

Bible Class

The parable of the Marriage Supper

Luke 14:7-11

18th September 25



Passage for Consideration:

And he put forth a parable to those which were invited, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When you are invited by anyone to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than you be invited by him; and he that invited you, come and say to you Give

this man place; and you begin with shame to take the lowest room.

But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that invited you comes, he may say unto you, Friend, go up higher: then shalt you have worship in the presence of them that sit at the meal with you. For whosoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.

Jesus had already explained to his disciples and those he met with along the way, what he thought of the Pharisees in Luke 11:43: *Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.* The Pharisees were a prominent Jewish religious and political group in the time of Jesus up to AD70. The term Pharisee is believed to have come from the

Hebrew word *perushim*, which means separated ones, a name they took to themselves, as they regarded themselves separate from the rest of society, considering themselves holy, and special, as they kept to strict laws and man made rituals, designed to make them feel pure, but at the same time, they behaved in ways which were unkind and cruel. Later Luke records in chapter 20:46,47: *Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater condemnation.* Here Jesus explains the biggest problem with them. All their rituals and outward appearance was for show. What they looked like in front of other people really mattered to them. How they appeared to God was not important to them. Jesus however, being given the Holy Spirit, was able to clearly read their minds, and thoughts, as well as astutely see by their behaviour what hypocrites they were. So in 11:39,40 we can read: *And the Lord said unto him, Now do you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. You fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?*

So these Pharisees were renowned for getting invites to feasts, wedding parties and so on, as it gave them great opportunity to parade around, being held in admiration and esteem by men, as they basked in the attention, and revelled in the respect that was given to them. They saw themselves as so important, that they assumed at any time they were invited to someone's house, or a gathering, or to a synagogue, a Jewish hall for collective worship, that they would be given the top seats, the most nice-looking chairs in the most prominent position in the room. It didn't occur to these type of people that anyone else was deserving to sit there. It was because it is how they saw themselves in society. They were the most important, therefore it followed that always they should have the best.

This kind of blinkered, and even blind behaviour is sometimes quite annoying when we see it in other people. Why do they assume that they should just take the best for themselves, why do they not check someone else is not more deserving first? The problem is, that human nature is such that we cannot really see this tendency in ourselves. But the truth is, without realising it, we can all be like it. It can exhibit itself in characteristics such as stubbornness, obstinacy, scathing and scoffing retorts, showing favouritism and so on.

We may laugh at the fat old Pharisee grabbing the best seats, but the same self promotion is in everyone of us.

It was not just a problem in Jewish society, but it was a problem in the ecclesia - 3 John 1:9: *I wrote unto the ecclesia: but Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence among them, received us not.*

Jesus being aware of this tendency was spot on, so well tuned in to the natural pride of men and women used words in his speech, which are similar to the writings of the Proverbs:

Proverbs 25:6-7: *Put not forth yourself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: For better it is that it be said unto you, Come up here; than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince whom your eyes have seen.*

Enjoying pride for a short while as you sweep past all the other guests and making your way to the comfiest and best chairs in the room might be nice, but how acute the longer feeling of embarrassment being shown the lowest seats! This silly and pompous behaviour is highlighted several times in the Bible.

Saul started off well, - 1 Samuel 15:17: *And Samuel said, When you were little in your own sight, were you not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed you king over Israel? But then he started to believe that he was king because he was better than everyone else, and deserved to throw his weight around, and*

deserved special treatment everywhere he went! He was soon cut down to size, and his shame was so bad, he fell on his own sword.

Another example was the egotistic and megalomaniac Nebuchadnezzar strolling around his estates, with all his minions in tow behind him bowing and scraping to his every word. *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?* Ooh he felt so good clasping his hands together, beaming with self congratulation! When a voice was heard *O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make you to eat grass as oxen, and seven years shall pass until you know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.* (Daniel 4)

From emperor to bullock! It is difficult to think of a bigger fall than that! How utterly humbling! Yet somehow that man learned his lesson, one so powerful and useful, it has been preserved for thousands and years, and we are still talking about it!

But maybe there is one even more extreme example – Haman, a pompous prince in Persia. Haman could not imagine anyone in the whole Kingdom, that was loved by the emperor more than he. He had such a high opinion of himself, that he felt invincible! (see Esther 6:6-12) He ordered the very best tribute to be paid to the man to be selected to be honoured before all the people, fully expecting it to be applied to himself. In the event, he wasn't chosen, instead it was his worst enemy the Jew Mordechai. He was choked with rage, bitterness and humiliation. He couldn't bear the shame! It is so extreme that the text is almost comical to read! Yet it is a sad indictment of the depths, the heights that human pride can reach. Ultimately Haman fell from being the king's favourite to just a corpse

dangling on a piece of rope. He certainly went up in the world, but the way he expected.

Back to the throne loving Pharisees, Jesus knew that they were a living caricature, an extreme version of what human nature can become, and yet be so unaware of such foolishness.

It is then a lesson of the parable the Jewish nation assumed its rightful place as being the favoured nation, and disdained the Gentiles as dogs, once they had the chief seats – once even in fellowship with God. But the dogs who licked the crumbs from the Masters table, were more appreciative of the feast than they.

So learning from this: *Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.* (Proverbs 16:18) The Apostle advises in Philippians 2:3: *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

And finally we finish these remarks with: Isaiah 57:15: *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

We are not worthy of the least of the mercies of God, there is no place for pride in the spiritual man.

Brother Terry