

LUKE 14:1-14
Hearing the Call... to Humility
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I'm sure you've all had the honour of being a guest at a wedding. You know that when you walk into the Reception Hall you find the seat which has been allocated to you. If you wanted to, you could go straight to the top table and sit down next to where the bride and groom will sit. But you would soon be ushered down to a lower seat - red face and all.

I was once at a wedding where I saw some people change the name tags on the tables. They didn't like the table they were allocated, so moved their name across to another table with the people they wanted to sit next to. How rude is that!

In today's reading from Luke 14 Jesus tells a parable about a marriage feast. In those days obviously seating wasn't allocated because people could come in and choose their own seat. Jesus advises to choose the lowly seat. Much better to be there, and then invited to come up higher; than grab the most important seat only to be ushered to the back of the room.

Today we begin a new series from Luke Chapters 14 to 19. The series is called, Hearing the Call. Today the theme is - Hearing the Call to Humility.

-This is obviously the theme in the parable of the wedding feast.

-It is an important theme in the story of the man being healed on the Sabbath and

-It is there in Jesus' instruction to the host of the dinner party to invite the poor and the sick when giving a party.

God calls us to humility.

We're going to spend 8 weeks in Luke hearing afresh the call of God on our lives. And this is all about what it means to belong to the Kingdom of God. Each week we will pick up a theme of Kingdom living. Jesus said in Matthew's gospel, *'Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be given to you as well.'*

As we examine Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom, I trust we will be refreshed in the call of God on our lives. Today we look at the Kingdom and humility.

We've talked about the Wedding Feast but there are two other stories in this passage as well.

In Verses 1 - 6 there is the story of Jesus challenging the Pharisees and experts in the law; by healing a man on the Sabbath. This is a story about compassion but there is also a lesson here about humility. The Pharisees were very proud of their adherence to the law such that it blinded them to the true nature of the Kingdom. Jesus reveals their blindness by asking two questions.

1. In V3, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" And we are told that they were silent, why? If they answered yes they would be seen as lawbreakers and the Pharisees were supposed to be the upholders of the law. If they said no they would be seen to be enforcing the law but heartless that they didn't want this man to be healed. We're told they were silent.

2. The second question Jesus asks really shows up their hypocrisy. V5, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?"

Once again, they are silent. Why? Because the answer is, obviously they would. Jesus is showing up their double standard in the way they applied the commandment to keep the Sabbath.

A little more humility is required on their part, a humility that would issue in compassion.

The final paragraph v's 12 – 14, is addressed to the host of the gathering challenging him to make sure he invites people to his house who will not have the ability to repay the invitation. We see here an exaltation of the poor, crippled, lame and blind.

We're told Jesus is in the home of a prominent Pharisee. I don't think he is having a go at the host but just wanting to reinforce a Kingdom principle. After all the host has invited Jesus to this dinner party, and he must have known Jesus was an itinerant preacher without much opportunity to repay the invitation. It is also interesting that one of the guests is this man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. This pharisee has invited someone who others may have shunned.

Once again in this final piece of teaching the theme of humility is prominent. It takes a humble person to mix with those on the margins and to act with no thought of reward.

So Jesus has some important teaching here about being the guest and being the host at a party. And I take it we have all been in both those roles:

-Be a humble guest and take a lowly seat - don't seek the seat of honour.

-Be a humble host and don't just invite your friends and the well to do, but also the poor and the outcast.

And overall, be wary of religious pride. Because you know the law of God doesn't necessarily mean you understand the Kingdom of God. If we truly understand Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom, it should humble us, not make us feel like we are better than anyone else.

Humility really is an elusive quality isn't it because as soon as you think you've achieved it you really have something to be proud about don't you.

There is a pop song from quite a few years ago that was good for karaoke; and it goes something like this, *"Oh Lord it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way. I'm always in front of the mirror 'cause I keep getting better looking every day. To know me is to love me I must be a hell of a guy. Oh Lord it's hard to be humble but I'm doing the best that I can."*

So how can we pursue humility when it is so slippery and hard to get a handle on.

I think it is important to realise that Jesus he is not just giving us some nice moral teaching here on how to be better people. He is teaching about the Kingdom of God. He is calling people to belong to the Kingdom.

