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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“HUMILITY”
Luke 14:7-14

○ {Rev 1:8; Dt 32:40} **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God,”** the A and the Z, the Beginning and the End, **“who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty”** declares the LORD. He dwells outside of time, and **“from everlasting to everlasting [he is] God.”**

There never was a time when God was not, there never will be a time when God *is* not. The LORD is eternal.

○ {Rev 4:8; Ps 145:17; Jas 1:13} **“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”** He is **“righteous in all his ways, faithful in all he does.”** **“God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;”** his **“righteousness is everlasting.”**

○ {1 Jn 1:5} God is entirely pure, absolutely incorruptible. **“In him there is no darkness at all.”** The LORD is holy.

○ {Ps 113:4; 145:3; 1 Ti 6:16} **“The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.”** **“Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom,”** for he **“[dwells] in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.”**

○ {1 Ch 29:11} **“Glory and... majesty and... splendor”** belong to God. The LORD is glorious.

○ {Rev 19:6; Job 42:2; Ps 33:3; 46:6; 24:8; 1 Ch 29:11, 12} The **“Lord God Almighty”** **“can do all things.”** **“He [speaks], and it [comes] to be,”** **“he lifts his voice, [and] the earth melts.”** He is **“The LORD strong and mighty.”** **“Yours,**

LORD, is...the power... In your hands are strength and power.”

Nothing is beyond God’s ability, no force can thwart the will of God. The LORD is Almighty.

○ {Jer 23:24; Acts 17:24; Dt 4:39; 1 Ki 8:27} The LORD **“[fills] the heaven and earth.”** He **“who made the world ... does not live in temples built by hands.”** He **“is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”** **“The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain [him].”**

God is ubiquitous, everywhere all at once, his presence is universal. The LORD is omnipresent.

○ {1 Sa 2:3; Ps 147:5; Job 12:13; 37:16; Ro 16:27; Eph 3:10} **“The LORD is a God who knows.”** **“His understanding has no limit.”** **“To God belongs wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.”** He **“is perfect in knowledge,”** **“the only wise God,”** the deity of **“manifold wisdom.”**

God knows and understands the past, present, and future in its fullness. The LORD is omniscient.

○ {Lam 3:23; 1 Co 13:4-5; Jer 31:3; Ps 63:3} The LORD’s **“compassions never fail.”** He **“is patient [and] kind. [God] does not envy...does not boast... is not proud. [He] does not dishonor others... [and] is not self-seeking.”** God **“[has] loved [us] with an everlasting love”** and **“drawn [us] with unfailing kindness.”**

○ {1 Jn 4:7} Although he cannot be reduced to a single word, **“God is love.”** The LORD is full of love.

○ {Eph 2:4; Ps 103:8; Jas 5:11; Ps 103:10} **“God...is rich in mercy,”** **“compassionate and gracious, slow to**

anger.” **“Full of compassion and mercy,” “he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.” “Our Lord” “[pours] out” his “grace... abundantly.”**

God blesses us with rewards we cannot earn and withholds punishment we deserve. The LORD is gracious.

○ {Rev 4:11; 5:12, 13} These words hardly begin to express the greatness and goodness of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is **“worthy... to receive glory and honor and power”!** **“Worthy...to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”** **“To him... be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!”** Alleluia! Amen!

And then there is – us.

{Gen 1:26, 27; Ps 8: 5} Do not misunderstand me: every person is, without exception, a creature of immeasurable value, for **“God [fashioned us] in his own image.”** The Creator made us just **“A little lower than the [angels] and crowned [us] with glory and honor.”**

Yes, sin has *blurred* the divine image, thereby diminishing our glory and honor; but it has not *erased* it. No human being is a worthless nonentity.

{Jn 1:12; Ro 8:17} Not only so, **“to all who... receive”** God the Son, **“who [believe] in his name,”** his Father has **“[given] the right to become children of God,” “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.”**

{Ps 8:4; 144:4; Ro 3:23; Ezek 7:17 KJV; Jer 4:33 } Still, **“what are mere mortals that you are mindful of [us],”** O Lord, **“human beings that you care for [us]?” [Our] days are...a fleeting shadow”;** we **“all have sinned”;** we **“fall”** so far **“short of the glory of God”** there is no comparison;

we are **“feeble”;** we **“are senseless children”** who **“have no understanding”;** we often fail to love; and we are reluctant in mercy and hesitant in forgiveness.

