

TAKE A BACK SEAT

Parable 26: Leaven

Lk 14:7-15

I. ILLUSTRATION

- WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE NEXT YEAR?
- WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL GOALS AND AMBITIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR?
- GOALS—AMBITION—ACHIEVEMENT—ARE NOT BAD IN THEMSELVES
- **Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for? Robert Browning**
- BRITAIN ACKNOWLEDGES ACHIEVEMENT—QUEEN'S NEW YEAR'S HONORS LIST
 - 2020 New Year Honors List
 - 1097 announced
 - Sir Elton John [Reginald White]—highest rank—Companion of Honor—65 members
 - Olivia Newton John—Dame Commander
 - Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
 - Established—4 June 1917 by George V—for achievement in arts, science, public service
 - Five classes—top two knights
 - Knight/Dame Grand Cross—GBE—300
 - Knight/Dame Commander—KBE or DBE—845
Long-term national contribution—significant/inspirational
 - CBE—Commander Order of BE—8960
Prominent/lesser role national level—or leading role regional level
 - OBE—Officer Order of BE
Major role in local activities—known nationally
 - MBE—Member Order of BE
Outstanding service to one's community
 - Focus is on **achievement** and **service**

II. BACKGROUND

1. JESUS WAS HEADED TO JERUSALEM
 - **Lk 9:51**—set His face towards Jerusalem
 - **Lk 13:22**—passing from one city and village to another—teaching along the way
2. JESUS' PREVIOUS CONFRONTATIONS WITH PHARISEES—BECAUSE HE
 - **Forgave** sin—they accused Him of blasphemy
 - **Cast** out demons—they accused Him of being possessed by Beelzebub

- o **Did not wash** ceremonially before eating
 - o **Healed** on the Sabbath
 - o **Ate** with tax collectors and sinners
3. THEY PLOTTED AGAINST HIM
- 11:53-54**—*When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say.*
4. YET JESUS STILL ATE WITH PHARISEES TOO
- 7:36**—woman anointed Him—followed by Parable of Two Debtors
- 11:37**—did not wash before eating—He pronounced judgment on Pharisees and Scribes
- 14:1**—the background for today’s parable
5. BACKGROUND TEXT
- 1** *It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely.* **2** *And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy.* **3** *And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”* **4** *But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him and sent him away.* **5** *And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?”* **6** *And they could make no reply to this.*
6. ANOTHER TEACHING MOMENT
- a. Jesus used this occasion to confront two sets of wrongful attitudes
 - Proud and selfish ambition—**vv7-11**
 - Cliquish and superficial values—**vv12-15**
 - b. These two passages may seem disconnected
 - But they are closely inter-related—and caused by one common problem

III. PROUD AND SELFISH AMBITION

A. BIBLICAL TEXT—Lk 14:7-11

7 *And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them,* **8** *“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him,* **9** *and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.* **10** *But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at*

the table with you. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

B. CONTEXT

1. A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON **Pr 25:6-7**

Pr 25:6-7—*Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of great men; for it is better that it be said to you, “Come up here,” than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.*

2. THEIR PROUD AMBITION—SUCH A PROBLEM—HE ADDRESSED IT TWICE MORE

Lk 11:43—*Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the marketplaces.*

Lk 20:46—*Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the marketplaces, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets.*

C. EXPLANATION

1. UNSEEMLY BEHAVIOR—**v7**

- Imagine the unsightly, undignified scramble for seats!
- Jesus was observing—not a part of it—waiting for the host to tell Him where to sit

2. PLACE OF HONOR—**v8**

- They reclined on three-person couches—*triclinium*
- The most important couch was front and center
- Others arranged by importance from head couch outward
- Most honored place at each couch—after center—was left side
 - They reclined on left and ate with right hand
 - Left side gave unobstructed view forward
 - On right side they had to recline backward and look over shoulder

3. WHY TAKE THE LAST PLACE?—**v9**

- By the time one was demoted from a chief place—all next best places were filled
- Avoid further humiliation in case another latecomer might bump him again

4. HUMILITY BRINGS EARTHLY REWARDS—**v10**

- Everyone dislikes the presumptuous or arrogant—but humility is likeable and honorable
- It gives host chance to be gracious—not judgmental—and everyone likes to be gracious
- You have nothing to lose at the bottom—but everything to gain

5. JESUS' PERSPECTIVE—**v11**

- a. At first Jesus put himself in the place of Pharisees—who wanted the best places

- His advice = if you want recognition and honor—humility is how to get it
- But this was not Jesus’ ultimate point—not earthly rank and reward
- b. **Verse 11** takes this from worldly instruction—to a parable with a principle
- c. Consider the eternal perspective
 - The honor game is a snare that will bring you down
 - True humility has a godly reward in itself
- d. This parallels **Pr 29:23**

