

Parable of the invited guests
Pastor John E. Dubler
Luke 14:7-11

The meaning of the parable in one sentence: “Before honor comes humility” Proverbs 15:33b.

Proverbs 29:23 warns us that “A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.”¹ “When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom,” as we further are warned in Proverbs 11:2. Here is a parable to warn anyone who is exalting himself. “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”²

And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them, “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher;’ then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:7-11)



The context of the teaching in this parable is a dinner at the home of a leading Pharisee. The parable was most probably delivered at a dinner of some kind, very probably the same dinner at the home of the Pharisee. At least, both the context of Luke 14 and the introductory line of the parable indicate that Jesus had just attended or was in the process of attending a dinner.

Luke 14:1 tells us that Jesus “. . . went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread.” Meanwhile, verse 7 declares, “And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests.”

Jesus was a keen observer of people and in this instance He is quick to offer correction to some behavior which He knows will be harmful to people if they continue to practice it, namely *self-exaltation*.

The Parable is not quite in the form of others which we have encountered. It is a story without a main character, framed in the third person. He does not choose to tell us, “A man was attending a banquet where he selected the place of honor . . .” Rather the parable is in the second person:

¹ All scripture references are to the New American Standard Updated Version unless otherwise noted.

² James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5.

“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast . . .” Further, the message of the parable is not shrouded in any kind of symbolism such as, “A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard . . .” The message is straightforward and may be clearly understood without interpretation of symbols. “When you are invited by someone . . .” proceeds to what could happen to a person if he did take the place of honor without appropriate invitation of the host, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Here then is the very clear message of the parable: Self exaltation results in being humbled, but those who humble themselves will be exalted. “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

The proud and self-righteous are convinced in their own hearts that they deserve a banquet thrown in their honor. Consequently their tendency is to step on others while they seek first place. They seek the honor of others and have no thought of their host, nor of other guests, only themselves.



It is therefore appropriate that we review some fundamental scripture selections regarding pride and humility. Pride first:

Psalm 36:11

Let not the foot of pride come upon me,
And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

Proverbs 11:2

When pride comes, then comes dishonor,
But with the humble is wisdom.

Proverbs 16:18-19

Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before stumbling.
It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly
Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 29:23

A man's pride will bring him low,
But a humble spirit will obtain honor.



Now let us review some of the fundamentals about humility.

Psalm 25:9
He leads the humble in justice,
And He teaches the humble His way.

Psalm 37:11
But the humble will inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

Proverbs 15:33
The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom,
And before honor comes humility.

Proverbs 22:4
The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD
Are riches, honor and life.

It should be noted that Jesus' advice is not some sort of game-playing strategy for being elevated. It is not reverse psychology. His advice is borne of a *lifestyle* of preferring others—honestly seeking the best place for someone else.



A significant parallel occurs in the second chapter of Philippians:

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:3-11)

Believers must constantly be on guard and beware of becoming competitive and self-promoting. These are the traits of the unsaved world. The attitude can be subtle or overt, and equally deadly in both cases.

Twice in scripture we find the words “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” The concept is adumbrated in a number of other ways as well. One way grace may scripturally be

defined is “the power and desire to do God’s will,” therefore it is most important that we receive adequate grace from God in our lives. Notice here that Paul says it is “by the grace of God” he is what he is (or he can do what he does). It is God’s grace operating in Paul that produced the results of his life which we today enjoy.

But by the grace of God I am what I am , and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10-11)

How impoverished we would be as a church if Paul had resisted God’s grace in his life by becoming proud. God gives grace to the humble. Paul received grace upon grace. The connection is inescapable. No wonder Paul never begins or ends any of his letters without a reference to God’s grace. It is that important. We receive God’s grace through a true understanding and practice of humility—the very opposite of pride.