God is God. We are not.

? {1 Pe 5:6} The only fitting response is to **“humble [ourselves]...under God’s mighty hand.”** But this raises some questions: *How can we grow more humble without becoming self-absorbed? How can we give concrete expression to spiritual humility? How can we avoid false humility, which is a kind of pride?*

□ Please turn with me to Luke 14:7-14. This two-part teaching will not answer all our questions, but it will point us in the right direction.

■ Part 1 is verses 7-11.

{Lk 14:1, 7} The Lord Jesus has gone **“to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee”** and **“the guests [are picking] the places of honor at the table.”**

☑ {Morris} In the center of the banqueting hall are one or more long, rectangular tables. They are just a few inches off the floor.

Around the tables are low couches arranged in a U-shape. Each couch is long enough to accommodate three people. Everyone lies down on his left elbow, and reaches toward the table with his right hand (I say “his” because men and women do not eat together in a public setting).

First century Mediterranean people are acutely sensitive to social status, and where you sit at the banquet indicates your rank in the hierarchy.

According to our best information, the place of highest honor is the center on the couch at the base of

the U. The second best place is just to the left of center, and the third best is just to the right of center.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth places of honor are on the first couch to the left, with the center spot being the best. The seventh, eighth, and ninth places are on the first couch to the right; and back and forth down the line. The place of least honor is the right end of the couch that is farthest to the right.

There is no official seating chart, so these status conscious guests scramble to get the best place possible. They do just about anything to avoid the shame of getting stuck at the right end of the couch that is farthest to the right.

To everyone's astonishment Jesus says (verse 8) **"do not take the place of honor."** If another guest of higher status comes after you, the host will move you down the table and you will be humiliated.

✎ Banquet seating is not Christ's top priority. He is illustrating the principle of Matthew 23:23: **"Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble them-selves will be exalted."** **"Humbled, and...exalted"** by whom? By the LORD God Almighty.

✎ Having said that, an internal attitude of humility is essential – but it is not real if we do not also manifest it in humble words and deeds. To paraphrase Forrest Gump, **"Humble is as humble does."** In the first century, where you sat was a great place to put this into practice. Maybe it still is.

■ Now for Part 2 in verses 12-14:

"When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends, your [siblings], your relatives,

or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The point is not to exclude kith and kin; it is to extend hospitality to, and rub shoulders with, lowly people who do nothing to polish our image or improve our status. If we do, God will repay us in ways that they cannot.

But we must not allow that to fuel our thoughts and deeds. There are few things arrogant than using people and relationships as a stepping stone to blessing.

✎ The best motivation is 3-fold: 1) people whom we might consider *useless* or *worthless* are bearers of God's image; 2) During his incarnation the Messiah broke with social convention and dined with the respectable and disreputable, the clean and unclean, the rich and poor, the powerful and the powerless; and 3) when we feed, give drink to, invite, clothe, and visit people to our advantage we probably are not doing it for Christ, but when we do it for those who give no advantage, we probably are doing it for him.

? This sermon is a call to be humble before our great and good God. Why, then, have I focused on acting humbly as a guest and a host? *Why have I zeroed in on humility in human relationship?*

{Mt 22:37-39} This is why:

✎ Scripture makes it clear that we cannot separate our relationship with God from our relationship with other humans: **“the first and greatest commandment”** is **“Love the Lord your God with [your whole being],”** **“and the second is... ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”**

✎ {1 Jn 4:20} It follows that **“if we do not”** humble ourselves in relation to other human beings, **“whom we have seen, we cannot”** humble ourselves before God, **“whom we have not seen.”** But if we are humble toward imperfect mortals we can be humble before immortal, holy, glorious, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, loving, gracious God.

O LORD, make us humble in relation to others, that we might be humble before you!