

THE WAY UP IS DOWN

Int.

1. Aim: To discuss this parable which shows that humility is the only way.
2. Text Luke 14:1-11
3. Jesus did not limit His use of parables to instructing only His disciples:
 - a. He often used them in responding to those who challenged Him...
 - (1) "The Two Sons" - Matt. 21:28-32
 - (2) "The Wedding Feast" - Matt. 22:1-14
 - b. He also used them in more casual settings...
 - (1) As a guest in a Pharisee's home, "The Two Debtors" - Luke 7:41-43
 - (2) Replying to a lawyer's question, "The Good Samaritan" - Luke 10:25-37
4. It was in another casual setting that we find Jesus using a parable to teach an important lesson...
 - a. The parable is found in Luke 14:7-11
 - b. It can be called "Taking The Lowest Place", and it illustrates the value of humility
5. The Way Up is Down

Discussion

I. ANALYZING THE PARABLE

A. THE SETTING

1. Jesus had gone to eat at the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on the Sabbath - Luke 14:1a
2. They had watched Him closely - Luke 14:1b
 - a. Perhaps to see if He would heal the man with dropsy? - Luke 14:2
 - b. Jesus asked a question about the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath - Luke 14:3
 - (1) To which they did not respond - Luke 14:4
 - (2) To which they could not respond, after Jesus...
 - (a) Healed the man - Luke 14:5
 - (b) Asked another question revealing their inconsistency - Luke 14:6
3. Jesus had also been watching them closely - Luke 14:7
 - a. He had noted how those invited were selecting the best places to sit
 - (1) It is thought that the seating arrangements at that time may have involved three tables in the shape of a flat-bottomed "U"
 - (2) "The triclinia, or Grecian table, then in use had three sections which were placed together so as to form a flat-bottomed U. The space enclosed by the table was not occupied. It was left vacant that the servants might enter it and attend to the wants of the guests who reclined around the outer margin of the table." (MCGARVEY)

(3) "The central seat of each of these three sections were deemed a place of honor. This struggle for precedence was a small ambition, but many of the ambitions of our day are equally small." (MCGARVEY)

- b. This petty positioning around the tables prompted Jesus to teach a lesson using a parable.

B. THE PARABLE ITSELF...

1. The setting is a wedding feast, a common social event in those days - Luke 14:8
2. Jesus warns against sitting down in the best place - Luke 14:8b-9
 - a. Someone more honorable may have been invited
 - b. When they arrive, the host will ask you to move
 - c. With shame you will have to move to the lowest place (the only place left!)
3. Instead, He counsels them to sit in the lowest place - Luke 14:10
 - a. That way, the host will come along and say "Friend, go up higher"
 - b. So instead of shame, brought about trying to sit in the best place, you will receive glory among those who sit at the table with you
4. Jesus then concludes with this maxim: "For whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." - Luke 14:11 NKJV
 - a. A "maxim": a fundamental principle, general truth, or rule of conduct
 - b. It was one of our Lord's favorite
 - (1) Used in the parable of "The Pharisee And The Publican" -. Luke 18:14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." NKJV

(2) Spoken when teaching His disciples not to be like scribes and Pharisees -
 . Matt. 23:6-12 v. 11-12 NKJV ""But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

c. It is found in the Old Testament -

(1) Psalms 18:27 NKJV "For You will save the humble people, But will bring down haughty looks."

(2) Prov. 18:12 NKJV "Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor is humility."

(3) Prov. 29:23 NKJV "A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor."

d. And repeated in the New Testament -

(1) Jas. 4:6 NKJV "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.""

(2) 1 Pet. 5:5 "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.""

e. Remember that this is a parable; Jesus' purpose is not just to have us focus on the story (in this case, the advice about attending wedding feasts), but the main principle illustrated by the parable. With that in mind, here are a few thoughts in regards to..

