

Luke 14:7-11; Phil. 2: 1-11; Invited, Yet Humble I. The Recipients of the Parable II. The Attitude of the Invited III. The Actions of the Invited

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this morning we return to the gospel of Luke where we left off- in ch. 14. Jesus has been speaking about the Kingdom of God- showing how this Kingdom is not like our earthly kingdoms. It is a Kingdom of mercy and grace that grows over time- and the most unlikely people will be welcomed in while the great ones of this world will be left outside. Jesus has set His face towards Jerusalem- and the persecution is starting to ratchet up. In ch. 14 Jesus carries this theme of the Kingdom. While today we see the attitude of those who are invited to the wedding feast- next week we find the attitude of those who host a wedding feast concerning those to invites. Today in v. 7-11 we find ourselves in the mist of a wedding feast. Now most wedding I have been to include some form of assigned table or a seating chart. You find your name on a list- and note which table you will be sitting at. It is quite instructive as you can see in this ordering- who the married couple considers to be important. Sometimes their family ranks high- other times their friends. Who does the host think is important- to be close to the head table? Children, it is kind of like your first day of Kindergarten. You find the desk with your name on it. You sit where your teacher tells you. Well, today Jesus uses the selection of seats to teach us the proper attitude of those who are invited.

I. The Recipients of the Parable

Our text begins in v. 7 where Jesus focuses us on this question- who is this parable spoken and applied to? Not only the initial recipients- but who did Jesus have in mind when He spoke these words. He starts by saying- this parable is for those who were invited. The word in the Greek is Kekelemos- meaning those who had been called- those receiving the invitation to come. The beckoned ones who are the intended recipients of the invite and this parable. If we look back at 14:1, we find that our context points to a dinner being hosted by a rich, powerful and influential Pharisee. Now we know how these Pharisees like to feel important- and having the master Jesus invited to their home was a definite boost in their ego for

these religious rulers. They liked the seats of honor in the Synagogue- to be seen and heard by others. So at the first level, this parable is told to those who were invited by this Pharisee to have a Sabbath meal at his house- which includes both Jesus disciples and other Pharisees who were watching Jesus. But this is not the only recipients Jesus had in mind. As He continues in v. 8- when you are invited to a wedding feast by someone- and again in v. 9- the person who invited you- and again in v. 10- when you are invited. Why this continual focus on the invite- this being called and beckoned? We will see the same thing next week in the following verses. There is a focus on this invitation aspect. Remember that in this context Jesus has been teaching about the Kingdom of God- and now Jesus is speaking about a marriage or wedding feast. Jesus is using his current situation- the context of the Pharisee's house- to teach not only his disciples but to all who will be invited to the wedding feast. And this is a very large and diverse group as we will see next week! Whoever has received an invite- wherever or whenever you are- to the ones being called and gathered together for a wedding feast- the marriage supper of the Lamb- this is the focus of this parable. To say this another way- this parable is being spoken to you- about you! All are invited to this feast- but even in the church we can size each other up! Even here, we can push and shove trying to get the honor and glory below. We can think of how deserving we are to be invited- how less deserving other people are of this invite. When we think about it- we should all be honored that we have been invited at all! We should be so thankful that we have heard and received the summons- because there are about 2 billion people who have little or no contact with the church and have never heard the gospel call! When so many have not yet heard the invite- when you know that you do not deserve to come- then we can start to understand the point Jesus is making here! Any honor to be found in this text is honor that the host gives- those invited have no merit on their own! Consider the honor in the invite! You have been called! Note that while these Pharisees are watching Jesus in v. 1- Jesus is watching them and considered their actions as well in v. 7.

II. The Attitude of the Invited

This truth brings us to our second point- the attitude of those who are invited! When we think we deserve to come- when we look down on others who are here- we miss the whole point! The call- the invite is all of grace! The necessary attitude of those invited to a feast is not- well of course I was invited. Rather- Wow- I am invited too! Jesus uses the wedding feast parable to point to the necessary condition and attitude of a Christian- and that is one of humility. Jesus is calling us all to repent of our pride- that we might each humble ourselves before the Lord! It is only those who know how undeserving they how- how much they need such a great Savior as Jesus is- who will understand what grace and mercy truly are! Humility is defined as a proper assessment of yourself in the presence of greatness! If the greatness of the host is the greatness of God- then all who are invited will necessarily be both surprised, humble and grateful! In Mt. 23- as a part of the woes spoken to the Pharisees- Jesus said- whoever exalts himself will be humbled- and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Jesus is specifically speaking about the one who humbles himself before the Lord- who acknowledges his own sin and misery- and need for a savior! Pride is repugnant- in fact pride is the chief sin that bars people from heaven! Because pride boasts in the self- our own worth and ability! Listen to the way that Jesus puts it in v. 11- Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. If you make yourself high- lofty- with an extended neck and uplifted nose- you will be reduced, abased and brought low- humbled to the dust! On the other hand, if you are lowly- meek and modest- of a simple pure heart – then you will be lifted up- exalted! Humility is a modest view of your own ability. To view yourself lowly- while others are seen as deserving of honor. The same words are applied in the reverse order- one necessarily leads to the other. Remember that this is the work of the Lord here. Blessed are the meek- for they will be exalted- they shall inherit the earth- theirs is the kingdom of heaven! It is the host of the house in v. 9- the one who does the inviting- the master of ceremonies that will bring one down and raise the other up! It is He who gives grace to the humble, but also opposes the proud as I Peter 5 says. Or as Prov. 3 puts it- towards the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble He gives favor. As I said, humility is the mark of every Christian. A proper regard-

