

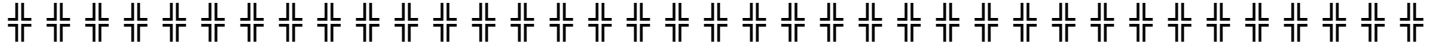
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church (Columbus, OH)

Trinity 17

October 4th, 2020

Gospel – Luke 14:7-11 (Places of Honor)

By Pastor Hromowyk



In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. We hear these words of Jesus again from our Gospel reading, Luke 14:11, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” So far the Word of the Lord.

The Gospel lesson and the overall theme of the day is a warning against pride. When pride manifests itself in a sinful way, it is always a sin against the 1st Commandment. Sinful pride exalts oneself, putting oneself in the place of honor. Jesus warns against this in our Gospel reading and Solomon warns against this in our Old Testament reading from Proverbs.

Jesus’ warning against pride is quite obvious in the second half of our Gospel. Jesus very explicitly tells a parable to that end. But the first part, what happens in the conversation between Jesus and the lawyers and Pharisees, sets the stage for the Parable. The issue of pride there might not be so apparent.

An error we often make is assuming that Jesus and the Jewish leaders were always at odds with each other. But it is very obvious in our text that this was not always the case. Jesus had dinner with them on a certain Sabbath (Lk 14:1). Jesus had demonstrated He had authority in numerous instances, and had impressed the teachers of the Temple with his “understanding and his answers” even as a twelve-year old (Lk 12:47). It shouldn’t surprise us that these men were “watching him carefully” as v. 1 in our reading today points out. And it should be made clear that this word doesn’t necessarily imply a suspicious eye, but instead is just as broad as it is in English: they were intently observing Him trying to figure Him out. For recall just before our text today which begins Chapter 14, toward the end of Chapter 13, we read, “At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, ‘Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you’” (Lk 13:31). We can speculate until Christ returns what the Pharisees motives were, but for them there’s *uncertainty at best* surrounding the person of Jesus at this point in Jesus’ life.

In v. 2, we get this important word, “Behold”, which is always like a flashing beacon signaling us to pay attention. “Behold, there was a man before Him who had dropsy.” The Greek Word gives even the non-Greek reader a slight glimpse of what dropsy was: ὕδρωπικὸς (*hydropikos*). You can hear the word “hydro” there, which of course refers to water. Dropsy was an abnormal accumulation of fluids in bodily tissues and cavities.¹

So Jesus poses the question: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” They remained silent. What happens next might not be so obvious in English. Jesus takes hold of the man, heals him, and then releases him (v. 4). Unlike many of Jesus’ miracles, there is no mention of the spoken Word. And this is all too ironic because the Pharisees have thus remained silent to Jesus’ questions, and will stay that way. The fluids that filled this man’s body are removed by Jesus’ touch.

With the Pharisees having seen this, Jesus poses another question to them: “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” (v. 5). And again, they were not able to respond. That word “able” there is not just mere inability. They knew the answer. They didn’t have the *strength* to answer. In other words, in both instances of silence, they didn’t have the guts or courage to give the right response because of their *pride*. They hung onto the Law the way they had been taught it, and refused to let this Teacher instruct them in any other way. No matter how much Jesus would show them that He was the Lord of the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, Mark 2:27, they refused to let go of their errant, human ways.

Pride runs rampant everywhere, and that includes churches, and we at Zion are not exempt. We need to look no farther than this pandemic. Everyone has their own opinions and almost everyone wants things done their own way. Pride is an unseen evil that manifests itself in ungodly stubbornness. Pride rebels against God’s Word,

¹ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks, v.9.

whether it be in love for Him by coming to Church and receiving His gifts or in love for our neighbor. Whether you're pro-mask wearing or not, or if you're in the middle and you think both extremes on either side are idiots, regardless of the truths on both sides, pride in this case is an unwillingness to listen to, and ultimately love our neighbor. And failing to love our neighbor means we also fail to fear, love, and trust in God. Let us *all* repent. No one here has handled this whole thing over the last 7 months without sin... Look to the example of the Pharisees' inability to admit they were wrong, and failure to answer Jesus' questions, as an admonition not to let our pride have its way with us, let we incur divine judgment. Remember Jesus' words at the end of the reading: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk 14:11).

He says those words at the end of the parable. Now the parable is set in a specific context with a very narrow application. We have all been to weddings where the bride, groom, and wedding party have a special table. It would be foolish for any other guest to try and take one of their seats. They would most certainly be told to move. And that would be embarrassing. That's the obvious sense of the parable that Jesus teaches. But a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, so we know there must be more to the story. It's not just about not taking the physical seat of honor away from someone else. It's about pride. The broad application is a warning not to let our pride cause us to think we deserve a better seat, as it were, than someone else.

Go back to the pandemic reference earlier, it would be like saying, "I'm only going to go to Church or Bible Study if my viewpoint is expressed in the church's pandemic policies." I realize I'm painting with very broad strokes here, but if that has crossed your mind or is still finding residence in your heart, you are failing to listen to the other side, and your pride is preventing you from loving your neighbor. Put your viewpoint in the backseat a minute and first listen to neighbor's. By doing so, you are "going and sitting in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'" (v. 10a). Then, "you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you" (v. 10b).

For you see, this is exactly what Christ did, and He did so for us. Mark 10:45, "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and gave His life as a ransom for many." We read in Philippians 2:6-9, "Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name."

Christ in His state of humiliation, humbled Himself being "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." But, because of His faithful submission to the Father's will in His humiliation, His name was made greater than any other name in the history of the world in His state of exaltation: "He descended into hell (to proclaim His victory over death), on the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead." If anyone deserved the honorable seat here on earth, it was Jesus. Yet Christ took the lowly seat here on earth in His humiliation, to be exalted to the highest place of honor in His resurrection and ascension.

So when you take the lowly seat here on earth, because of God's promise, by His grace your reward will be great in heaven. You take the "lowly seat" whenever you submit to Paul's teaching in the Epistle today where he says, "I... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We are one body, brothers and sisters in Christ. There is no room for pride. 1 Corinthians 12:21-27, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

If God has thus composed the Body, that is, the Church, in this way, giving honor to even the parts that lacked it, or even the "parts" as it were that *we think* might lack it, then the honor and glory truly belong to Him.

So repent, and by faith, the honor that is Christ's will be given to you. He does not touch you to heal your spiritual dropsy that fills your body with the fluids of sin, but He does physically enter your ears in Holy Absolution. He does not reach out and lay hold of you, but He does physically enter your mouth under the bread and wine in His true body and blood, and by faith forgives you, removing every last drop of transgression, and in sin's place fills you with His righteousness. So you see, by faith, you are given the place of honor, because in the humility of repentance and faith you are given Christ's honor. "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." He who has ears to hear, let him hear. In Jesus' name, Amen.