

Pentecost 12 8/31/25  
Luke 14:1-14 17C

**“FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLLED, AND HE WHO HUMBLLES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED.”**

Ponce de León sailed for years, risking his reputation and his life on a legend whispered by natives: a fountain whose waters promised eternal youth. Coronado marched his expedition hundreds of miles through a harsh and unfamiliar land, searching for the fabled Seven Cities of Gold. Both men pursued a glittering prize that turned out to be nothing but a mirage. Ponce de León never found the fountain of youth, and the "golden cities" Coronado discovered were just simple mud pueblos.

Well, I suppose you could argue, Ponce de Leon was going to use that fountain to cure people of arthritis and male pattern baldness and Coronado was going to use that gold for the betterment of mankind. Well, ok. But, I think it's truer to say that were all about exalting themselves. That, My Friends, is exactly the opposite of what Jesus is teaching us this day. Listen to His words, *“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”*.

In our lesson, Jesus teaches us of trying to exalt ourselves and the downfall that it inevitably brings. In our lesson, Jesus teaches us that the God-pleasing attitude of the heart is humility.

I. We love to compare ourselves to our neighbor, because we can look so good in our own eyes, when we see our neighbor's faults.

Look at the Pharisees in our lesson. The Pharisees were the leaders of the Jewish religion. We would think that if any group would welcome God's Son with open arms, it would have been the leaders of God's children. But, no. The reason for that is clear. Jesus came to save us

from sin, death, and hell because we could not save ourselves. But, the Pharisees refused to see their sin. They believed they needed no Savior to save them, because they were such good people, far better than anyone else, that God was going to reward them with eternal life in heaven. And do we see that in our lesson.

When they arrived at the home for the feast after the synagogue services, they showed their lack of humility. Our lesson tells us that they were "choosing for themselves" the places of honor at the table. Each and everyone of them thought himself better than even his fellow Pharisees!

They exalted themselves before their fellow Pharisees and before God. They based their standing before their fellow Pharisees and before God on their works. For this earthly life and for eternity, they thought they would be rewarded for what they had done. They sought not to glorify God, but their own glory.

So, Jesus taught them:

*"When you are invited by someone to a wedding fest, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to his person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place."*

We hear those words and think, "You go, Jesus! You put those Pharisees in their place!" But, if Jesus came to your house, what would He find? Anger and continually keeping a record of wrongs? Yelling, screaming at one another? Name calling, words that hurt? Would he find you too busy to be in the Word and prayer, but having plenty of time for recreation, TV, the computer? And what would He find on your computer? Pornography? Gossip? Slander? Love of money and stuff money can buy? Would He find love and humility, or bitterness and selfishness?

II. Do you know who was all about humility? Jesus. The Good News of the Christian faith is that Jesus humbled Himself for us and for our salvation. The Apostle St. Paul writes,

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Ph 2:5-8).*

Jesus is very God of very God, yet He humbled Himself to be born of Virgin mother and become a man and dwell among us. He endured poverty, contempt, rejection; ultimately, great agony and death on the cross. This He did for us, so that we would be forgiven and have a home eternal in the heavens.

Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father's will. And, we remember that God has demanded us to perfectly follow His will. But, when we look at how God wants us to live our lives and how we really do live our lives, we see that we have not obeyed the Father's will. When we examine our lives in the mirror of God's law, we see that we daily sin so much and deserve nothing but punishment from God.

In repentance and faith, we come to God as beggars. We cannot exalt ourselves, trying to claim the highest place in heaven because of who we are or what we have done. Like the repentant tax collector, we cannot lift our eyes to heaven, but can only cry, "*God, be merciful to me, a sinner*" (Lk 18:13)! Knowing God, we come in humility before God like the Prodigal Son trusting not in ourselves but in His mercy, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you*" (Lk 15:18). Like the Syrophoenician woman, we come begging for even the smallest of the crumbs of God's

grace.

The GOOD NEWS of the Christian faith is this: God exalts us in Christ Jesus.

Just as God raised His Son from death, so, in the new birth of our baptism, He raises us from the death of sin to new life in Jesus. As the Son obeyed the Father's will and served us, so living in Christ, we strive to obey the Father's will and serve our neighbor.

Luther would use this illustration. To teach the truth that we are all beggars before God, he would say that when we come to worship, we come with an **EMPTY BAG**. There is nothing in there, because in us, apart from Jesus, no good thing dwells. So in worship, God gives us good gifts. He fills your empty bag with **forgiveness**, so that you can go and give it to your neighbor who has sinned against you. He fills your bag with **love**, so you can give it to someone who has hurt you, someone who just rubs you the wrong way. God fills your bag with **patience** and **gentleness**, so that you can give them to your child, or your ailing spouse. He gives you goodness and kindness to your neighbor who needs a ride, or someone just having a bad day.

Our Epistle reading encourages us, *Let brotherly love continue (He 13:1)*. And, that begins with a heart of humility. Paul writes, *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves (Phi 2:3)*. In Christ, as Christ to our neighbor, we act in humility to others, just as Christ acted in humility towards us.