

The honor of Christian humility.

Text: Luke 14:1, 7-14 for 9/22/2019 by Pastor Bolwerk

One 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. ¹³“But 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.”

Theme: The honor of Christian humility.

1. It comes from how we see ourselves
2. It comes from how we see others

“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (v. 11).

You are drowning. You are gasping, fighting for air as you struggle to keep your head above water. But you know it’s only a matter of time before you go under for the last time and die. Suddenly, someone grabs you, pulls your head above water, wraps their arm around you, and pulls you to shore. You are safe, and you are alive.

You turn to the person who saved you and ask, “Who are you?” He tells you he is a prince and that he must now return to the kingdom he came from. So you ask him, “How can I thank you? What can I give you? What can I do for you?” The Prince says, “There is nothing I need, and I have many servants to do things for me when I return.” You reply, “There must be something I can do to thank you for saving me.” He replies, “If you want to thank me then take this sash which has my royal seal on it. Wear it proudly, and when anyone asks you about it tell them what I have done for you. That is how you can thank me.” As the Prince prepares to leave, he says one last thing. He says, “I would really like for you to come and be a part of my kingdom and enjoy everything my kingdom has to offer. When you come simply show my servants the sash and they will lead you to my royal banquet. I will have a seat ready just for you.”

This is quite an honor. So you take the sash and you wear it every day. You are so grateful to be alive that when anyone asks you about the sash you immediately tell what Prince did for you. At first it feels so good to tell people about this great man. But like all feelings it slowly starts to fade. And as time goes on you find that when you talk about the

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Prince that's all people seem to want to hear about. It seems like people are only interested in hearing what the Prince did. They don't seem to be interested in you. This makes you a little annoyed, yet you continue to tell people about the Prince because he did save your life.

But one day you are speaking to someone you know, telling them something about yourself. But they cut you off. They say they don't want to hear about you, they just want you to tell them about Prince. At that point you are fed up. You're tired of giving all this time and attention to someone else, someone who is not even there. You are someone, aren't you? Don't you deserve a little recognition; a little respect?

So you stop telling people the full story about Prince. Oh, you mention that you met a prince who gave you this beautiful sash to wear, and who invited you to come and join him in his kingdom and dine at his table. You just leave out that one little detail about how this Prince saved your life. And when people ask you why the Prince did all of this for you, you simply answer, "Because I tell people about him. In fact, if it were not for me, there would be many people who would have never heard about this Prince." Which is "true," isn't it?

Over time, when you are asked about the sash, you find yourself talking more about yourself than about the Prince. It's not long before people get tired of hearing you talk about yourself. They stop listening. Eventually, they stop asking about the sash. Since the sash is no longer getting you any attention you take it off; you stop wearing it. You put it away, and eventually you lose track of it. It gets lost in the shuffle and busyness of your life.

Years pass, and you decide to visit the kingdom where the Prince lives. As you walk around the kingdom taking in the different sites you walk past the palace of the Royal Family. And as you do you look through the front gate you see a large number of people walking around inside the palace. They are all wearing sashes just like the one you used to have. As you look at the people you realize, these are all people who you told about the Prince. It is then that you remember the Prince's invitation.

Without hesitation you walk into the palace and go looking for the Prince. In your search you enter a large banquet hall and there, sitting at the head table, is the Prince. You run over, sit down next to him, and say excitedly, "Do you remember me? I'm the one you saved. I'm the one who told all these people about you. I did all of this; they are all here because of me!" The Prince looks at you with sadness in his eyes and says, "Yes I remember saving you. While you may have told these people about me, they are not here because of you; they are here because I saved them also. And just like them I gave you one of my sashes, so you could wear it as a way of thanking me. But you are not wearing that sash. I gave you incredible honor by giving you a sash with the seal of my Kingdom. Only royalty can wear that seal. And only those who are wearing a sash can join me at my banquet table. I'm sorry, but you are going to have to give your seat to someone else."

And as the Prince's servants lead you away from the banquet table you see your seat

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being given to a small, unassuming, old woman. And you mumble to yourself, “What did she ever do for the Prince?”

“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (v. 11).

Jesus is the Prince who saved us. The Son of God gave up his throne and humbly came into this world to save us from drowning in our sins. He rescued us from an eternal death in hell. Then he covered us, not just with a sash, but with the robe of his perfect life. With that robe comes a new life of faith. Then he placed on us, not a royal seal, but his own holy name. He then invited us to join him at the banquet table in his kingdom.

