

Parables Lesson 15: What is your personal responsibility? Humility

THE CHIEF SEATS

Luke 14:7-11

Introduction:

It is interesting to me that a phrase that became prominent in the 60s and 70s is still prevalent in many areas of our present day life. Reading newspapers and novels, watching television and movies, listening to interviews and speeches you constantly hear the phrase, "I'm just trying to find out who I am."

Self-esteem has become paramount in our society. It controls how our children are raised, how teachers interact with students, how employers treat employees, how politics is practice, even how the Bible is taught.

Even standard hymns have been changed:

Amazing Grace which read, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a *wretch* like me" now reads, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved *one such as me*."

At the Cross which said, "Would He devote that sacred hear for such a *worm* as I" now says, "Would he devote that sacred head for *someone* such as I."

"Christian Counselors" have taken up this cause.

In a book by a prominent "Christian" Psychologist he tells us that we must realize who we are in Christ so that we can reach our full potential as Christians.

And who are we, according to his book? Here are just a few samples:

The Kings Kids

Rom. 8:15 and 16--*For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of **adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that **we are children of God**,*

Fellow Heirs with Christ

Rom. 8:17--*and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and **fellow heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with {Him} in order that we may also be glorified with {Him}.*

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In fact, we ourselves are Kings and Priests

Rev. 1:6--*and He has made us {to be} a kingdom, priests (kings and priests-NKJV) to His God and Father; to Him {be} the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

The Chosen, Holy and Beloved

Col. 3:12--*And so, as those who have been **chosen of God, holy and beloved**, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;*

Victorious Conquerors

Rom. 8:37--*But in all these things we **overwhelmingly conquer (We are more than conquerors-NKJV.)***

All these things re taught in Scripture so what is wrong with this picture?

This teaching caters to pride rather than humility, and, James 4:6 tells us clearly that "**GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**"

All these flattering things are taught clearly in Scripture, but what's "the rest of the story?" What is the complete picture? Are we, in fact responsible for any of these blessings God has bestowed on us?

Don't these blessings bring with them awesome responsibilities.

Let's look at these facts again in the total context of Scripture:

We are the Kings Kids, but what kind of kids?

1Pet. 1:14---*As **obedient children**, do not be conformed to the former lusts {which were yours} in your ignorance,*

We are Fellow Heirs with Christ not just of treasure but trial.

Rom. 8:17 and 18--*and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with {Him} in order that we may also be glorified with {Him}. For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time** are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

It is true that, in fact, we ourselves are Kings and Priests but this cost God a great price and we are still under authority.

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Rev. 1:5--*and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood . . .*

Heb. 8:1 and 2--*Now the main point in what has been said {is this}: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.*

We are the Chosen, Holy and Beloved and as such we bear a challenging and demanding image.

Col. 3:10-14 – *and (we) have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him {a renewal} in which there is no {distinction between} Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.*

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

And this goes teaching on and on and on.

We are, of course Victorious Conqueror, but by who's power.

Rom. 8:37--*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.*

The complete picture then is that we are who we are because of God and Christ. **That should not build our self-esteem but humble us.**

Eph. 2:8-10---*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

And so today we come to a parable that teaches another personal responsibility to add to stewardship, sowing, and hearing. It is our responsibility to live humbly.

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PARABLE OF PRIDE – Read Luke 14:7-11

What was the setting?

A Sabbath dinner at the home of Simon, a Pharisee.

In the Middle East when a dignitary had a dinner it lasted a long time. Often the exact hour was not even given. People came and went as they wished.

We know, both from Scripture and historical literature that important people such as government official and religious leaders often came late in order to make a grand entrance. (*We call this being fashionably late.*)

Protocol for the dinner.

Greeks and Romans ate reclining on cushions at low tables and the Jews adopted this style also.

The seating arrangements were standard. The host sat in the middle of the "head table." On his right, in the most honored spot, sat the High Priest, or other highest-ranking religious personage. *Draw Diagram*

From that position other important people, other Pharisees, government officials, etc. sat in descending order of importance or influence.

Why was Jesus there?

He was not invited because of his popularity.

Luke 14:1--*And it came about when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on {the} Sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching Him closely.*

He was invited so that He could be tricked into an action or word that could be used to accuse Him and bring about His demise.

He was not on trial, however, they were.

