

There is no honour without humility. That's the conclusion I have come to from the parable in the first half of chapter 14 of the book of Luke. It's the first of two parables we'll deal with in the chapter over these next two weeks.

The Lord of Heaven and Earth knows our hearts and speaks to our motives so we might understand afresh what it means to live for his purposes. My new year's resolution in three words: **renewed Kingdom living.**

There is no honour without humility. The principle behind this is in v 11:

In the Kingdom of God those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

This is a passage about honour. In order to understand **the place of honour** we need to **first understand humility.** There is no honour without humility.

With that in mind then let me approach the passage in three steps:

1. Firstly, **honour where honour is due;**
2. Secondly, **seek the lowest place;**
3. Thirdly, **seek the highest reward.**

Honour where honour is due

This began as a two point message. Until it occurred to me that if we thought Jesus was dismissing the place of honour outright we would misread the essence of his teaching.

Honour matters to God. He is to be honoured above all else. In John 8:49 Jesus declares that while he honours God in his own ministry those who oppose him, the Pharisees, dishonour Jesus.

Honour signifies **respect and esteem.** It literally means 'weighty'. In and of itself is not sinful. The bible tells us to honour parents, widows, the elderly, masters, wives, authorities. In Romans 12:10 we are called to honour one another above yourself.

Rank. Reputation. Status. Character. All of these are mentioned in the bible as reasons for a person receiving honour.

But the Word of God doesn't leave it there. It looks into the heart and explains **what makes a person honourable**. Wisdom. Graciousness. Humility. Kindness. Righteousness - the **non-self-centred brand**.

And most importantly, **fear of the Lord**. Reverence and respect for Him. This is honour where honour is due. **Above all, to God**. Revelation 4:11:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

The bible says all honour is derived from him. He deserves it as the giver. He gives it as a gift. It can only be rightly understood as **an expression of his favour**.

When we understand honour as a God-given gift, it helps us to honour others as a blessing to them. Without strings attached. Whether parents. Governments. Employers. Those older than us. Each other.

Or if others demand honour from us as if to be treated like a god, we know the true God. Any honouring we give is first and foremost that which honours our Heavenly Father.

But while honour is God-given, Jesus says it's always going to be a problem for us because of our sinful hearts. We take God's gifts and use them for our purposes rather than his.

There is no honour without humility. Jesus provides some timely advice as he attends a meal at the house of a local church leader, a Pharisee, according to verse 1 of chapter 14.

That advice in two parts. **Seek the lowest place. Seek the highest reward.**

Seek the lowest place

Seek the lowest place. V 7 exposes the motive of the meal.

Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honour

Unlike a lot of functions we might have been to, there aren't place names at the meal Jesus attends. But there are places of honour. I imagine similar to the head table at a wedding, where, appropriately, the bride and groom, with their party, are given due honour.

A friend of mine shares the story of going to the cinema with 3 mates to see a blockbuster movie just released. In the days when cinemas could be packed.

Seat allocation applied. Because they booked last minute the 4 of them couldn't sit together. But when walking in they noticed a bank of 4 seats unoccupied towards the front so they just sat together in those.

The other party of 4 - booked for those seats - then arrived. 5 minutes into the movie the film stopped and the lights came on. It was announced 4 patrons were not in their allocated seating and would need to move to their designated places before the movie could recommence.

This could only be called 'The Walk of Shame'. Even I felt embarrassed when I heard what had happened.

Jesus observes a competition for honour. **Seating that symbolises status.**

If you have a choice, says the Lord, don't take the highest place. You'll face the risk that the host will have invited someone of greater honour and you'll be forced to give it up your seat for them.

And, as we all know, **the only seats left will be up the back.** According to v 9, you will be humiliated by claiming an honour not yours. A walk of shame.

Instead, v 10:

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

There is no honour without humility. Seek the lowest place, says Jesus.

The person who doesn't mind where they sit shows their identity and well-being is **found in their position before God than before others.**

This is the gift of the gospel. God says **'You're OK with me'**. Because Jesus humbled himself for you on the cross. You have been raised to sit with him in the heavenly places.

The sinfulness of humanity meets the saving grace of Christ:

those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted

Ephesians 2:6 is the exaltation of Luke 14:11:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

That moment when you were humbled and received forgiveness and new life in Christ was the moment when **the honour that ultimately matters to you is that which you give to God.**

If you're honoured in this life that's a gift. A bonus. An act of grace. Never let it go to your head. So when the host says to you **'Come and sit here in the highest place'** remember in Christ, you already do.

Live for the incomparable riches of his grace. Seek the highest reward. Part two of Jesus' advice.

Seek the highest reward

The parable could have concluded at v 11, but our Lord has a word for the host as well as the guest. V 12:

When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

In our current Covid climate we're being told how many we can have for a meal, but not who. Jesus speaks into his own setting where there appears to be a **return-reward culture** when it came to banquets and dinners.

The best way to summarise this is **'I'll honour you if you'll honour me'**. At its worst it's just elitist snobbery.

I don't think it was our Lord's intention to ban meals with family and friends. But his words drives to the very heart of understanding God's gift of honour.

What reward do you seek?

The world is full of people who think more highly of themselves than they ought. And it's full of people who will convince you of that. If you'll allow them.

Social status is addictive. Beware the **'return the favour'** culture where **grace gets replaced by greatness**. It's not called **'Mixing in the right circles'** by accident.

Blessed are those who can bless the lives of others without expecting anything in return. Where the reward will only be known at a later date. V 14

For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just

Matthew 25:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Blessed are those who can bless the lives of others without expecting anything in return. When you discover this you have discovered the work of Christ within you. It can powerfully and profoundly change the life of a church.

There is no honour without humility. **The truly humble person does not have to justify themselves in the sight of others.** God has already done that through the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is **no greater honour** than that which you can give to God now because of the death and resurrection of Christ.

And **no greater reward** you will receive from him at the resurrection of the just.

Honour where honour is due. Seek the lowest place. Look for the highest reward.