

I want you to imagine a wedding reception. It's a very special day for the couple. The couple and their parents may spend a lot of time, money, and energy getting ready for the big day and now you arrive at the wedding reception and it's time for you to find a seat. You see a nice big table on a pedestal on the edge of a room. You think that that is a pretty good spot so you take a seat next to the groom...and you aren't part of the wedding party. Could you imagine the look on the bride's face if you would do that? It would be very embarrassing for you to be asked to leave the table. Now you probably have sit at that one chair behind the door and next to the dj's speakers. It would have been better for you if you took the back seat first, then were invited to move up to a table front and center. This is the same point Jesus told people at a feast. He told this story to teach us that God will exalt the humble. Our Savior teaches us :it is good to be humble and we will be exalted for his sake.

It might be hard for us to picture anyone needing to be told not to pick a seat that didn't belong to them at a wedding, but the Pharisees were such people. Pharisees lacked humility. The Pharisees were people who constantly measured their own worth by comparing themselves to others. The Pharisees cared a lot about what other people thought of them. They let everyone know what they did for God, how much they gave in offerings, and how closely they followed God's laws. The Pharisees wanted to look good in front of other people. They prayed in public and made a show of how they followed God's law, right down the the number of tassels on their clothes.

They became the "Mean Girls" of their society. These Pharisees fed their self esteem with others' opinions of them. Looking good in front of others is what made the Pharisees feel good. But looking good means you have to be noticed, if you sit in the back of the room, no one sees you, no one will talk about how good and prominent you are.

It would be one thing if the Pharisees' pride was a harmless vanity, but it hurt others too. Sometimes looking good on one's own isn't good enough for a person's pride. Often the Pharisees would publically compare themselves to others. They even created categories of "sinners" and "non-sinners:" titles much worse than mean girls calling others "fatties" behind their backs. Because they saw themselves as better than others, the began to believe God loved them more than others.

Thinking that they were better than the "sinners" made it easy for the Pharisees to not show love for their neighbor. The Pharisees wanted to look good in front of other Pharisees too, they couldn't be seen hanging out with the "un-cool" sinners. Besides, any help given to the "sinners" was a waste if God didn't love them anyways. A Pharisee wouldn't help a sinner if there wasn't anything in it for him because Pharisees were motivated by reward. The only reason a Pharisee would spend so much money on feasts with friends is because he knew that his friend will probably invite him back to the next party.

These Pharisees needed a lesson in humility. We realize that we *also* need this lesson whenever we fail to show love to others for the sake of our pride. When we care about what others think of us, we often ignore the needs of those people we label "sinners" in our own minds. If we think about helping only those who can help us in return, we also need a lesson in humility.

Jesus teaches us to be humble because humility is a good thing! For one thing our humility helps others. Our humility helps others when we love one another as ourselves. We love each other by putting each others needs first. We seek help and compassion for others before we ask for it for ourselves. Jesus did so often. If everyone would show love for others first, think about how many people in this very room you could count on! You would not have to worry about yourself if we all were humble and sought to love before we sought to be loved.

When we are humble we don't seek repayment, but show love out of thankfulness to God for all he has given us. This enables us to willingly help those who can't return the favor, whether it's spending time teaching children God's Word, feeding the hungry, or clothing the poor. Our humility is a blessing to other people.

Just as Jesus taught the Pharisees, he teaches us that pride is damaging. Jesus warns us that God puts down those who are full of themselves. People who put themselves first in their priorities can't put God first. God has his ways of putting people in their place when they begin to think that they are the only people that matter.

Our pride not only hurts ourselves but it hurts others. Our pride prevents us from showing one another love. We think that we deserve other people's love first, and we don't love unless we are loved first. With our

sinful nature we are stuck with a “me-first” attitude. It hurts others whenever one spouse puts a desire before the other, or when children or workers complain about added tasks instead of doing a job willingly.

But Jesus did not only teach us about humility. He did not only tell us to be humble so that we would fail at doing what he asks. He tells us that we will be exalted, that we will be lifted up from our lowliness for his sake. Jesus himself was humble before he was exalted too, but his humility was something he did for you and for me.

First Jesus, God’s son and God himself, humbled himself when he became a man. When God became man he limited his unlimited power. He lived on this earth as a human being like you and me. Even though he is our Creator-God, he took on the form of one of the things he created.

Jesus was humbled when he suffered for us. Here the creator of all things allowed the forces of nature and other human beings to harm him and cause him suffering. He went through sickness and pain, he suffered grief at the loss of loved ones. Jesus was tempted by the rebellious devil in every way possible. And yes, he was tortured as he paid for our sins.

Jesus was humble when he died. The author of life itself surrendered and gave up his life for us. Jesus could have used his power to free himself from this suffering and death, but he gave up his life as payment for all of our sins. But all this humility had a purpose, his humility didn’t end in his defeat but his victory. Jesus rose from the dead and was exalted for us! God raised him up because death could not keep the creator of life himself. He rose so that you and I will certainly be raised from the dead ourselves.

We know that we will be exalted because Jesus is our host and friend at the Wedding Feast In the church. We won’t have to be worried about being kicked out of the wedding feast like someone who sits at the head table and causes a commotion. Jesus invites us to feast at the wedding held in his Church. Jesus invites us personally to come regularly and celebrate his life and resurrection with his other guests. Yet we are still humble at this wedding feast. Our humility and love for one another attracts even more people to his invitation to come to this feast.

But this feast on earth in the church is not the only way we will celebrate this feast with Christ. Christ has already given us forgiveness for all of our sins, resurrection from death and eternal life with him in heaven. We will all receive this on the great day of resurrection, the Last Day. Then Christ our Savior will take us up to heaven to be and feast with him at the Great Wedding Feast. By his grace he promises to give us even more! He will look at how we served him in humility on earth and call us to move up to a higher table. The savior who has given us everything will give us even more.

Unlike a wedding here in this world, the wedding party will never end in heaven. Imagine all of your friends and family having a good time, dancing, eating, and talking. It’s a wonderful thing, it’s going to be a lot better in heaven. We look forward to this great feast in heaven because God will exalt the humble because Jesus lived, died and rose for us. God has given us everything. There is nothing we have to worry about because our sins are forgiven and our resurrection is secure. This is our encouragement to humble ourselves and give everything we have for one another in love. Amen

1. What story did Jesus use to teach us about being humble?
2. What will God do to humble people?
3. What did the Pharisees lack?
4. How did Pharisees hurt others?
5. When do we need a lesson in humility?
6. Why wouldn’t we need to worry about ourselves if we were all humble?
7. List 3 ways Jesus was humble
8. Why do we know that we will be exalted?
9. List two places we feast in our faith

10. What is our encouragement to serve one another?

*What question do you have about this sermon? Bring it to Bible class!

Further Discussion:

1. Define what a Pharisee is in the Church today.
2. Agree or Disagree: If everyone in the church would be completely humble, nothing would ever get done because no one would accept a leadership position.
3. What makes being humble so hard for us to do?
4. Think of ways we can encourage each other to be humble.