To belong to the Kingdom is to take our eyes off ourselves and focus them on Jesus. This is how the Christian life begins isn't it. It is a very humbling place to come to.

Everything in our society is saying to us be self-sufficient and independent.

Be adult. You're autonomous and can choose your own destiny, your own reality.

Coming to Jesus is about recognising there is someone else who is Lord, not ourselves. It is about recognising the horrible sin of not acknowledging Jesus as Lord, and finally bowing the knee to him and saying sorry. That is a huge challenge to human pride. If you want to know where humility begins this is the place. Allowing Jesus Christ to have complete control over your life. That's what it means to say Jesus Christ is Lord.

In terms of our theme today it is about acknowledging Jesus is King in his Kingdom and we are his subjects. We hear His call to live after the pattern of the King.

1. So, we care about people not just rules. We are people of compassion who seek to bring healing to those who are suffering. We may not have the powers of the King to always instantly heal disease; but we can pray to the King and sometimes there is miraculous healing. Sometimes, we are required to simply walk with the person who is suffering and be compassionate. The Kingdom is about showing compassion.

2.The Kingdom is about taking the lowly place after the pattern of the King. Philippians 2:6 says, *“Jesus was in very nature God but did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness he humbled himself becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!”*

Jesus didn't just take the lowest position at weddings; he was a servant throughout his whole life. In Luke, we especially meet the radical Jesus who loved turning things upside down.

-He associates with the lowly

-He touches the untouchable and calls nobodies to follow him.

-He then accepts the humility and the humiliation of the cross.

3.The final paragraph from verse 12 is about the humility of a host, to not only invite friends, relatives and rich neighbours to dinner parties; but to find a place for the lowly and the outcast. Of course, his is the pattern of Jesus, the pattern of the King in his Kingdom.

I was reading in 'The Australian' yesterday morning an article about the AFL Grand Final. It said this, *“At the ground, an incredible array of politicians, business identities, celebrities and football legends will descend from 11:00am for the best networking gig money cannot buy.*

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will be among the 700 in the Olympic room, as well opposition leader Peter Dutton. Billionaire Kerry Stokes is flying in from Perth, gold medal swimmer Ariarne Titmus will be there, and power brokers such as Tony Shepherd, Eddie McGuire, Julie Bishop and John Wiley will work the room.”

Now there's nothing wrong with being rich and famous, someone's got to do it, and some of the people there are simply doing their job making contacts for their business. I can't help but think of the homespun advice of Flo Bejelke-Peterson, *“It's nice to be important but more important to be nice.”*

The real question is, do those at the top have the humility to make room for the little person, the person who struggles, the disadvantaged?

Jesus did.

And those who belong to Jesus should as well.

This Tuesday there is a forum on homelessness being sponsored by the Noosa Council and being held over at Noosa Church on Eumundi Road. There are a number of speakers coming from various churches and Christian groups, around SE QLD who are doing practical ministries helping the homeless. They are going to be sharing what they're doing and there will be opportunity to discuss what might be appropriate here in Noosa. Unfortunately, I'll be in Brisbane on Tuesday and an apology but I know Val Smerdon and Mary Couche are planning to go and if there is anyone else who would like to join them please talk to me or them and we can give you more details.

Parish Council has been talking for a number of months now about the housing crisis that is happening in Noosa at the moment. It is important that the church is at the forefront of providing a response. This is what it means to be humbly following the King reigning in his Kingdom.

I want to finish with a quote from Tom Wright who says this.

“Pride, notoriously, is the great cloud which blots out the sun of God's generosity: If I reckon that I deserve to be favoured by God, I declare that I don't need his grace, mercy and love. I also imply there are those who shouldn't have the opportunity to receive his grace, mercy and love. Jesus spent his whole life breaking through that cloud and bringing the fresh, healing sunshine of God's love to those in its shadows.”

So my friends are you hearing the call...

the call to humbly follow Christ -

-with compassion

-not seeking personal advantage

-making a place for the poor and those on the margins.

Are you ready again to surrender to Christ as your King, and serve him in his Kingdom.