

August 28, 2022

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 14:1, 7-14

This is a passage I have preached much on in the last thirty years. This was a passage I thought I knew well. I thought it was about humility or the lack thereof. I still have so much to learn. I decided to investigate the Jewish concept of humility from a rabbi. Their concept is slightly different from the Roman Latin one. This all started out by asking myself, is God humble? This leads me down some very interesting rabbit holes. The most important one being what is the context of this passage and how do Jews understand humility? Buckle up this is interesting.

This passage is not so much about humility as it is about arrogance. The Jews viewed arrogance as, what about me. This is a very selfish concept and attitude. Those fighting and fussing about the choice seats at supper were only thinking of themselves. From a Jewish perspective they were very arrogant. So to help them move past their selfishness

and arrogance Jesus makes a suggestion. That they should invite the people without power and money to their tables for a meal. That would be a humble thing to do even from a Jewish perspective.

To really understand the context of this story we need to understand how Jews think about humility. Trust me it is not what we have been led to believe it is. This is where our problem begins. The Jewish and European concepts of humility are different. Thank you to the Romans and Latin. Our word for humility comes from the Latin, humilis. This word means low. Knowing that lets move on further.

For the Jews, humility is not, I think I am a loser! It does not mean low. It does not mean that I deny whatever talents or accomplishments I have. This would include all my strengths and good things I have done. The humble person knows exactly who they are. They are honest about themselves. However they do not exaggerate their virtues and they do not exaggerate their faults. They do not boast about their virtues or shortcomings. There is no exaggeration or boasting in the Jewish understanding of humility. It should also not be dishonest or untrue. True humility should produce joy and freedom.

Rabbis warn not to let your high assessment of yourself bring you to arrogance. This is the opposite of humility for a Jew. The Rabbis point to Moses as the most humble person in the Bible. Moses's accomplishments were so great and many. He was the one who went toe to toe with Pharaoh in Egypt. Moses was the one who led the Jews

out of Egypt and slavery and into the promised land. He talked face to face with God and gave the Jews the Ten Commandments. In all of these great events Moses remained humble. He did not exaggerate his accomplishments, boast or become arrogant and selfish. Moses's story reminds us that God is the One who gives us our talents for our life and mission here on earth. God trusts in us and it is our duty to prove Him right. Use our talents for the good of others. There is no need to boast or be arrogant. The talents were not ours in the first place. They were given in trust to us by God.

So after all of this I have concluded that God is humble from the Jewish perspective. In scripture He does not seem to boast or is arrogant about His accomplishments. Jesus certainly does not come across that way either. He died in order to save us. It was not all about Him but us. Logically there seems to be no arrogance in God or Jesus. So that leaves me to conclude they must be humble.

There is a slight difference of understanding regarding humility. The Latin, Roman and European understanding is low. Jews understand it as honest and true and self-awareness. Not boasting or bragging about your virtues or shortcomings. So you could be wealth and powerful and humble. This whole adventure has given me a new way to view the scriptures. I hope it has been an eye opener for you also. God bless and take care, Pastor D