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12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you. 13 “But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

We are embarking together on this wonderful long section of Jesus teaching at the end of His ministry to the Jews. These chapters are a summary for us of things that were typical during all of the ministry of Jesus.

Therefore we find passages in other synoptic gospels that are close parallels from different time frames. Did Jesus have something like, for lack of a better term, a stump speech that He repeated many times to new audiences. It seems very plausible.

And Luke has gathered many teaching moments together for us in one place in these chapters because he wants us to have a complete record of how Jesus taught. There is much here in Luke that we would not have at all if not for Luke's gospel. Many stories that only Luke includes. What a treasure this is.

For years I've been reading different books and articles about reaching people with the gospel message. Everyone agrees about who the most difficult

people to reach are.

The most problematic folk to reach with the truth are the ones who are religious. What do you say to people who are convinced . . . they're OK? We've got this figured out. We have a religious system and we believe in the One God, and we have a long history of people who went before us that believed what we believe. And anyways, we are God's chosen people.

What do you say to shake them from their false belief system?

Jesus has been battling this from day one. If you read through the sermon on the mount, that's what the entire thrust of the sermon is about. You think you're OK, but you mis-understand God and you mis-understand His standard.

Jesus says to them in Matt. 5:48 *Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

How do you convince a religious person that God's standard to be in His presence is absolute sinless perfection the equivalent of His perfection? When Paul says in Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*, Paul is stating the same thing. Jesus says you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect and Paul adds; no one is. All have sinned.

To be anything less than God's holy perfection, is accounted as sin that entitles you to eternal separation from God in hell. One sin. One tiny imperfection. One fault that removes you from His glory is all that is required. And we were born into sin. We inherit the imperfection from our parents, all the way back to Adam. Romans 3:10 *There is none righteous! No Not One.*

That's what the Bible says, that's what Jesus taught, that's what Paul taught. But religious people don't believe it. Religious people think, no God would hold folks to an un-attainable standard. Obviously those words are just some kind of hyperbole. God either somehow grades on the curve, or He's an awfully lonely God.

Religious folk look around themselves and as long as there's somebody more wicked than they are, it's like we're OK but of course God won't let those lesser folks in. We'll be just fine. We go to church most of the time. And we live by a code roughly similar to the 10 commandments. Our version tailored for us. But it's similar.

My neighbor just bought a seriously gorgeous new GMC pickup to pull his seriously gorgeous trailer. I'm picturing the trailer nicer inside than many of our houses. So I came around the corner and he was walking over to his driveway and I stopped and rolled down my window and said; your new truck is making me break the 10th commandment. You shall not covet your neighbors new truck, or his trailer.

Seriously. Where did the coveting come from. FWIW I don't covet his payments, just the pretty things. Where does sin come from? I'm walking around the patio with bare feet and put my weight on a pebble right in the middle of my soft pad and I hear bad words coming out of my mouth. Where did that come from? Sin just seems to bubble out of me.

Jesus told these same jews; Matt. 15:11 *“It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”*

This stuff just bubbles out of my inner person. Defilement. Foul, rotten stuff dwells in me. Those righteous pharisees have that same well of inner defilement that we all do. But they think they are righteous. If God grades on a curve and He's a 10, they believe they're at least a 9.

Jesus continues about the sick heart we all possess in Matthew 15:17 *“Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? 18 “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 “These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”*

All of us have inherited this problem, this sin, this falling short of God's perfection from our parents and Adams race. All of us are guilty. These pharisee's do not believe that. They think their self generated righteousness is just fine.

Jesus has been battling this mindset for His entire ministry. Over and over and over and it's not getting through to them. I mean it's really astonishingly not getting through to them. I mean like thousands of miracles and a perfect life and speech like no man ever spoke and it's not getting through to them.

Back to the Mt. 15 quote, the disciples are more than a little astonished at the hardness of the pharisees. They go to Jesus about the defilement coming from within quote and they say; 12b *“Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?”* 13 *But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 14 “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”*

There's that nasty election thing again. Jesus says; the problem is the elect aren't elect. The jews who believe they are God's chosen ones are blind. And deaf. They can't see the truth. They can't hear the truth. Deaf, blind, dumb. And the reason is . . . according to Jesus . . . they are plants that the Father did not plant. Religious plants that God didn't plant. Deaf, dumb, blind, and hopeless.

Well, you say, I'm going to take that and run with it. If God has blinded some and elected some, why bother saying the same thing to the blind, over and over and over again. Still blind. Still deaf. Still dumb.

