

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, August 28th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Pride vs. Humility
Luke 14:7-14

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

This is the day that you have made, Lord.
Help us to rejoice in it and be glad!

Remind us of the privileges we enjoy as your people:
to come to you in these moments,
to confess our sins,
to receive forgiveness and give it,
to pray and sing and listen,
to renew our fainting spirits,
to rest in all your promises.

Open our eyes to see you, Lord.
Open our ears to hear your Word.

Visit us through your Holy Spirit,
and help us to celebrate our faith. Amen

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Loving God, we have gathered to meet you.
We have come to listen to you,
to seek you, to worship you.
You are the beginning of all things,
the life of all things; you knew us before we were born.
In you we become; in you we live.
Loving God, you are here and everywhere,
around us and within us; you know our inmost thoughts.
In you we hope; in you we live.
You are the source of serenity,
giving peace that is beyond our understanding.
In you we are still; in you we live.

Loving God, we live in you; we worship you.
 Loving God, you live in us; we worship you. Amen.

Opening Hymn # 821: "Sun of My Soul, My Saviour Dear"

Sun of my soul, My Savior dear,
 it is not night if You are near;
 Oh, may no earthborn cloud arise,
 to hide You from your servant's eyes.

Come near and bless us when we wake
 as through the world our way we take;
 till in the ocean of Your love
 we lose ourselves in heav'n above.

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
 we confess that we have sinned against you
 in thought, word, and deed,
 by what we have done,
 and by what we have left undone.
 We have not loved you
 with our whole heart and mind and strength.
 We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
 In your mercy forgive what we have been,
 help us amend what we are,
 and direct what we shall be,
 so that we may delight in your will
 and walk in your ways,
 to the glory of your holy name.
 Through Christ, our Lord. Amen**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!
 The LORD is faithful in all his words,
 and gracious in all his deeds.
 The LORD upholds all who are falling,
 and raises up all who are bowed down

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.

Responsive Reading

Question 66. How do we interpret the Bible?

Both Old and New Testaments were written within and accepted as scripture by communities of faith. Those who seek to understand the Bible need to stand within the church and listen to its teaching. The Bible is understood in the light of the revelation of God's work in Christ. We interpret scripture properly as we compare passages, seeing the two Testaments in light of each other, and listening to commentators past and present. Relying on the Holy Spirit, we seek the application of God's word for our time.

Jn 5:39, Acts 16:14

Question 67. Should Christians read the Bible?

Yes. The regular reading and study of scripture, together with the hearing of the word in public worship, are some of the richest joys of Christian commitment.

Eph 6:17, Heb 2:12, Ps 119:105, Isa 55:11

Music Ministry: "Abide With Me" by Trish Warren

Prayer for illumination

God of all history, thank you for the Bible.
 Through your Word we learn that you love your people dearly,
 and we learn that we are your people.
 Thank you that your Word shapes our identity.
 Thank you that your Word gives us hope for the future.
 As your Word is read and preached,
 send your Spirit so that we can know
 our role in your ongoing work in our world. Amen

Scripture

Luke 14: 7-14

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

⁷ Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸ "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be

invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. 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 honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Parable of the Great Banquet

¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, 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."

Children's Hymn: "He Knows My Name"

I have a Maker
He formed my heart
Before even time began
My life was in His hands

He knows my name
He knows my every thought
He sees each tear that falls
And hears me when I call

I have a Father
He calls me His own
He'll never leave me
No matter where I go (Refrain)

Sermon

Planning a large event always has its challenges. Especially when those events have people who come from different backgrounds or different cultures. When you plan something like a large wedding you have to worry about who sits where and who sits with who, the last thing you want is people starting a fight at one of the tables during the reception. Even on a smaller scale something like a dinner party has many of the same complications, who sits where, just watch people try to figure out where they are supposed to sit, they will look around and try to find their place.

That is what is happening in the scripture today. There is a large dinner party occurring in the home of a high-ranking Pharisee and Jesus has been invited, perhaps as the guest of honor and likely so that those present can gather evidence to use against him in the future. To make it

more complicated all of the guests are trying to figure out their position in the social hierarchy of the party while the smile and make small talk with the other guests who are present.