understanding of our own ability in the presence of true greatness! How can those who receive free, undeserved grace turn around and boast- or be proud and rude towards others? When we remember who we are – when we consider our ability in the proper light- then we are opened up to faithful service! We need to remember Jesus- consider the author of our salvation- having the mind of Christ as Phil. 2 puts it. Count other more significant than yourselves- because Jesus did this for you! It was He- the most important One- who came in the form of a servant- to be humbled even to the point of death- for the sake of our salvation! If you consider Jesus- the humble savior; if you trust in this suffering servant- then you will soon find His Spirit enabling you to follow in His footsteps! Whoever exalts himself in this life will be humbled when the Lord returns, but for those who walk in true humility today- these will be exalted.

III. The Actions of the Invited

So what does humility look like? Well, building upon a humble faith that trusts in Christ and rejoices in the invite to the feast- a humble heart will make itself known in what we do. If you rely on good works and have pride in your own morality and righteousness, you will be rude and self-seeking in your attitude towards others. If you view yourself as an unprofitable servant, you will find it easier to let others go first. In our present-day situation- it could look like this. Let's say that there are 3 reserved parking spaces under the carport. Who would presume they should park there? This parking position of honor- would the elders- or the pastor take that place? Well, this parable speaks of letting others take the seat of honor- while you go and sit in lower place. Remember that the table for fellowship was an upside-down U shape- while the host and special guest sat at the top- while everyone else had to sit at the sides. How close could you sit to the top- to the host- was determined by the host normally. So what Jesus is saying here is this- do not sit up next to the top- but rather let others go first. Kids, do you know why your dad opens the door for your mom and lets her into church first? Because it is a sign of honor for your mom! To let her go first! But Jesus is saying this should be the normal actions of all of those invited. The entire church should be a place of humble service! Of self-denying actions. Like Jesus did and said in John 13-

washing his disciples' feet! Give up the best seats- v. 8- do not think to exalt yourself- rather take the lowly seat! Be willing to do the lowly task- to get your hands dirty! Far too often we have an exalted- an inflated view of ourselves. Washing feet- waiting on tables- serving on that committee! There is no glory and no recognition in that! And if someone gets something that I think I deserve- well I will pout and complain about that! Children, have you ever complained when your brother got more ice-cream than you did? When your sister got a bigger piece of chocolate than you? When someone won a prize that you were working for- or got recognition that you wanted! Well, your parents are tempted to do the same thing! I should have got that promotion; I should be recognized at work. I did all that work and my boss did not thank me! And how do we seek recognition in the church? How does pride hinder our service here? Well, it can be very subtle. From applying sermons to everyone else- to an unwillingness to forgive others. Pride is really the idolization of the self. Pride says- look at me! It is pride that keeps us from loving others as we should. Pride makes us indifferent towards others- uncaring as we think we deserve better than them. It is pride that stops us from being amazed by grace- from marveling at the fact that others too have been invited to the feast! Rather let us seek humility- to love, think of and serve others first. Following after Christ who looked first to our interests when He came to this earth.

To conclude, pride is nothing new. It led to the fall of Satan and the fall of our first parents. Pride is not only a relationship killer; it is a spirituality killer! Jesus' own disciples would argue, who is going to be the greatest? Who will sit at your right and left side? But Jesus said- I came to serve! So you should seek to humbly serve one another! Children, is there someone in your class that you would never talk to- and never play with? Why not? Parents, is there someone in our church that you would never talk to and associate with? Is it pride that hinders you? Jesus uses the selection of seats to teach us the proper attitude of those who are invited. The attitude required is humility towards one another- as we rejoice in the privilege of being invited by the host to celebrate the feast!