Our faith wants to serve Jesus as a way of thanking him for saving us. It wants to humbly wear his robe of righteousness and tell others about what he has done for us. But our old, sinful self does not like that kind of humility. The selfish part of us wants attention, recognition, honor, and respect. Our sinful nature wants to exalt itself, not God.

While our New Self wants to be humble, our Sinful Nature tries to use that humility to gain attention. Our Old self often turns our “humility” into nothing more than pride in disguise. We may start out telling people of how Jesus saved us, but our Sinful nature doesn’t like Jesus getting all the attention. So it’s not long before we are talking about ourselves and all we do for the Prince. We speak of how we “never” miss a church service, and how we “always” give generously of our time, money and skills. We tell of all we do for God by serving on boards and committees, sitting through long meetings, and helping with all that is needed for the church to function. We hold before others our prayer life, our service to others, and all of our “good works” hoping to receive just a little recognition, a little honor. Instead of telling about how the Prince saved us, we talk about ourselves, acting as if God’s Church and Kingdom would fall apart if it were not for us. We honor ourselves over the very God who saved us. We steal God’s glory. We dishonor his name.

This is why Jesus tells his parable. He wants us to see ourselves in light of what *he* has done for us. Jesus lived and died for us, humbling himself and becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:8) The King of heaven and earth humbled himself to pay for our self-exaltation; to pay for our desire to have God’s honor and glory. Jesus death paid for all those sins; he paid for all sins. Then, rising from the dead Jesus honored us by sharing with us his life-giving gospel, bringing us to faith, putting his name on us, and calling us his brothers and sisters. He gives us even greater honor by allowing us the privilege of wearing his royal robe and telling others what he has done for us.

The honor of Christian humility comes from how we see ourselves: we are sinners who are in desperate need of a Savior. We enjoy the honor of that humility when we remember that salvation and faith are 100% God’s doing, and 0% our doing. Even the ability to trust in Jesus for forgiveness is a gift from God. We didn’t deserve it, yet God still honored us with that gift. That gift of faith gives us the ability to humbly set ourselves aside so we can honor Jesus by telling of his saving love for us and for the world.

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Yet the honor of Christian humility is more than just how we see ourselves. It also comes from how we see others. This is why Jesus tells his second parable. He says, **“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. “But when you make a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. Certainly, you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous”** (vs. 12-14).

Jesus wants us to use these words to consider how we view people. You see, our sinful nature is always looking at others for what we can get from them. That selfish part of us “gives” with the desire of getting something in return. This desire causes us to rank people, looking at them as being in a better or worse situation than ourselves. Then we tend to focus on “sharing” with those who we believe are better off than us hoping to receive something in return. We often do that with the spiritual blessings Jesus has given us. We share them with people who we feel we will benefit us in some way.

But Jesus did not do that with us. This Prince of Peace worked to save us, all the while expecting nothing in return. In fact, Jesus knew there was nothing we could give him because we were spiritually dead. Something that is dead cannot give you anything. Yet Jesus humbly gave up everything so he could free us from that death, so he could give us forgiveness, peace, and eternal life.

Jesus wants us to humbly give to others just as he has humbly given everything to save us. His words open our eyes to the reality that no one is better or worse than us because **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23). Jesus humbly gave his life to pay for the sins of all people. Now, he freely offers his forgiveness to everyone.

The honor of Christian humility comes from seeing others as Christ sees them. It doesn't matter if a person is rich or poor, healthy for sick; it doesn't matter what they wear or how they look. In Jesus eyes all need his life saving forgiveness. In the humility of saving faith we recognize that God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). And God has given us that truth.

The honor of Christian humility comes from sharing that truth of Jesus' saving work. And in faith we want to share that truth unconditionally. So where is the honor in that? Jesus tells us, **“you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous”** (v. 14). What an honor it will be when our Lord raises our bodies from the dead, reunites them with our souls, and then says to us, **“Friend, move up to a higher place”** (v. 10). What an honor it will be to dine at the banquet table of our Lord. We honor Jesus by humbly sharing his saving message with the people in our lives. Our Lord honors us by raising us from the dead and giving us a joyous, unending life. Amen.