II. THE PARABLE APPLIED Humility or Pride

A. WE LEARN THE DANGER OF PRIDE...

1. The wise man wrote:

- a. "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall." - Pr 16:18
- b. "A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor." - Prov. 29:23

2. Pride is like a cancer

- a. It is one of the 7 deadly sins - Pro. 6:16-19 "a proud look"
- b. There is a difference between pride and self respect.
 - (1) Self respect and self esteem are necessary to a good self image and is desirable.
 - (2) But pride is destructive and is like a spiritual cancer ! Why ?
- c. Pride is a condition of the heart. It is arrogance and selfishness
 - (1) Pride will cause us to make a ridiculous statement and try to defend it
 - (2) Pride must always give an answer, even if he has no knowledge about the questions being considered. Pride is unable to say "I don't know." In having this attitude a person cannot be taught anything because they feel they know it all.
 - (3) Pride causes us to think we are superior to everyone else
 - (a) A person of pride never makes mistakes. So they defend themselves vigorously in everything they do.
 - (b) They try to justify and explain every action.
 - (c) This kind of attitude causes us to be very lonely because the person with pride thinks nobody is perfect except himself.

(4) Pride says I am better than you are in...

- (a) Intelligence
- (b) Financial attainment
- (c) Educational accomplishments
- (d) Standing in life.

(5) These attitudes lead to destruction.

3. The danger of pride is not just in social settings (as per the parable), but in our relationship with God!

- a. The Lord hates pride - Prov. 8:13 NKJV "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate."
- b. It defiles man - Mark 7:21-23 - pride comes from the heart and these are the things that will defile or ruin a man.
- c. It is of the world, not of the Father - 1 John 2:15-17
 - (1) A person filled with pride will not listen to God
 - (2) If we refuse to hear God's message we cannot be saved.

B. WE LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY...

1. The Lord blesses the humble -

- a. Psalms 25:9 NKJV "The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way."
- b. Prov. 3:34 NKJV "Surely He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble."

2. Humility is a mark of wisdom - Prov. 11:2 NKJV "When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom."

3. Humility precedes honor like arrogance goes before destruction
4. Prov. 18:12 NKJV "Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor is humility."
5. Prov. 22:4 NKJV "By humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches and honor and life." Humility = lowered state of mind

C. What is humility ?

1. Hebrew and Greek words
 - a. They mean to have a lowered or afflicted state of mind or spirit that is self inflicted
 - b. It is making yourself poor in spirit.
 - c. It is a trampling on one's self
 - d. This is not to be understood that one must constantly berate himself to be humble. A person who goes around telling people how useless he is, is merely trying to draw attention to himself like the Pharisees did. This is not humility!
 - e. Humility is not being shy or bashful.
2. Dictionaries define humility
 - a. Webster's "modest or meek in spirit or manner: not proud or assertive"
 - b. "Freedom from a proud or haughty manner; meekness"

3. True Humility

- a. It is thinking soberly about oneself
- b. Rm. 12:3 "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" Soberly = be in right mind
- c. We must have a balanced view of our self
- d. Recognizing our dependence on God.
 - (1) Jer. 10:23 "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
 - (2) A humble man realizes that of himself he can do nothing
 - (3) We must depend upon God for each breath, for every drink of water, for each bite of food, even for every heartbeat.
 - (4) A humble person does not trust in himself for these things
- e. Humility is understanding that others deserve a special kind of treatment
- f. "Humility is a quality that when you discover that you have it, you don't." - Jean Thornton

D. THEREFORE, AS DISCIPLES OF CHRIST LET US...

1. Be clothed with humility - Col. 3:12 NKJV "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;"
2. Be humble before God - 1 Peter 5:6 "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time," Humble - abase, bring low

3. Be humble in our dealings with our brethren in Christ - Phil. 2:3 NKJV "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."
4. Be humble in our dealings with those around us, even those who oppose us -
 - a. Tit. 3:2 NKJV "to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men."
 - b. 2 Tim. 2:24-25 NKJV "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,"

CONCLUSION

1. Through this simple parable, Jesus has taught us a most important truth: the need to be humble in our relations with God and those around us!
2. Humility is not a popular grace in our culture...
 - a. It is considered a sign of weakness by many
 - b. People fear that they will be made a floor mat by others
3. But we must remember that God is watching, and it is He who said: "For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (I saiah 57:15)
4. If we desire the Lord to dwell with us, then let us walk humbly before Him, as Micah wrote... "He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)
5. May God give us the grace to so walk before Him!

Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Morning Sept. 6, 2009
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