the Christian home, there are no paupers, and no kings
- There are husbands/fathers, wives/mothers, children/siblings
- And all of them are called to SERVE one another – not expect to be served.
- A servant is the lowest place (most humble) at the table – in fact, doesn't even have a place at the table with the "non-servants"
 - Some children in this room expect mom to serve you.
 - You expect dad to serve you by providing stuff.
 - And many parents don't expect their children to serve them.
 - Parents, you do a great disservice to your kids!
 - Model servanthood, and teach your children the value of serving.
 - They are little missionaries – your kids.
 - As long as you view them solely as those you "serve," they grow up thinking they deserve to be served.
 - Rather, EXPECT them to serve.
 - Read the gospels to them – show them Who Jesus truly was – how He – the only rightful King of kings, humbled himself as a servant.
 - His exaltation came at the resurrection.
 - Not in this life – but for us in the eternal.
 - Until then – in this short life – we serve.

- **Work or School**

- A lot of folks have a fairly predictable daily job
- And students in public and Christian schools and home schools as well (but for home schoolers, I refer you back to Home life)
 - This predictability can lead to a "get in, get out" mindset
- And you may even work and deal with people who simply never appreciate your kindness and "extra mile" attitude
 - Which can lead to giving up, and just getting by
 - I'd like to remind you that great **peace, freedom, and JOY** are direct results of serving.
 - If you aren't experiencing peace, freedom, and joy when returning from work, one of two things is likely happening:
 - 1) you're not serving, but just existing
 - 2) at the end of the day, you're not reflecting on how God used you

- Serve others at work – get creative – I’m sure you can think of things to do that might even result in getting the TILT from a co-worker
 - and at the end of the day, **reflect back on how God was glorified through you.**
 - If you don’t have this as a habit, whether you love your job or despise it, I truly encourage you to build a habit of reflecting on how God used you each day.
- **Your church family**
 - We exist to serve one another.
 - We do NOT exist to be “fed” by others – but to participate in the nourishment of the entire body.
 - One of my jobs is to “feed” the flock – of course.
 - What is YOUR job? Role?
 - Each of us have gifts to bring to serve one another.
 - If you are not involved in serving in this body, I encourage you to jump in.
 - We NEED you!
 - We WANT to serve alongside you.
 - We have administrative help needs... set up and tear down needs... children’s ministry needs... coffee/refreshments...
 - Being in a healthy family means everyone is jockeying to serve one another.
 - In that – if we GET THIS – then even in your selflessness, you will be served by others.
 - It’s a beautiful, healthy “cycle”

Pray