

*“And he put forth a parable to those that were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abashed; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*

This parable is only found in the gospel of Luke, which has the most parables. Jesus was provoked to delineate this parable because of what he experienced as a reaction to the self-aggrandisement of the society of his day and generation.

The idea that someone can never be in a position of higher status is not the issue of this parable, but the emphasis is that others need to recognise that someone is honourable and that they are the ones which grant that public appreciation. This is a reminder that we never act alone but that all we do is relative to others with whom we are required to interact. It is not good for man to be alone. Jesus rubbed shoulders with many different types of people some shunned by others who felt that such were beneath them, and morally inferior.

The idea that once you are honoured by the host you are then worshipped seems strange. How can we understand this form of language? Jesus was worshipped by others, not as God, but as a Godly person who manifested the Father in his behaviour and speech. The word in the original Greek is *Doxa*, which is also translated dignity, glory, honour and praise but only worship this once. Glory is the most common translation, used 144 times. The usual word for worship is either *latreuo* or *proskuneo*. Both of which are variously used in conjunction with the worship of God, Himself.

This is an echo of Proverbs 25v6,7 *“Put not forth thyself in the presence of the King and stand not in the place of great men: For better it is that it be said to thee, come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen”*. Jesus would have read and reread this passage and was able to utilise its message in the circumstances which he encountered in Judea in the first century. The Proverbs was written by a King and Jesus as King can speak with authority about such matters. The Holy Spirit has preserved this parable for future consideration, accurately recording the words of the master.

Jesus uses the setting of a wedding. He attended the weddings of others as is recorded in John 2v1, but it is never recorded that he attended a funeral, *“let the dead bury the dead”*. Weddings were a celebration of life and the divine commission to fill the earth not just with people but with godly people. Like the prophet Jeremiah Jesus never married himself, as he was married to the Ecclesia, the living manifestation of God in a multitude even if only a few in certain eras, but always more than being in isolation.

In a building there would be many rooms. It was rare for a large, roofed space to be available to the common people so that all could be together. The architecture at that

time was limited to large public buildings where the ability to congregate together was thereby limited. This set practical limits to the size of an Ecclesia. Synagogues were built for public worship outside of the Temple itself, but these were not available to the early Ecclesias as the Jews zealously guarded their spiritual integrity. Synagogues were not the places where weddings were conducted. The idea of a wedding as a religious not a community activity is more recent and follows the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church which regards marriage as a religious sacrament, something Jesus never did.

The need to spread out the wedding celebrations between different rooms, is a practical reality and speaks of the everyday application in what Jesus is saying, It is not some grandiose theory, or highbrow principle but the living demonstration of practical faith in circumstances that are not invented. Highest and lowest rooms are not literally speaking of the height of the rooms although the status of being lifted up above the others has an appeal. In some places the higher rooms would be awkward to get to and perhaps more precarious in structure and stability. There is rather an appeal to status, the highest status room versus the lowest status room. That the person does not merely move down one place and so then must everyone else move one place lower, is a practical reality which would not happen in a real outworking.

That the person who is asked to move has assumed a high status is clear. That he should instead demote himself in his own eyes, is the necessary consideration, and place himself first in the lowest room. There is an implicit requirement then for the host to assess the status of his guests on an ongoing basis. This is something we perhaps refrain from doing in some cultures but is more active in other cultures. However, the truth of this parable requires this to be the standard approach.

Jesus is the ultimate example of this humility. He was a King yet rarely used that to his personal advantage. Instead, he lived among the common people seeking out any minds which were likewise humble enough to be touched by the power of the Word rather than seeking the popularity of this present evil world. If we have a high opinion of ourselves, then we should reflect upon what basis do we make such a judgment? Do we accept the views of others and seek their approval. This is something that we need to monitor as we have to find that balance between, convincing ourselves of our status despite the opinions of the world, and responding to the input of others who have a view on our own situation.

Jesus subsequently goes on to address the person who had bidden him attend, not those who were bidden, as he did for the actual parable. He does not restrict the commandment to a marriage but "*when thou makest a dinner or supper*". We are not good at putting this into practice. It implies that we should always include the poor the maimed the lame and the blind, those less fortunate than ourselves, however we usually restrict our invitations to friends, brethren kinsmen and rich neighbours as Jesus warns is not acceptable. This is the type of hard-hitting comment which we quickly pass over and seek to avoid. How we live our lives should be influenced by what Jesus taught, and we need to be more rigorous in its application.