The reason is because Jesus did. We're weeks away from crucifixion and Jesus is still saying the same things to the same deaf, dumb, blind, judged people. Let me draw us back to our passage today.

We're in a room where the silence and hatred is deafening. These men are staring at Jesus with vitriolic hatred. He broke their Sabbath tradition. He did

not break God's law. He violated their religious tradition. They're convinced in their minds that they will be welcomed in heaven and that He will be in hell. The opposite is true.

Jesus never stops plowing that bad ground, never stops planting the seeds of God's word. What does He say. The same thing He's been saying for 3 years. Things are not what you think. The reality of the kingdom is different than the model you've created for yourselves.

*Vs. 7 And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table; saying to them,*

They thought they were there to watch Him, but we learn He was watching them. This is a reception. This pharisee may have been fairly wealthy. And so we have a room with tables called tricliniums. Three can recline at each of them. And they are arranged with the nobleman who is giving the reception in the middle of the room and the other tables in a circle fashion around him.

Then there's a whole pecking order of placements in relation to him. The table at his right hand is first in importance, and the person in the center of that table is highest and so on.

We've been watching the TV show about the president and we still do the same thing today. When the president gives a big state dinner, the aides and staff spend hours deciding who will sit where with guests of most honor being closer to the president and those of less importance being further removed.

This idea of honor shown by placement in a room is a human game we're still playing. But in this case, these proud men are scrambling to get to the best seats of the most pre-eminence first. And Jesus uses their time honored tradition to show them something about themselves that God hates.

*saying to them, 8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may*

*have been invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.*

For the purposes of His little parable He uses the familiar pageantry of a wedding feast. An even bigger event than this pharisee having a luncheon on a sabbath. A wedding feast was the event of the year in their culture. And Jesus will use this scenario of a gathering for a wedding very often to teach His truth. We'll see it again in just a few verses in this chapter.

And Jesus gives them a scenario where it's a wedding feast and you've gotten there at a good time, you've made it into the room before most others and you've gone straight to the best seat and sort of laid claim. I'm claiming this place of honor for me.

But the man giving the party comes into the room last after all are seated and walks straight up to you and says, I'm sorry, but you will have to defer to this man. He belongs in this place of honor at my reception. And at that point, all the other seats of less honor are all taken so you go out to the cheap seats or perhaps have to stand against a wall.

The point of the parable is about how we perceive ourselves in ranking in the kingdom of God, and how God perceives us. Jesus is using a familiar physical reality that they would understand and had seen often, including this very day He's speaking.

The point of the parable is, you thought you belonged at the important table right next to God, but God says, you're not as important as you thought. Move.

In this version it's move to last place. But in other versions it's who are you? I don't know you. You feast crasher. Bind this person up and throw them out into the darkness.

It's a picture of these jews who think they're almost like God himself, they're

so fervent and righteous, but on that day when they see Him face to face they're going to find out their righteousness was only filthy rags.

We think we'll have a place at God's table, but God's criteria for most and least honor is different than ours. In a similar account in Matthew's gospel the wedding owner doesn't just remove the fellow to a place of less honor, he has him bound and thrown into outer darkness. Back to Jesus parable.

*10 "But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.*

You're invited and you go in and stand at the wall while the others are rushing for the best seats. And the one who invited the guests takes you right to the seat where the guy who just got moved to the rear and gives you that place of honor deserved by you and undeserved by the other crass guy.

How much more honor for the man who owns the feast to give you a place of more honor.

What's going on here? What is the parable about? Is Jesus trying to teach these hypocrites how to be classier hypocrites? No. There's a single lesson here in regard to God's future feast in His kingdom.

*11 "For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."*

God hates competition. He's God and He hates anyone else that's trying to be God. That's the bottom line of the sin of pride. Pride is the sin that robs God of the honor due to Him and takes it for ourselves.

This is a foundational truth that we should learn when we are infants. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 both use the identical quote because it cannot be stated any more plainly; *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

At it's core, pride is the sin of wanting to displace God as God and put you there instead. It's the original sin of Satan that got him thrown out of heaven.

From the heart of Satan in Isaiah 14;

*“I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of assembly, in the far reaches of the north. 14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”*

I will, I will, I will. First three words. I will ascend. That's what every proud person is attempting to do from some crummy pharisee grabbing the best seat first, all the way up to Satan. Everybody is scratching their way to the top. And God hates it. From the guy at the bottom to the guy at the top, God hates the sin of pride.

Proverbs 3:34

*He mocks the mockers, but gives grace to the humble.* God is in heaven laughing at every proud boaster who is storming His authority to reign. Pride is a serious serious sin.

