

WHO GETS FIRST PLACE? Luke 14:7-14

Everybody wants to feel important.

Pharisees tried to establish their importance by being invited to all the right places; sitting in all the right seats.

If the right people came to their parties, it made them look good.

So they went after all the right people
to feel important and improve their self-esteem.

Filling our need to feel important with the world's temporary symbols of status and success won't last long and ultimately leads to frustration and failure.

NATURE OF PHARISAIC REJECTION 14:1-16:31

Several incidents involving Pharisees show the nature of their rejection.

REVELATION OF PHARISAIC ATTITUDE 14:1-24

An invitation to a Pharisee's house provides background.

THEY were watching HIM.

They're more interested in trapping Jesus,
than in discovering truth or helping the oppressed. 14:1-6

Their attempts to occupy first place show their real interest:

THEY WANT FIRST PLACE FOR THEMSELVES! 14:7-14

JESUS' MESSAGE TO THE INVITED GUESTS 14:7-11

HE's been watching THEM. 14:7 *When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable:*

They want the best seat for themselves.

NOT the best view,

BUT the highest position—each wants 1st place for himself!

Can you picture the scene?

*Everyone trying to be proper and religious,
while trying to slip into the seat of the highest honored guest!*

It reminds me of a number of popular sit-coms.

*Everyone acts like everything is fine. Big smiles, etc.,
while trying to slide into the best seat.*

Jesus uses a parable—but it's not a very well-disguised situation

—they have just been doing the same thing.

14:8-10

“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. 9 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. 10 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.

It's better to sit too low and have the host call you up

than to sit too high and have the host ask you to move down in front of everybody else.

You can hear the snickering!!

Being brought down (publicly) results in shame (humiliation)

Being moved up (publicly exalted) results in glory

Hendriksen: "The glory of taking the lowest place is that
from there the only direction one can go is up."

A British official was entertaining a haughty lady. By mistake his assistant asked her to sit on the left of her host rather than the place of honor at his right hand. She was offended and

indignant. Turning to the general, she said, "I suppose it's hard to get guests seated properly at the table." "Oh, not at all," he replied, "I have found that ***those who matter don't mind, and those who mind don't matter!***"

GOD'S PRINCIPLE: 14:11 *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Jesus' warning isn't directed at occasional offenders;
it views characteristic action

**The person who characteristically exalts self
will be humbled.**

**The person who characteristically humbles self
will be exalted**

This is a fundamental, universal, truth of Scripture.

Have you noticed how common this warning is in Scripture?

Three times the New Testament quotes Jesus saying this.

Luke 18:14 *"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Matt. 23:12 *For whoever exalts himself will be humbled,
and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

Ps. 138:6 *Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly,
but the proud he knows from afar.*

Matt. 18:4 *Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child
is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

James 4:6 *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:
"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

Both James and Peter quote from Septuagint version of Prov. 3:34

1 Pet. 5:5-6 *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

APPLICATION:

What's the relationship between action and attitude?

This isn't just a problem of actions.

It's a reflection of attitude as well.

Jesus isn't giving us a gimmick to earn self-promotion.

*Sitting down low, with a hidden goal of being called up,
only deals with the action*

What about attitude? Phil 2 – I should consider myself less important than others, so that I am pleased (and surprised!) when called up higher – not disappointed that I am not considered as great as I thought I was!

***"Humility is not thinking meanly of ourselves;
it is simply not thinking of ourselves at all."***

JESUS' MESSAGE FOR THE INVITING PHARISEE 14:12-14

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. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Don't use your guest list to earn personal repayments.

Wiersbe: Jesus knew the host invited people for one of two reasons:

- 1) to pay them back for having invited him;
- or 2) to put them under his debt,
so they would invite him to future feasts.

Such "hospitality" wasn't evidence of love and grace,
but of pride and selfishness.

Each one tries to outdo the other,
and then *hopes* to get *more* than they give!

**Rather than use their position to gain prestige and advantage,
true religious leaders serve those in need,
so that *God* can reward them.**

**If you go after man's repayment,
you miss God's repayment**

The world invites **the influential, insiders, power brokers**

– those who can "make it worth your while"

You invite them in order to get them to invite you

You treat them well, to see what you can get in return.

**That list of invitees includes: peers (friends),
brothers,**

relatives –family (others in your own clan

–**people who look like you** –the same social bracket)

and rich neighbors (hoping they'll return the favor!)

Going after that kind of guest list earns no merit in God's sight.

That's an attempt to get ahead, not to do good to others!