This would have been quite challenging, the invitees at a party like this would have been the elite of the region. They would be the elite citizens, the rich, the powerful, the influencers, teachers of the church and politicians, even the high priests and the court of the Sanhedrin would be present. When all of these elite gathered the dinner table became a very important place.

At a dinner like this the tables were usually arranged in a 'u' shape and often on different levels of the floor. The head table, where the most important guests set was usually elevated, up on the dais, and it was the base of the 'u' shape. The rest of the guests would sit at the side tables which were usually one step lower and then there could be other tables around the room where the lowest of guests would be seated.

With Jesus being the guest of honor, all those gathered are wondering where they should be seated, he did not easily fall into any of the categories of social status that they were familiar with at these types of events. Everyone wants to be seated at the high table, because that equates to importance and social status. Jesus would be the last one to sit down, the guest of honor was always seated last, so everyone pretended that they were happy to sit anywhere but secretly they longed to be at that head table.

People are trying to get the best seat that they can, the one they feel they deserve, because of their position, power, or influence in society. Remember this is back before people used things like place cards or seating plans to tell people where to sit at these events. So, anyone who wants to be seen as important, seen as powerful, seen as influential, even when they were not, would want to be seated at that head table so that they could give the illusion of their power, position, and influence.

It is to those who are vying for a better seat in this free for all seating that Jesus shares the 'Parable of the Wedding Feast'. In essence he asks them, 'Why are all of you trying so hard to be important? Why are all of you so anxious to be seated at the head table, in the illusionary seats of position, power and influence?'

He makes it clear that they should not be vying for these seats when he says to them, 'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Luke 14:11)'

Luke 14:11

¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus does not hesitate to call out the people gathered there; he does not hesitate in challenging them to face their own pride. He wants all those gathered to understand that they

are competing with one another over something that only really has a worldly value, and it comes at the cost of heavenly rewards.

The real truth in this Parable is that we all need this lesson. Whether we want to admit it to ourselves or not we all seek out places of honor and recognition in society. We want to be recognized for who we are, for what we do, for the influence we have. We do not want to be wallflowers; we want to be stars. It is true that not everyone wants to be center stage, not everyone seeks out the spotlight, but even those backstage want to be recognized for what they do. There is a basic human need to be recognized for what we do, we all seek it out, we all want someone to tell us we have done a good job. Humans were created to live in relationship with one another, and this need to be recognized is part of who we are, we just want people to be aware of our input, to be aware that we exist.

In the modern world this need to be recognized has been amplified by social media. Social media is the new head table at the banquet, people vie for the most likes, the most retweets or shares, the most comments on their Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. People post of all of the accomplishments, of all of their success, of the beautiful places they go and the perfection of their relationships with others. The post and post all of the things that they think other people will desire, and most of it is false, all-in hopes of being recognized for their position, their power, or their influence, all in hopes of gaining a seat at that hi-table.

This does not mean that you need to stop posting about birthdays, anniversaries, or other big milestone events in your life. However, it does mean we need to consider why it is we are posting about these things, are we sharing our joy or are we seeking the recognition of others, hoping to have them envy us in some way.

When we think of all the things that a Christian is supposed to exude into the world, the very first thing we should acknowledge is love, after all we are called to love our God first, above all things with all of our heart, mind, body, and soul and then to love our neighbor as ourselves. If we are trying to make them envy us, how are we showing them love? Its for this reason that humility is one of the virtues that Christians try to adhere to in their lives.

Even the disciples were guilty of seeking out the high places, they often got into disputes over who was the greatest or who would get to seat at the right and left hand of Jesus. Jesus often rebuked them for their desire to seek out the positions of power, reminding them of the costs associated with being on his right and left hand. However, in Matthew 18 when they ask Jesus, 'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?', Jesus responds by telling them it is a child, in fact he says "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'

Matthew 18:3-4

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

We have heard over and over that we need to have a child like faith, one that is full of trust and reverence of the Father. However, I think we often skip over the fact that Jesus tells us to have both the faith and the humility of a child.