In a way, weeks before these men will murder Him, think about the grace of a Saviour who humbles Himself to graciously reach out to these proud men again and again in warning them.

From their perspective, they've got this whole proud pecking order of who is highest in esteem and who gets to sit in which place of ascending and descending honor. Jesus and the sick man that He healed aren't even players. They aren't on the honor list. The only reason Jesus is there is for entertainment value.

Boys, the club will be meeting today, and Jesus will be there. Let's see what we can get on Him to add to our list of hatreds.

From God's perspective, the person far above all, is His only Son, the very One that these proud men are doing their utmost to disgrace. The values in the

kingdom of God are just exactly opposite of the values in the kingdom of men.

Weeks out from His murder, Jesus is still graciously reaching out to these men. *11 "For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."*

They think they are ascending upward to be like God. Jesus says you're descending to the pit. Exactly opposite. Scrambling for the most honorable seats betrays a heart condition that God not only hates, He will throw it out of His presence and into the same place reserved for the original proud ascender.

How gracious is our Saviour to continue speaking to proud haters who are seething to murder Him. How humble is our Saviour whom God will highly exalt! Paul tells of a celebration in heaven when the most humble of all will become the most exalted of all. Lord, if I can please just be a fly on the wall at that celebration!

*Ppn. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

But humble Jesus isn't finished in this room;

*12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you. 13 "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the*

*righteous.”*

All of this posturing of the proud ascenders is its own payment. I'll invite you to my party and honor you, but then you are required to invite me to your party and honor me.

Does anybody actually watch the Oscars? All the beautiful people in a room together in one place at one time. If you're at the top of that heap the honor begins as the limousine pulls up to the red carpet at the entrance. The cameras are on you as you climb out of the chariot and ascend upon the red carpet into the room of great honor.

Whoopee. Five minutes later you're in hell. Forever. God is up in heaven laughing at the entire ordeal. His fury and His laughter are the same thing.

God's wrath and God's mercy are the same thing. Sort of like a stiff ocean wind. If you're going in the direction of the wind, it's mercy. But if you're going into the wind, it's wrath. But it's the same thing.

Jesus says, you pharisee's are trying to ascend in your pride by all of your good will posturing and honor parties. God hates all of it.

If you want to throw a party that God would approve and enjoy, invite all of the humble people who can never repay. This is a picture of God. God who invites sinners who can never repay the debt of their sin, to come to His table and feast with Him in the kingdom.

It's so counterintuitive to this world's fallen pride. Be like God. Invite those who can never hope to repay you. God repays those who humble themselves here to serve the downtrodden.

*14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”*

Don't miss the main point of Jesus gracious message to these proud pharisees;

Don't live in this world to ascend here. To proudly gain more and more prominence in this world. We are to live in such a humble and self emptying way that benefits those less fortunate than we are because when we do that, it looks like what God does, and we pay our ascendance forward, to the next life.

The law of living now, not for now, but for later. We live as though this life was 5 mins long and our motives are not for gain now, but gain later.

Jesus actually gives us a motive of wealth and happiness. It's OK to want to be rich. It's OK to want to be happy. But those motives aren't for this world, Jesus teaches us to pay it forward for the next world. Humbly helping whoever it is that you can help here, pays forward unimaginable wealth in the next world.

Go ahead and be greedy. Go ahead and be an ascender. But understand that the way you do both of those is to become nothing in this world, for the sake of the Name, for the sake of God's glory, become nothing here, and Jesus says, you will be rich in the next world. The world that lasts forever.

This world is perishing. How foolish these social climbers, these hypocrites, these pharisees who are scratching each others eyes out to climb to the next rung of greatness in a world that will soon perish in fire. All of it is motivated by pride. Satanic pride which God will judge with His wrath.

Jesus says, we need to humbly leave this world behind and work for treasure in the next world.

In the spiritual realm, beyond this perishing world, we humble ourselves and accept that in God's realm, we are *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind*, spiritually. Adam has left us poor and crippled and blind and lame because of sin. That describes us accurately. It takes humility to confess that.

But God responds to true humility and sorrow over sin, and He says come to

my banquet, come to my feast. Don't worry about your rags you're wearing, I'm going to clothe you for my feast in my Son's brilliant white clean wedding garments.

That is the status, not our own, a status purchased for us by Jesus when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. He took the punishment of death we deserved. He paid the debt we could not pay. And the risen Christ will clothe us in wedding garments, white and clean, which is His righteousness, not our own.

When Jesus said, *Therefore you must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect*; It wasn't hyperbole. That IS the standard. We will go to that feast clothed in Christ's perfection.