Pr 29:23—A man’s pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.
- e. It is illustrated by another parable—Pharisee and Publican

Lk 18:14—I tell you this tax-collector went to his house justified rather than the Pharisee; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

6. JESUS PRACTICED WHAT HE PREACHED

- a. Jesus humbled Himself—Philippian hymn
- b. He took a second seat to the Father
 - **BF&M—Article 1**—can be misleading

All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.
 - Only if our focus on Jesus glorifies the ultimate object of worship—His Father
- c. He takes a back seat even today
 - Allowing us to be visible face/hands of ministry—empowered by the Holy Spirit
 - Enabling us to even greater things

Jn 14:12—Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do.

7. THE IRONY—OF VERSE 11

- a. If one hypocritically takes a lower place in order to be exalted—he will be disappointed
 - God hates false humility as much as arrogant pride
- b. If one just *acts* like a servant leader *in order* to become the boss of others
 - If—we take back seat *in order* to move up—but don’t get promoted
 - Then —we feel cheated—and resentment sets in
- c. The Lord knows our heart and true motives
 - The falsely humble proud heart—will be truly humbled in the long-run

8. GOD’S VIEWPOINT

- Is described exactly the same way by James and Peter
- They both quote **Pr 3:34**

Jas 4:6 and I Pe 5:5—*God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

TRANSITION

Then Jesus tackles the problem that makes this proud ambition acceptable to them
They have institutionalized these attitudes into a communal clique with worldly values
They not only encourage proud-heartedness and self-righteousness among themselves
They care *only* for themselves—and how they can use one another for their own benefit

IV. CLIQUISH AND SUPERFICIAL VALUES

A. BIBLICAL TEXT—Lk 14:12-15

12 *And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. 13 But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” 15 When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”*

B. EXPLANATION

1. PHARISEES WERE ‘SEPARATISTS’

- Keeping apart from the unclean, infirmed, and disabled—to stay ‘holy’
- They were in their conditions as a result of sin—their parents’ or their own
- Part of a religious establishment of elitists—who rejected and abused the poor and needy
- Irony—a man with dropsy was at the dinner in the Pharisee’s house

2. JESUS’ CRITICISM

- a. He chided them for emphasizing external perfection—and ignoring inner holiness

Lk 11:39—*Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.*

- b. He pronounced judgment on those who did not take care of the down and out

Mt 25:45—*In as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.*

3. HIS OWN MINISTRY FOCUSED ON RECLAIMING THE DOWN AND OUT

Lk 4:18—*to preach the gospel to the poor . . . to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed*

4. HIS POINT

- Stop your endless cycle of self-congratulation—among your privileged friends
- Stop constantly trying to ‘keep up with the Joneses’—and their worldly values

- Reach out and help those unlike yourselves—who *really* need your help
5. JESUS DID NOT MEAN—REJECT YOUR FRIENDS
- *Do not invite your friends . . . v12*
 - Present active imperative = *Do not keep on inviting*
 - Don't make this a habitual and exclusive practice
6. JESUS DID NOT MEAN—ASSOCIATE ONLY WITH THE POOR
- *Invite the poor . . . v13*
 - Present active imperative = *Make it a habit to invite them*
 - Not just once—as a token gesture of piety
 - But also—not an exclusive and absolute command that excludes others
7. JESUS MEANT—THE GOSPEL IS NOT ABOUT
- Worldly prosperity—but caring for and sharing with others
 - Closing ranks with your own kind—but sharing with others different
 - *Quid pro quo*—proportional give and take—but about sacrificial giving
 - Keeping score—and paying back debts—but acknowledging God's grace
 - We can never pay God back for what He has done for us
 - Receiving and being served—but giving and serving others
 - Superficial worldly values—but eternal matters

V. THE COMMON DENOMINATOR—APPLICATION

1. DO NOT LIVE BY SUPERFICIAL VALUES OF THIS WORLD

- Not earthly honor and recognition
- Not earthly cliques and riches
- But the eternal things—of the Kingdom of God

2. STAY FOCUSED ON GOD AND WHAT PLEASES HIM

- We should have his **ambition**—*to be pleasing to Him*—**II Cor 5:9**
- Our greatest **achievement** should be—to glorify God—not elevate self
- Our greatest **honor** is—to boast in the Lord—**I Cor 1:31**

Jer 9:23—*Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, declares the Lord.*

VI. INVITATION

TAKE MY LIFE, AND LET IT BE CONSECRATED

**Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise.**

**Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.**

**Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee.**

**Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose.**

**Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.**

**Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.**