

Luke 14

Verse 7-11

A or D Reserve Seating

12.02.2006

Are you going to Melbourne for the Commonwealth Games? I am not, but after the Sydney Olympics, I have been looking at how tickets have been selling in Melbourne. This past week you could still buy A and B reserve tickets for the Opening and Closing, nothing for the aquatics, but plenty of A,B,C and D reserve tickets for track and field and lots of other events.

Imagine if someone with D reserve seating went into the A reserve section of the venues, especially if they set up near the royal box, or near the foreign dignitaries. What sort of security response do you think would happen?

Some people will try to improve their seating if they can, even if it means occasionally getting embarrassed. People have been trying that for thousands of years. It happened in Jesus' time.

As we saw last week, in Luke 14 Jesus was at a prominent Pharisee's home for a meal. It was an important occasion. Eminent Israelites were there. and Jesus watched them jostle for the good seats, and their disappointment when moved to a lesser valued seat.

As the meal progressed, the tension chafed when Jesus healed the man with dropsy. The Pharisees had tried to trap him, but Jesus turned it back on them. He had shown true compassion compared to their diamond-hard law encrusted hearts. These religious leaders, who prided themselves on keeping the law, had been shown to have failed to have understood the Law.

Now Jesus would show that they had also failed to understand the wisdom parts of the Old Testament. Old Testament wisdom did not simply teach morals or etiquette. It assumes that the reader was in a right relationship with God, and wanted to know how best to live in order to continue to please God. In the Old Testament, the truly wise person not only lived wisely, but also taught others how to live.

eg Proverbs 25:6-7 says, "*Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place*

among great men; it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here", than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman."

Being very wise, Jesus showed their foolish pride, by telling a story in Luke 14:8-10. "*When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; And the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you."*

That is good logic is it not! God is not against logic. But we are wise to apply logic within the limits He sets for us. That means we should not use logic to go against what God has revealed in the Bible. But the question arises, does the logic of Jesus teach them to show false humility? Does he encourage them to simply think about the honour that they may receive by humbling themselves and being exalted?

It may seem like that, esp as he says in v11 "*For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

But he was teaching something much more important than a show of humility. In God's kingdom, the way ahead is to become humble.

Pride in our feeble efforts, or even in the occasional impressive thing, does not count for much. The way to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God is to serve.

On another occasion, his disciples were arguing about how important they were. Jesus stopped the argument and placed a child before them and said that God looks for child-like trust. No one enters the Kingdom of God without child-like faith.

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Yet so often we are tempted to be like the Pharisees. We recognise the more impressive gifts and skills in people, and we think that God must be more proud of them, and he has blessed them more than us.

We focus on the externals, like who can sit in the prized seating. But God will humble all such vain pride.

And he raises up and exalts the humble. The broken and contrite he will not send away. The man with dropsy, despised by the Pharisees and treated as a stooge simply to try to bring Jesus down, was shown mercy and exalted when Jesus healed him. He had not rated an invitation to sit at the dinner in the Pharisee's place. Yet our Lord cared and healed him.

Are you humble? Do you consider others as better than yourself? Do you want God to exalt you or humiliate you?

In Philippians 2, Paul describes the humility of Jesus. Though he was equal with God, he humbled himself to become a servant and die for us. Yet God exalted him to the highest place, where at His name, every knee will bow and adore him.

We are to have the same attitude as Jesus. We are not to fight and scratch each other. We are not to jostle for the best seats. We are not to boost our own egos by claiming more than we should have and then being deflated by others.

Rather we are to be humble. Not with a patently false humility which only seeks people to push us up. Rather, with the humility which flows from a right understanding that our true worth is not found in what we do, or in what skills or gifts we have. It simply is to flow from the grace of God. We do not deserve his love or praise, but He freely gives it to us as we walk humbly with our God.