Children, especially young children, have no need to be better than the other people around them, they are often satisfied with whatever their own life situation is at the moment. Young children do not exhibit pride or arrogance, instead they are more interested in discovering, and relationship with others. Young children are naturally attracted to other young children, regardless of any differences that they might have in racial, social, or economic status. Children might not always share well with one another, but that is not based on the pride of owning something or having something that others do not. In fact, many children are pretty humble in how they behave and interact with others, often shy and bashful.

To be a true follower of Christ we need to learn – humility

We need to learn what it means to be a humble person. So, what does that mean, what is a humble Christian?

Does being humble mean feeling inferior to others? Does it mean putting ourselves down? Or developing an inferiority complex. Definitely not!

Does being a humble Christian mean being timid? Like a mouse trapped by a cat in the corner. To be afraid to stand up and say anything to anyone? To be afraid to stand up for yourself or for scripture about what is morally right or wrong in this world? Again, Definitely Not!

So, what is a Humble Christian?

Humility is the opposite of pride or conceit. It is ironic how easily we can identify pride and conceit in others. Pride is when we take the gifts of time, talent, and treasure that God has blessed us with and instead of using them to glorify God, we use them to compare ourselves to others and in a sense to elevate our own self worth above others. It is not when we have a good self-image or even when we know and admit that we are good at something or blessed, it is when we take that blessing and use it to appear better than others in this world.

When we list off the seven deadly sins, the first one that is listed is almost always pride. Pride is the source of all the other sins, pride is the source of greed, the source of envy, the source of covetousness. Pride is often what causes us to become selfish. Pride is often what causes us to become focused on our own wants and desires over the needs of others. Pride is often what causes us to deny the word of God, because of our own desire to be what we want more than

anything else in this world. We want that seat at the high table and will say or do whatever it takes to be seated there in this world.

Yet, Jesus says humility is the attitude that Christians should have, one where we realize everything we have, all of our blessing of time, talent and treasure come from God alone, I have no part in them. Without God I am nothing and therefore how can I boast over others about the things I have. How can I use these blessings of God as a measuring stick to elevate myself above others?

Which brings us to the second part of today's scripture, 'The Parable of the Great Banquet'.

Luke 14:12-14

¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, 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."

This is another common element of this world. 'Quid pro Quo', 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours', 'tit for tat', or any of the other hundreds of colloquialisms that we have to describe when someone does a favor for some in exchange for another favor or something of value.

That is what Jesus is warning about here, there is no humility involved in these types of arrangements. People were invited to these types of events or banquets not because of relationship, but instead because of what they could give or do for the host of the banquet in terms of power, prestige, or influence. The powerful and influential were invited because they would have to return the invitation to one of their events. 'Quid pro Quo'. The host knew that they would get something back out of the invitation.

Jesus is saying this is not how a Christian should think. To be a Christian and to walk the path of humility means we have to be willing to break the norms of society, to break through the sociological barriers of status where our relationships are primarily with people who are only like us.

Jesus wants us to stop thinking about what will benefit us in the long run, stop thinking about how a relationship with some might help our business or our social status. Jesus is telling us to be in relationship with those who are in real need. To move the focus, we have on ourselves and our status, to a focus on others in this world, the poor, the sick, the blind and deaf, the lame, the homeless and the prostitutes, people who offer us nothing in return for the kindness that we share with them. This is what serving Christ with humility means to a Christian.

We live in a world where we are surrounded by pride. Social media is filled with posts of people glorifying their lives, their accomplishments, their sins. We are told that we are to envy these things on social media, on television and even in the news. Shows on Netflix, prime and other

streaming services glorify pride, arrogance, and conceit, they teach people that they need to 'keep up with the Jones's'. As our world and technology becomes more and more disposable, people are constantly pushed to find ways to get the newest technology, whether that is a tv, computer, phone or even car.

