

## Introduction

*Did you hear that?* We are studying and listening to the stories of Jesus. These stories are not so much fictional as they are purposeful. A parable is a picture and a principle laid side by side. A parable is not an allegory; it is not laced with hidden and secret meanings. A parable is an illustration with application to make a clear and concise point. It is an analogy that paints a picture of truth in life.

Today we are going to examine an illustration regarding common, yet conflicting human behavior. It is a behavior we all observe and in which are tempted to indulge.



### 1. The Setup By the Pharisees

"One Sabbath, when He went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were

watching Him carefully. And behold, there was a man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?' But they remained silent. Then He took him and healed him and sent him away. And He said to them, 'Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?' And they could not reply to these things" (Luke 14:1-6 ESV).

It is the setup for the story we are about to study, but it was a "setup" to trap Jesus.

Once again we read about a meal in the home of a Pharisee. They had Jesus there to "scrutinize" Him. Note they were watching him. This is the critical eye. This is the effort to find fault and to expose error—a "blow the whistle" moment.

One other factor involves a man who was there. This time—rather than being an uninvited or accidental guest like the woman last week—they placed him there to be the focus of attention in hopes of exposing Jesus' disregard for the law. They wanted to discredit Jesus.

Talk about a lunch meeting with an agenda! They were “doing lunch” and trying to “undo Jesus” in the eyes of those around.

Dropsy = edema. He was swollen. His body retained fluids such that his extremities were bloated and distorted. But the Pharisee’s did not believe in “working on the Sabbath” so they were challenging Jesus’ miracle worker actions by placing the man in the house in front of them and in front of Jesus.

Jesus put the challenge directly back at them—not a theological controversy, but a reflection of compassion. And then Jesus does what only He can do—He heals!

Amazing how often there are those who want to exploit the plight of human need and suffering for their own selfish purposes. People will exploit needs for profits and people will exploit poverty for political power and purpose, etc.

Yet in the face of exploitation, Jesus turned the tables. If your son or if your livestock fall into a well, would you not pull them out to save from drowning? This man was drowning inwardly in bodily fluids. “I just got him out!”

Oh, the compassion of the Savior!

Silence. They could not reply because the hypocrisy of their own actions was evident to all. Nothing creates more consternation and frustration than having your pride exposed! Do you feel the tension in the text?

## **2. The Story of Jesus**

While they were seething over the way Jesus “turned the tables” on them and reshaped their defense, Jesus took exposure a step further.

“Now He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ‘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, 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. 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'" (Luke 14:7-10 ESV).

They had been surveying Jesus to catch Him in a misstep, but He had been watching them also!

He tells a parable about presumption. Being invited to a particular party or gathering was a symbol of status, but even more than that, where you sit! (Illustration: airplanes today—every seat has a different value.)

We discussed the table setup and reclining last week, but there was significance to the seating. To the right of the host was the chief guest of honor, then to the left, the next, and so on around the table.

Was Jesus talking manners? Was He trying to instruct them in better social etiquette? No! Jesus was exposing motivations. While there was wisdom in His instruction on good manners, there was confrontation and conviction in the arrogant and haughty attitudes on display at this gathering. This was much more offensive to God than the healing of a bloated man's body!

Jesus pointed to what was going on among the Pharisees—their self-promotion, self-inflation and their posturing for greater prominence among each other.

Nothing is as cunning and conniving as human pride—looking for a better seat! And no temptation or motivation in life seems to have greater appeal for us all than that of pride and self-promotion.

Pride is more common than the common cold and it's been observed, "Pride is the only disease that when you have it, it makes everyone else sick!"

Pride: "inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, wealth or accomplishments, rank or elevation in office. It manifests itself in lofty airs, distance, reserve and often in contempt of others." —Noah Webster, 1828

Jesus noticed this jockeying for position among those respected religious leaders and exposed their selfish and sinful motivations.

"The pleasure of pride is like the pleasure of scratching. If there is an itch, one does want

to scratch... As long as we have the itch of self-regard, we will want the pleasure of self-approval." —C.S. Lewis

In days past, I have shared with you some common pitfalls of pride. It is the root sin behind so many other fruits of sin in our lives.

- **Pride inflates our confidence and importance.**

"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom" (Proverbs 11:2 ESV).

