

**"Be Humble"**  
**Luke 14:7-14**  
**August 31, 2025**  
**Central UMC**

Once there was a dinner speaker who was in such a hurry to get to his engagement that when he arrived and sat down at the head table, he suddenly realized that he had forgotten his false teeth.

Turning to the man next to him he said, "I forgot my teeth," The man said, "No problem." With that he reached into his pocket and pulled out a pair of false teeth. "Try these," he said. The speaker tried them... "Too loose," he said. The man then said, "I have another pair – try these." The speaker tried them and responded, "They don't fit right."

The man didn't skip a beat, but said, "I have one more pair – try them." The speaker said, "Wow, these fit perfectly." With that he ate his meal and gave his address. After the dinner meeting was over, the speaker went over to thank the man who had helped him. "I want to thank you for coming to my aid. Where is your office? I've been looking for a good dentist."

The man replied, "I'm not a dentist. I'm the local undertaker."

This humorous story shows that there are sometimes two ways to look at things...two ways to understand what seems so obvious on the surface. And our Scripture this morning is somewhat like that.

On the surface, it seems so innocent...Jesus being invited to have a Sabbath meal with the Pharisee and in the Pharisee's home, no less...and then, Jesus' teaching. This seems to be a pleasant story about Jesus and his ministry.

This morning, I want to dive deeper into what was really taking place and then also try to explain what Jesus was trying to tell the people there at the Sabbath meal and also what he is saying to us, today. Basically, that His Way...God's Way is clearly different than the world's way. It's about being humble

When I was in college, a friend and I were back home for the weekend seeing our family in the winter, and we decided that we would drive back to Greensboro in a two-car convoy. Now that Sunday, the weather man said it was going to snow that evening. My friend called me and asked if I wanted to head back up sooner to miss the driving in the storm that would be fine. My friend had a truck that could go off

road, so he had no worries about driving in the snow, but me on the other hand drove a '98 Ford Escort.

I told him, "No worries man, I can drive in the snow." Which was true because my dad, being raised up north, taught me how to drive in the snow. So, we wait till later in the day and head back to college. About half an hour into the drive the snow started coming down. No problems...until 15 minutes later when the lines on the road disappeared, and the snow was falling even harder.

Me, being the confident 21-year-old kid, still cruising along when I hit a slick patch of road and next thing I know, I'm starting to spin. I end up doing a full 360 and slide into the ditch in the middle of the highway. Freaking out I just put my foot to the accelerator and hoped to get out of the ditch. Luckily, my Ford Escort did not want to be stuck either and I was able to recover and get back on the road.

Needless to say, I was a WHOLE lot more cautious the remaining half hour drive to college. When we got back to school, my buddy came out laughing at me saying in a mocking tone, "Oh yeah, I know how to drive in the snow." He said that he saw me spin out and thought he was going to have to pull me out with his truck, and to this day we both don't know how that little Ford Escort made it out of that ditch. My conclusion was that my guardian angel gave the car the juice it needed to get back on the road.

That was a humbling experience for me because it told me that no matter how confident I may be, even in something like driving in the snow, I still will make mistakes if I rely on my own ego. The guests in this story also were acting with their egos trying to get to the important seats. To be seated in a place of honor in a Pharisees home would have been a huge deal.

You see, the Pharisees constituted one of the largest and most important groups of religious leaders during Jesus' time. They controlled the activities of the synagogues and exercised great control over much of the Jewish population. Their power also came from their good relations with the occupying Roman Empire. The term Pharisee means, "separated ones." That means they separated themselves from the masses and were eventually considered as the progressives of their day, willing to adopt new ideas and adapt the religious law to new situations.

Having control of the synagogues and then also having some political power with the Roman occupation, the Pharisees became wealthy and their homes were very nice. The outside walls of a Pharisee's home might meet the street, but just inside those walls, would be an outside courtyard, which would possibly be decorated and very inviting. After leaving the courtyard, you would then enter the home. Most likely you would enter into a large room...one that would be able to hold many people...a room where a dinner party could be held.

So, as they entered the house, Jesus followed. And as he entered, he noticed how the guests were scrambling for places of honor. And Jesus taught them again by saying...

"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 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."

That will give the dinner guests something to talk about! What I'm saying is, if you walk around with your nose in the air, you're going to end up flat on your face. But if you're content to be simply yourself. To be humble, you will become more than yourself.

