

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**  
**Des Moines, WA**  
**August 29, 2010**

*Luke 14:1,7-14*

**How A Christian Conducts Himself in the World**

1. *Jesus' lesson at a Sabbath banquet*
2. *The way we can apply this to ourselves*

Hymns: 230 – 770 – Distribution: 492, 314  
– 498

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

*Luke 14:1,7-14 –*

<sup>1</sup>*One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched... <sup>7</sup>When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: <sup>8</sup>"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. <sup>9</sup>If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. <sup>10</sup>But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. <sup>11</sup>For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

<sup>12</sup>*Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. <sup>13</sup>But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup>and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

The new school year is upon us! The story's been told of Little Billy who was going to his first day of school in a new town. He was a third grader. His mom picked him up at the end of the day and

asked him how things went. He informed her that he was the best looking boy in his class. A bit surprised, his mom asked, "Who told you that?"

"No one had to tell me," came the reply. "I simply saw everyone there." It might be amusing to hear a little child say that about themselves, but it's sad when an adult behaves in such a childish way. Unfortunately, this attitude is not uncommon today.

This morning, we hear Jesus teach us a lesson on a Christian's attitude. In Luke 14 we will learn, "**How A Christian Conducts Himself in the World.**" Let's take a look at Jesus' lesson at a banquet long ago and then apply his teaching to our own lives.

**1** – We see the setting in which Jesus teaches his lesson in verse 1: "*One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.*" Jesus had a Sabbath meal invitation. It was at the house of a ranking Pharisee. Later on we hear that many guests were there taking their places to eat, so this seems to be quite a prestigious meal. Was Jesus being honored to attend such a function? Was this one of his supporters in the ranks of the enemy? It doesn't seem so. We hear that he was "carefully watched" at this banquet. Perhaps this was another attempt by his enemies to catch him in his words and discredit him.

In the setting of this banquet we read, "*When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.'*" Jesus watched what probably was standard behavior for taking seats when it was time to eat. A scramble ensued for the most prominent places. We don't know the exact seating arrangement at this banquet, but often a feast would have couches where three people could recline on their side as they ate. The choicer seats would be the ones closer to the host and on the side where you would have an unobstructed view of him. Those seats were for the most important people!

The closest comparison we'd have today is a wedding reception. At a larger wedding, the head table is often facing the other people. Often the couple will put nametags at the places at tables closest to the front for their closest relatives, their best friends, and their honored guests. The other people can fill in behind those front tables.

Can you imagine going to one of those prominent tables and, after removing the nametags, sit at the place of that honored guest? Or simply making a “pushy rush” to sit at a closer table? Jesus here condemns the attitude of:

- Pride
- Arrogance
- Having too high an opinion of yourself
- Having little regard or respect for others

He sharpened his lesson by the example of a proud guest who picks a seat a little too high for his status. The host in Jesus’ parable had to come tell him to move down to a worse seat because more important people than he were there. How embarrassing! Back to our own illustration, how embarrassing if the wedding couple forgot a few nametags for some of their honored guests and had to move you back toward the door of the hall instead of closer to the head table because these other more important people needed seats!

Jesus then taught about the proper attitude: *“But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests.”* Don’t misunderstand Jesus. He is not advocating seeking prominence and compliments. This is not his formula or strategy for people with ambitious motives. The Christian attitude Jesus is describing is a believer’s natural view of themselves. A believer has an honest-to-goodness humility about themselves that doesn’t think about or strive for the better seats. Jesus finished his lesson about a believer’s attitude with a proverb: *“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

We’re able to see an even deeper danger in this lesson from Jesus than hurt feelings at a party. The proverb about those who exalt themselves and are consequently humbled can have eternal implications also.

How is this true? Think about these same Pharisees and their proud attitude again. Think about how they took pride in adding their own laws to God’s OT law and feeling that they were meriting a high place in God’s kingdom because of this. In John 8 Jesus had an exchange with them about this: *“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’ They answered him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?’ Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.’”* Do you see the danger? Their

prideful attitude in being descendants of Abraham and their outward, ritualistic adherence to God’s OT laws – plus hundreds of their own – led them to a feeling of being “right” with God because of themselves. What need was there for a Savior? They were getting a pretty high seat in God’s kingdom on their own! It’s interesting that the other place Jesus uses this proverb is at the end of his parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector, where only one went home forgiven, and it wasn’t the one who was crowing about his own achievements.