Jesus is telling us to slow down and take stock of who we are and what is driving our behaviors.

\He wants us to ask ourselves, 'Why do we do what we do?', 'Why do we associate with the people we associate with?'. What motivates us in this world?

Jesus reminds us that living the 'Quid pro Quo' lifestyles does not work for those who want to enter into the kingdom of heaven. 'Quid pro Quo' is a calculation, one that weighs costs and benefits. How can you measure or calculate the repayment of love, or mercy or compassion? We cannot measure these things, and even if we could how much of a debt of love, mercy and compassion would we owe to God for all he has done for us? There can be no equal exchange of these things, they just need to be freely given and shared by Christians, knowing that if we live our full lives giving out all of our love, mercy, and compassion it would pale in comparison to the love, mercy and compassion that has been shown to us by Jesus, our lord and saviour who died upon the cross for us.

You see in salvation there is no 'Quid pro Quo' because salvation is a free gift from God. A gift of grace given to those who have faith in God and love him with all of the heart, mind, soul, and body because at some point they humbled themselves and admitted that they were a sinner in need of redemption.

Rabbi Simcha Bunim, a great Polish Hasidic master, taught that "Everyone must have two pockets, with a note in each pocket, so that he or she can reach into one or the other, depending on their need."

When feeling lowly and depressed, discouraged, or disconsolate, one should reach into the right pocket, and there, find the words: "The world was created for me".

But when feeling high and mighty one should reach into the left pocket and find the words: "I am but dust and ashes." (Gen. 18:27)

So, brothers and sisters as we go forth this week, let us humble ourselves. Let us share freely with all whom we meet love, mercy, and compassion and through that give them a glimpse of the salvation we have received through Jesus Christ.

Let us Pray,

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

Generous God, you have given us life,
a place to live in,
and people to live with.
Open our eyes to each other
and to all our brothers and sisters,
especially the poor, the oppressed, the alienated.
Make us humble enough to help and comfort them,
so that your love and justice and peace may come to them.
We make bold to consecrate ourselves and our gifts
to you and to the service of others,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Holy Ground"

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, gracious Father,
in the presence of your bounty keep us humble,
in the presence of all people's needs make us compassionate and caring.

Give us faith in our praying and love in our serving,
knowing that by your power
all may find a new balance in living and a new victory in adversity.

We pray for all unhappy lives,
those who are bitter and resentful, feeling life has given them a raw deal,
those who are sensitive to criticism and quick to take offense,
those who desire their own way, whatever the inconvenience or cost to others.

May your judgment and mercy be for their healing.

We pray for those who are lonely,
 who are shy and self-conscious,
 who find it hard to make friends;
 those who are nervous and timid,
 who ever feel themselves strangers in a world they can scarcely understand.
 May your presence inspire confidence and ensure companionship.

We pray for those who live with bitter regrets,
 for loving relationships brought to ruin,
 for opportunities freely given and woefully abused,
 for the bitterness of defeat or betrayal at another's hand,
 or for failure in personal integrity.
 May your grace give new hope to find victory in the very scene of failure.

We pray for all in illness and pain,
 weary of the day and fearful of the night.
 Grant healing, if it be your will,
 and at all times through faith the gift of your indwelling peace.

Bless the company of Christ's folk, the church in every land.
 Make her eager in worship,
 fearless in proclamation of the gospel, and passionate for caring.
 Bless our country. Bless our leaders.
 Bless our children and grant us peace within our borders.
 Grant us as a nation to be found effective in establishing peace
 throughout the world.

Bless us, each one, in the communion of the saints,
 and keep us ever mindful of the great cloud of witnesses that,
 following in their steps, as they did in the steps of the Master,
 we may with them at the last receive the fulfillment promised to your people.
 We pray all this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and rules with you and the
 Holy Spirit as the triune God, now and forevermore. Amen.

Benediction

May the omniscient God give you knowledge,
 the omnipotent God give you power,
 the omnipresent God give you a presence that blesses—
 so that you may share God with the world. Amen.