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18 ESV).

"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12 ESV).

At the 1961 Masters Tournament, Arnold Palmer was leading Gary Player by one stroke and his ball was sitting pretty in the 18th fairway. Palmer was about to win his third green jacket in four years and become the

first man to successfully defend at Augusta. But Palmer got caught up in the moment. He accepted congratulations from his friend, George Low, while walking to his drive on 18, and he forgot an important lesson his father had drilled into him, "Don't ever get ahead of yourself." Palmer's second shot sailed into the right green-side bunker and before he knew it, Palmer was tapping in for a double bogey to hand Player his first green jacket.

Pride is a set-up for failure and humiliation. It was for the Pharisees; it was for Arnold Palmer, and it will be for you too!

- **Pride stunts our growth.**

Too many of us get "stuck" in life, relationships and progress because of pride.

"Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Proverbs 26:12 ESV).

"Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'" (1 Peter 5:5b ESV).



Jesus was making an appeal of compassion to the arrogant and inflated hearts of the Pharisees in our text. They did not need moralistic teaching or legalistic rule-keeping to help them be better people. They needed to see how their religion of self-promotion and self-righteousness had stunted their growth and caused them to miss God's grace. They needed grace to be saved... and so do we!

- **Pride injures our relationships.**

"By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom" (Proverbs 13:10 NKJV).

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are a war within you?" (James 4:1 ESV).

- **Pride produces stress and anxiety.**

Follow the flow of the context and you will find this entire summary of human conflict roots in human pride. God opposes the proud! At the same time, when we come to God in awareness of our weakness and dependence, God moves to give grace.

“But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you” (James 4:6-8, 10 ESV).

The gospel is a message regarding grace that exposes human pride, but it gives grace in human need and this grace recovers us and enables us to live for God’s glory.

Ever see mismatch on the line of scrimmage in football? Your pride and God’s grace is a great mismatch; it will always fall in His favor. Yet He can and will use human weakness humbly surrendered to His grace—lifted and exalted for His glory.

I trust this every week as I preach! This podium is not my platform; it is my altar. Here I surrender to His wisdom, strength and promise to work in the lives of those who hear and gather for eternal glory!

### 3. The Sermon For Us

After Jesus told the story, He preached a two-point sermon (heads vs. tails).

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11 ESV).

NOTE the clear precept and promise:  
Everyone who exalts SELF will be humbled.

Pride is unwise. Wisdom is with the humble.

“...with the humble there is wisdom”  
(Proverbs 11:2). Don’t be stupid!

In the context, the idea completes the illustration of seats at the table. But for us, it is the principle and practice of humility in life. In God’s kingdom, the way up is “down!” Yet, God promises the one who humbles himself will be exalted! Humility is both the way of wisdom and godliness.

# **What Does Humility Look Like?**

Humility is not pity, loathing or low esteem, but rather an honest evaluation of ourselves before God and others.

## **1. Humility Begins with Honesty**

See Romans 12:3.

- Honesty about our weaknesses (physical and moral)
- Honesty about our limitations (knowledge and power)
- Honesty about our needs (spiritual and relational)

## **2. Humility Honors Others**

See Philippians 2:3-4.

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” —C.S. Lewis

## **3. Humility Remains Teachable**

See Proverbs 15:12. Pride makes us unteachable and unreachable, but humility makes us pliable and absorbent.

## **4. Humility Reflects Respect.**

See 1 Peter 2:13-17—God’s authority over all and our honor of that authority in all things.

## **5. Humility Responds With Gentleness**

See Ephesians 4:2.

Instead of being hard and harsh, humility makes us gracious, gentle and patient with others.

## **6. Humility is Personified in Christ**

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8 ESV).

Jesus (who was at this meal) was the incarnate Son of God. He was the most honored guest and yet took the lowest seat!

So it is the work of Christ for us (to empty Himself) to humble Himself to the point of death on a cross. Yet this is the good news of the gospel, and God recognized this humility by exalting Him!

See Philippians 2:9-11.

Have you humbled yourself before God by getting honest about your need to be saved? Have you humbled yourself into waters of baptism, reflecting the work of Christ for you? Have you honored the body of Christ, the church, by agreeing to be identified with Him and the church and not independent?

Remember: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6 NKJV).

*Did you hear that?*