Psalm 10:4 drives this point home: *“In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.”* Jesus himself tells us the danger of this attitude in Luke 9: *“Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”* The danger is that in its ultimate form, pride separates a person from God forever in hell.

This becomes even more significant when we see what Jesus had to do to save us from hell. In the act of coming to earth as a superhero to conquer our sin and death, how did Jesus do it? Philippians 2 says that *“being in very nature God, (he) did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!”* Jesus showed us the perfect attitude in the process of winning our salvation. He made himself low and became our servant, suffering and dying for our sins on the cross so we would escape that punishment and be forgiven. He truly is the ultimate example of humility, winning our salvation in the process!

We must admit in Christian humility that we have not done nothing to enter the kingdom of God, either by earning our salvation or even deciding to believe God’s message and be a part of it. Romans 3 says, *“Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle?... We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”*

**2** — The time has come for you to examine yourself for the attitude of humility Jesus teaches us about. Is this still important to address today? C.S. Lewis, the famous Christian author, wrote a book years ago called **“Christian Behavior.”** In it he included a chapter called “The Great Sin.” What do you think this chapter covered? The sin of murder? Adultery? Hate? Actually, the chapter was about the sin of pride. C.S. Lewis noticed it as a great temptation to Christians of his day, and we must also admit that this is a danger to us!

What has our attitude been toward our importance and standing? Have we exited many a room like Billy, who felt pretty superior? Have we presumed to move up to the head table in our own minds?

Our first reaction is probably a resounding “No!,” but let’s take a closer look. A new school year is upon us. Perhaps it’s a good day to ask these questions of the grade school and high school students here today that will be beginning a new year soon. What your attitude is?

- Are you going to conduct yourself with humility? Are you going to show respect to all your teachers?
- Are you the type to be friendly and outgoing to all the students at your school, or do you consider yourself better than some? Are there some you would never associate with or eat with because you’re better than they are?

A teacher can have sinful thoughts of pride as well and feel that they know it all and do it all right, inflexibly never being open to input or suggestions.

Parents of students can proudly and inappropriately express themselves when it comes to school issues that are sensitive to them:

- “Who decided that new school policy?! Who changed the schedule? Who figured out this dress code? I have all the answers for a perfect school!”
- “My child got what grade? A child in this family couldn’t have earned that! It must be the teacher’s fault.”
- Unfortunately, some people can choose to work behind the scenes to tear down morale and respect rather than addressing things properly.

What about pride outside of school dynamics? What about your personal life?

- Are you a listener first at home or the type who expresses your personal opinions loudly and quickly? Do you always have to have your way?
- If someone does a favor for you that isn’t exactly the way you would have

done it, are your first words “Thanks so much!” or “You didn’t do it right”?

- Do you feel hurt if you’re not invited?
- Are you insulted if you’re not noticed?
- Do you expect to be complimented?
- Are you offended if you’re not thanked?
- Do you get angry if your name is not remembered by someone?
- Would you be crushed if you lost the election?
- Will you be brokenhearted if you’re not picked for the team?

We can also think about this lesson from Jesus when it comes to our church. Might we be guilty of a lack of humility? Might we be inflexible with our personal opinions on how things might be done in a church, perhaps:

- The way a group is run
- Property and facility decisions with building and decorating
- The way a worship service is held
- Traditions that someone feels must be followed

The result of a lack of humility in expressing opinions inappropriately is: Disharmony, bitterness, and a hindrance to the mission of the Church in some cases. I’ve even heard of congregations where people have left because they weren’t “getting their way.”

When pride rears its ugly head in our lives and we recognize it, there is but one recourse: To confess our sin of pride and look to the cross. Look to the One who bowed his head in humility to win the salvation of the world, the One who also gives us the example of humility to follow in our lives.

As we close our look at pride and humility today, I was struck by an insight I heard this past week. I read a paragraph someone wrote about the heroes of this world. He wrote that every hero of this world comes to a moment that decides their career and renown as a hero. It’s a time when they are challenged and their strength is revealed. They recognize this and seize the moment. The writer of

the paragraph mused about how different this is from God's heroes. God's heroes and his people are found – and are even the strongest – when they realize their own helplessness and nothingness. They must rely on their God, and in him they find the greatest strength they will ever know.

As we hear Jesus' lesson on humility today, may we learn it well. May his example of humility in how he saved us motivate us to a proper view of ourselves. And may we always conduct our lives in this Christian humility. Amen.