

29AUG10 Text: Luke 14:11 ***“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”***

How often have you been told, *“If you don’t look out for yourself, no one else will.”* The Mc Donald’s commercial calls out to us: *“You deserve a break today”* *“You’ve earned the right to drive this luxury automobile”* the car manufacturer beckons. We **like** to hear such things as these. We want to make sure that we get everything that is coming to us, and maybe even a little more, if we’re lucky. Advertisers cue in on those words and images that will strike a responsive chord within, in our “self,” so that we spend money on the things they are promoting simply because (we are told) *“you’re **worth it!**”*

Our Gospel lesson forces us to look into the mirror ask:

WHO AM I LOOKING OUT FOR?

Who’s at the **top** of the list in your life...yourself? Are you #1? Both you and I need to recognize that **bolstering** our own self-image, making **sure** we get everything that comes to us, feeling as if we have the **right** to this or to that and the dozens of other ways in which we **look out for ourselves** are just the opposite way of looking at our lives as God would have us see them. Catering to our **self-centered nature** within means elevating ourselves again and again to the heights of pride and arrogance so much so that we can **finally even end up thinking that we have the right to tell God what to do or not do for our own good.** This morning our Gospel lesson will get us to re-examine some of our attitudes to help us determine how much we really are looking out for ourselves and will help free us from the

1. obsession of living for ourselves and catering to our selfish **pride** and help us to
2. adopt a life and attitude of **humility** which in love seeks to serve the needs of others.

Life can be distressing for those who are obsessed with themselves, those whose lives are **focused on me, myself and I**, those whose mental attitudes are sent into a tailspin if others do not compliment them, if others do not applaud their efforts or if others do not make them feel successful. When Christians have such a self-centered approach to life, **looking out for themselves first and foremost and wanting everyone to look to them too,** then it’s quite likely that the Spirit of God will have a more difficult time helping such people see their lives as **gifts** of God’s abundant grace to be lived in humble service to God and those around them.

In our Gospel lesson today, we discover that Jesus had accepted an invitation to dinner on the Sabbath Day, an invitation that had been extended to Him by one of the most influential Pharisees in Jerusalem. However we need to recognize that the invitation had been given with the “hidden agenda” in mind of carefully observing Jesus in this “controlled” environment with the hope that Jesus could be accused of some grave spiritual blunder. The already tense relationship between Jesus and the self-righteous Pharisees was made even more tense and more strained when Jesus healed a man as soon as He entered the Pharisee’s house. He admonished the Pharisees by reminding them that they would have come to the aid of one of their animals on the Sabbath...how much more important to help a man who was sick!

The interesting thing about this account is that Jesus goes from the One **being observed** and takes instead the position of **Observer**. Jesus **watched the guests** as they approached the dining area and took note of the seating arrangements. Jesus saw how the guests were **picking out for themselves the places of honor at the table**, making sure they would enjoy their dinner in just the right place being surrounded by just the right people. No doubt Jesus also observed the anger in some eyes when they could not get the seat they had wanted. When Jesus was given the opportunity, He spoke a parable about a wedding feast in which some experienced great humiliation because they were asked to kindly take a seat farther away from the head table. Jesus encouraged humility in choosing a seat far removed from the place of honor. Then if such a person was considered out of place, he would be moved closer. Did Jesus tell this parable to help improve their social etiquette? **Of course not. Jesus told the parable to help the Pharisees, blinded by their own pride, to see that they habitually looked out for themselves first.**

Jesus didn’t let His host “off the hook” either, even though it might appear that an effort had been made to be thoughtful and kind through extending the invitation to Jesus to join this meal. Jesus had observed that all those whom his host had invited could easily have provided a meal for themselves and could also be counted on by the host to return the invitation sometime in the future. **Jesus suggested to his host that he instead make a practice of inviting those who had nowhere to go and had no means to return the favor to him. That would be a *real* act of kindness.** That would show that he was looking out for others and such actions would be acknowledged by God and blessed by Him.

One wonders what kind of response the words of our text received from the assembled guests: *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* The self-exultation Jesus speaks about is our Old Adam's preoccupation with oneself, looking out for "Number 1," elevating **oneself** at the expense of others, an inflated opinion of oneself. It is the problem of **pride**.

Pride is a serious problem. **In the life of the unbeliever, pride prevents a person from acknowledging the need for God's help, by stubbornly insisting that he has done no wrong and so does not need the forgiveness and salvation God freely offers to all by faith in Jesus Christ.** C. S. Lewis, a twentieth-century Christian author, describes the problem of pride in this way: *"If I am a proud man, then, **as long as there is one man in the whole world more powerful, or richer, or cleverer than I, he is my rival and my enemy.** Pride always means enmity--it **is** enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity toward God. **In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself.** Unless you know God **as that**--and therefore know yourself as nothing in comparison--you do not know God at all. **As long as you are proud you cannot know God.** A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you."* A proud person that is looking out for himself or herself first and foremost might not recognize their own obsession of living for themselves and might not recognize that they are catering to their selfish pride. James 4:6 comes to mind: *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* We need God's help and His grace to help us adopt an attitude of **humility** in our lives which in love seeks to serve the needs of others.

Before we can really stop being so concerned about ourselves and looking out for "Number 1," and start to humbly live and serve the needs of those around us, **we need to recall what our Savior Jesus Christ has done for each of us.** We need to see Christ as the Host of an eternal, heavenly banquet, a banquet to which you and I had no right to be invited, a banquet hall in which we had no means to enter. **Christ was the One who opened the door, took us by the hand and said, "This is My Father's house, and I am making you at home in it and seating you at My table. You are welcome here because I have healed every bit of you and made you presentable. I have done this as your Servant by dying on the cross for all your stubborn pride, your selfish lusts and everything else that made you unworthy and that made you want nothing to do with Me."** **Yes indeed, Jesus humbled**

Himself and took the form of a servant, filling our greatest need for salvation by yielding Himself to death on the cross for all of our prideful sins and our self-centered desires to look out only for ourselves.

WHO ARE **YOU** LOOKING OUT FOR? Are you **looking out for #1?**

Have you and I been catering to your sinful self and proudly lording yourself over those around us? Have you and I elevated ourselves over others with an inflated opinion of who we are?

How quickly married life improves when husbands and wives stop looking out for themselves and start seeing how they can better support and love their spouse!

How much more joyful family relationships are when we sacrifice our pride and say those difficult words, *"I'm sorry, I was wrong, please forgive me."*

How much better our Christian witness is in school when we look out for the good and welfare of those who may not be the most popular but who need our friendship nonetheless.

How much more Christ will shine through our lives at our places of employment when we sacrifice our pride and humbly seek to serve the needs God reveals to us in that place.

How great it will be when we begin to pay more attention to people who need our help and who can never repay us, even when this is done in trying surroundings or under difficult circumstances.

How we need the presence of God the Holy Spirit to help us see ourselves as brothers and sisters in Christ who reflect His loving care in all we do! **Only by His grace can we stop looking out for ourselves and begin to live as His Word guides us to, living in response to His vast mercy toward us.** The things we heard in our epistle today—keep on loving each other as brothers, showing hospitality, visiting the prisoner, honoring marriage, maintaining a proper perspective on money, remembering those in prayer who have spoken God's Word to us—these things and so many others God's Word points us to will be missed if a person that is looking out for himself or herself first and catering only to their selfish pride.

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." May God help each us adopt an attitude of **humility** which looks away from ourselves and in love seeks to serve the needs of those whom God places into the path of our lives, for Jesus' sake. AMEN

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