If we get that kind of repayment,
then we miss out on God's repayment.

**If you go after God's repayment, you invite different guests and you earn
a different kind of reward.**

If you want to get God's attention by doing good to others,
you invite people who can't repay the favor.

**Then you invite outsiders: the poor, crippled,
maimed, and the blind.**

You invite the "down and out" –people from a lower class than yourself.

You throw out class distinctions and prejudice
(whether racial or social!).

You won't get the world's applause
–but you'll get a reward worth having!

GOD'S PRINCIPLE:

INVITE PEOPLE WHO CAN'T PAY YOU BACK!

Then the repayment comes, not in social acceptance,
but being counted among the just (righteous) at the resurrection.

The Pharisees aren't interested in God's reward
–they want temporal power and privilege.

They're seeking more for themselves.

Looks like it's teaching **SALVATION BY WORKS –but it's not!**

It's really the opposite!

Inviting outsiders won't make us righteous;
 it only presents evidence that we are righteous.
 It's a description of what real righteousness looks like.
 Jesus addresses those who *think* they can make it by works.
 Their presupposition: God loves those who look like ME!
 Jesus wants them to see that they're wrong.
 He wants us to see our sin
 – to recognize that we aren't going to make it on our own.
 If the only way we get in is by of someone else's grace,
 then we have no basis to get proud and no right to be exclusive.
 Unless God lets in the undeserving, we're all on the outside!
 If we want mercy,
 we have to change our perspective and view people with mercy!
 If we judge on the basis of mercy, then we throw out class distinctions.
 We start reaching out to people who can never pay us back!

APPLICATION:

If we were to throw a party for the "poor, crippled, maimed, and blind" in our world, who would we invite?

How would we go about it?

What would the plan require?

EFCA resolution on racial discrimination:

- How do we feel about blacks? about hispanics?
- The problem is a long way away from us! But not for long!
- Do you want "that kind of people" around?

Whose attention are we after?

Which kind of repayment are we seeking?

Are we trying to climb the ladder of success to get ourselves ahead?

*Would we rather not be seen with people
 who might keep us from getting ahead?*

*Why not let God handle the promotions
 and stop trying to advance ourselves?*

Sammy Morris, Christian from Africa came to school in America. Although his path wasn't easy, his difficulties never deterred him. When he arrived at Taylor University, he was asked by the school's president about a room. Sammy replied, "If there's a room nobody wants, give it to me."

Jon–Came prepared to serve–do dishes, wash, iron,

No! He came to live in our family as a son–NOT a servant!

A young artist submitted work to be hung in a prestigious art exhibit, but the selection committee rejected it. One member, renowned landscape painter Joseph Turner, insisted they include the young man's work. The others denied his plea, saying there was no room. Turner quietly removed one of his own pictures, replacing it with that of the young artist.

During the American Revolution a man in civilian clothes rode past a group of soldiers repairing a barrier. Their leader was shouting instructions, but making no attempt to help them. Asked why by the rider, he retorted, "**Sir, I am a corporal!**"

The stranger apologized, dismounted, and proceeded to help the exhausted soldiers. The job done, he turned to the corporal and said, "Mr. Corporal, next time you have a job like this and not enough men, go to your commander-in-chief, and I will come help you again."

Walter Anderson in *Courage is a 3 Letter Word*: Hundreds of times I've looked into the eyes of a successful person and asked, **"When it is dark and you are alone, do you ever say to yourself, What will I do when they find out I'm me?"** I've never failed to make a friend with the question. And I've never failed to get a nod.

In *Dropping Your Guard*, Swindoll wrote, "I was thumbing through a periodical and happened on a picture of President Reagan in the Oval Office. He was behind his desk, signing documents...I noticed a small sign on his desk too small to read. It intrigued me. I found a magnifying glass and looked closer; the print was blurred... I had my secretary phone the White House." The sign on the President's desk said: *"There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn't mind who gets the credit."*

Fred Smith tells how his daughter and her husband befriended an ex-convict and the woman with whom he was living. Rick gave the man a job. Brenda spent time with the woman, bought things for her, and witnessed to her about Christ. Together they convinced the couple to get married. They even asked a minister to perform the ceremony and opened their home for it. A few days later, Rick found a note saying they were leaving town to get away from a hired assassin. Later, Mr. Smith asked his daughter how she felt about spending so much time, energy, and money on these people, only to have the relationship end so suddenly. Tears welled up in her eyes. "No matter where they are or how long they live," she said, "they'll always know that somebody cared."

"MAKE ME A SERVANT"