You see, what Jesus was telling these people around the table was that, a believer in Christ has a completely different idea of self-worth. Most of the world finds self-worth in what one does or has done...being a doctor, parent, athlete, president, hero or the like. Or, they find their worth in how they are honored by other people...how much money they make, their position, privilege, their awards or their influence, imagined or real.

But the Christian knows God's law, and realizes that he, or she, has a sinful nature, which always wants to go the opposite direction from what God wants. And the believer knows that they always fall short of God's standards and are forever in need of forgiveness...they realize that they are absolutely unable to save themselves.

Jeffery Samuelson, pastor of the Christ Lutheran Church in Maryland, rightly points out that, "That anyone who follows the way of Grace and

Righteousness understands that we do not deserve any honor from God, because our sin and rebellion merit us only death...and that by understanding and accepting these things, it humbles us. But we also understand that through our broken and contrite spirits, and by God's Grace, we know that God loves us and wants to save us to Himself. In fact, we meant so much to Him that he sacrificed His own Son, sending him to suffer and die on the cross to pay our sinful debt."

So how does a Christian treat themselves? We know that without God's Grace, we are nothing, and so we, who have been given Christ's perfection, we humble ourselves and put others first, the same way Jesus did when he healed the sick.

God's way is different. God's way is being humble

Let's return now to the dinner, because Jesus has more to teach us...Jesus says in verses 12-14.

He 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. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

What Jesus is seeing at this dinner is selfishness, opportunistic manipulation, and hoped for favors. What he saw was not right...what he saw was unrighteous thoughts, words and deeds. And so, Jesus taught again...showing them that by the Grace of God, your thoughts...your words...and your deeds become different. Doing good without expecting anything in return...your life becomes unselfish, giving and truly righteous in God's sight.

So how does a Christian treat others? Jesus encourages us to do good for those who cannot repay us in kind, whether it's feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, or helping the handicapped.

Living righteously is not easy; it is different from what we are taught in this world. Our world has us conditioned to not do anything for nothing, or to be simply compensated reasonably. Our sinful nature doesn't like the "wasted effort" of helping people who can't help us.

But you see...God's Way is different. It means we need to be humble.

There is a story of the famous inventor Samuel Morse who was once asked if he ever encountered situations where he didn't know what to do. Morse responded, "More than once, and whenever I could not see my way clearly, I knelt down and prayed to God for light and understanding."

Morse received many honors from his invention of the telegraph but felt undeserving: "I have made a valuable application of electricity not because I was superior to other men but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone and He was pleased to reveal it to me."

There is one last thing Jesus had to say at this dinner with the Pharisee. He says...if you will do what I have taught you...You'll be—and experience—a blessing. Those you help won't be able to return the favor, but the favor will be returned—oh, how it will be returned! Returned at the resurrection of God's people.

Jesus here is telling the dinner guests...and he is telling us, too, that we will be blessed for the love we show and give to others. We will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. He is telling us that God notices our righteous living and he tells us that our reward and our treasure is in heaven.

As Jesus stands, and walks from the Pharisee's home that day, 2000 years ago...as the dinner guests watch him leave, what do you think they were thinking?

Oh, there might have been some in that group of Jewish leaders and legal experts that might have really heard what he was saying...they might have seen a glimpse of God's way that day, but we all know how most of them saw Jesus. To them, he was speaking rebelliously, and going against the status quo...to them he was speaking foolishly...to them, he was someone who needed to be silenced.

Jesus says to us as believers today...accept the fact that we are sinners, become humble, do good for others, live righteously in accordance with God's will and then Jesus promised...He promised that we would be rewarded for our Righteousness.

We find today in our Scripture that there are two ways to live...The way of the world led by our egos, or a different way... a righteous way...God's Way. Being humble. Humble even when we think it is "beneath us." Because even then we can be blessed

Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, was an outstanding example of this truth. Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her.

pBecause he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend." She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute.

By being humble, Washington was being blessed in a huge way and he didn't expect it, or know that the woman would help the Institute. However, Washington humbled himself and helped a stranger who he deemed a friend.

Through being humble, God pushes us to share our blessings with those less fortunate, or in Washington's case, a friend that was in need of wood being chopped. Because you see, when we act honestly, we are treated honestly. When we give love, we are loved. When we provide justice, others are just with us. When we ask for nothing, God give us everything. When we are humble, we are "repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."