

14 On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

⁷When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. ⁸“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; ⁹and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” ¹²He said also 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, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Don't toot your own horn.

I can't remember the last time I heard that said – maybe some of you have never heard it said – but somewhere in 50's and early 60's I think it was a common phrase. Don't brag – don't tell others of your accomplishments – don't promote yourself. Don't toot your own horn.

Times have changed. Humility is out – self-promotion is in. Let them know what you are doing if you want to get ahead. Make sure you get credit and not the other guy. If you don't watch out for yourself no one else will. Why some are even ready to take credit when you are the one who did all the work! Anything to get ahead.

At the dinner party that day, Jesus was noticing how the guests were choosing the places of honor. Jesus gave them this advice: “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the

lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, Friend, move up higher; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you.

Now that is what Jesus said – it kind of fits with the “Don’t toot your own horn advice.” But just think how confident you would have to be of your host’s opinion of you to do what Jesus suggests. I can see it now – I take the lowest seat and the host never notices. I sit in the lowest seat all night. All the other guests begin to think I am sitting exactly where I belong. And the next time there is a party with assigned seats I find that my placement is exactly where I had put myself – in the lowest place.

How many of you tell that story. You did not promote yourself at work and another who contributed far less to the company was chosen for promotion over you.

At a party you listened to others telling about their lives and asked them questions and no one ever showed any interest in you.

On the sports team you told the coach that you would sit down for a while so another could play and the coach forgot about you altogether.

Jesus may think that the host will say, “Friend, move up higher,” But when did that ever happen to anyone but the most important people? Little people, like me, like some of you, are just forgotten. Bad advice, Jesus. Bad advice.

Jesus would be finding out just how bad that advice is himself before long. Before the high priest, before Herod and Pilate he did not defend himself and where did it get him? Put on the cross. No one on earth came to his defense, no one called him Friend then. No one gave him a place of honor but his was the place of greatest shame.

But Jesus trusted just how important he was to his Father. Jesus trusted that when he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross that God would not forget him. In the letter to the Philippians Paul tells us just how right Jesus was in this hope, declaring that because of Jesus’ obedience God has highly

exalted him and gave him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. From lowest humiliation to highest exaltation – that is Jesus story. Jesus was right after all. He said, “For all who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” Jesus is the living proof.

But that was Jesus and I am I and you are you. He is the Son of God, but what about me, what about you? Do you have any idea just how important you are to God? Do you have any idea how much God listens to hear your thoughts, your hopes, your requests? Do you have any idea how much God is watching over you and seeking to guide you and help you? Do you have any idea how much God loves you? Will God forget you in the lowliness of death? Never – God will exalt you to eternal life. All of Jesus’ living and his dying and his rising were for you. You will never be forgotten.

Every day Jesus wants you to live in that confidence. Jesus saw the guests that day living before the judgements of one another – concerned how they would be seen in comparison to one another and he wanted so much more for them and for you. Not that we would let the judgements of others lift us or defeat us but that our lives would be lived before the judgement of God. Lived in the mercy of God. Lived in the marvelous grace of God. Jesus wants your life to be lived in a deep confidence in God. In faith in God.

That is what Jesus wanted for the host that day as well. Don’t invite your friends and family, rich neighbors who will repay you but invite those who need a meal,

poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. Jesus wanted him to see that he could invest himself in those who most needed some help – Jesus wanted him to know that God would be pleased with that. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous, Jesus told him.

The poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind – these are not always easy to help, not always grateful. A blind person can complain about what is served for supper as much as a thirteen year old son or daughter can. The

poor can show bad judgement as often as an elderly parent might. But God is pleased when the most vulnerable in our society are being watched out for by you and me.

Today after worship you have the opportunity to talk to some of the people who help us watch out for the most vulnerable. Some of the agencies we support in their helping the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind will have representatives here to talk with you and to explain their work to you. Take an hour to hear their stories. You will be glad you did and God will be glad you did.

Can you count on God? You bet. Even when the coach fails you, or the boss passes over you, or others think little of you hold your head high – you are an honored friend of the only host who matters, the Lord God creator of heaven and earth. And when you help them, the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind know just how honored by God they are as well.