Remember, He already placed them on the defensive by healing a man of dropsy even though it was the Sabbath and even though healing was considered work.

His argument in favor of doing that unlawful thing totally silenced them. Now they were "watching Him closely," but He was also watching them.

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This parable was told in reaction to the thought, actions and motives of the guests that He had been observing.

What are people like?

Children are selfish prideful little creatures.

They scramble for the seat by the window in the bus, for the aisle seat, for the seat next to the teacher. They fight for toys, swings, and crayons.

Adults are selfish prideful big creatures.

They seek status and position, places of importance, and seats at the head table. They scramble for bigger and better cars, homes, and offices. In fact, there is an entire system of protocol in government, education, and business.

Some people even get upset when someone sits in their seat at church. All this comes from pride and self-centeredness

Stienbeck writing about pride said, *"You will find best proof of this in America, where there is not a single individual who is not descendant of some aristocrat or a member of a family that came over on the Mayflower. There is not even an Indian who hasn't descended from a tribal chief."*

PATH OF HUMILITY

Jesus Confronts Pride Teaches Humility

Jesus observed the game of pride.

The people came in and maneuvered for the best seats. The prominent and powerful probably made the weaker move. The table was full and the only empty seats left were at the bottom.

Jesus used satire to rebuke their bad table manners.

A self-important guest comes to a wedding feast and takes the place of honor next to the host and the table fills up. In the middle of the dinner, a real guest of honor arrives and the host removes the first so the new guest can sit next to him. By now the middle of the table is full so the self-styled dignitary has to go to the very bottom of the table.

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Jesus presents a better plan – humility.

Wouldn't it be better to enter the dinner and sit at the lower end of the table. Then when the host asks you to join him and moves you up you are honored instead of embarrassed.

The observed problem is pride. The answer is humility.

We need to learn humility.

The Bible commands it.

*I Pet. 5:5--You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; **and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility** toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,*

*Micah 6:8--He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And **to walk humbly with your God?***

It is to our benefit.

Pr. 22:4--The reward of humility {and} the fear of the LORD Are riches, honor and life.

"He who humbles himself will be exalted." – Matthew 18:4, 23:12; Luke 14:11, 18:14; James. 4:6 and 10; I Peter 5:5 and 6; Philippians. 2:3 and 4.

It is dangerous not to be.

Pr. 18:12--Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, But humility {goes} before honor.

Luke 14:11---"For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Humility and how to attain it.

The Principle of Humility – Bow before God

The root word for humility is the same as for humiliate. We cannot be self-conscious about our desire to sublimate our will to Christ. We must bow!

The definition of that root word is "to make yourself low." It indicates the absence of pride, vanity, and arrogance.

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Throne concept from *Four Spiritual Laws*, Campus Crusade for Christ:

Pathway to Humility – Realize your limitations

We are physically weak.

Gen. 3:19--*By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.*"

Man is just dust. Whether he is an architect, astronomer, soldier, executive, athlete, preacher – no exceptions – all are dust.

Neil Lightfoot wrote it well,

*"There are trails where man cannot go, mountains he cannot scale, galaxies in space he cannot subdue. . . . He cannot ward off pain. He is unable to defend himself from disease. He cannot disguise the inevitable marks of old age. He cannot bride death away. **The immensity of death alone is sufficient to keep man humble.**"*

We are mentally limited.

We use only a small percentage of our mental capacity and all the accumulation of data in our minds and computers is a speck next to the unknown.

Will Roger wisely said, *"We are all ignorant, we're just ignorant about a lot of different things."*

We are morally flawed.

We have in us a bent to sinning so strong that we would not dare to stand before God based on our moral goodness, even the works we have done in His name.

Paul's lament in Romans 7 makes it absolutely clear that the only answer to our moral dilemma is the work of God through His Holy Spirit (Chapter 8).

The Pattern for Humility – Jesus

He planned it.

Phil. 2:5-8--*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. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

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He lived it.

Born in a stable – died on a cross – a life lesson in humility

He taught it.

Jesus spent His entire life casting out fear except in one area where He nurtured it . . . the area of pride.

Our responsibility is to imitate Christ and develop a humble servant spirit.

John Bunyan, said it plainly in a poem called "The Shepherd Boy Sings"

He that is down need fear no fall,

He that is loe, no pride;

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be His guide.