

Luke 14:1-14

“The Way Up Is Down”

It doesn't take too long in your journey as a believer to discover that “Kingdom Rationale” is counter-intuitive. Until you realize that as humanity that *we're* the one's that have been flipped upside down due to the sin nature that's inherent with in us all; and so in reality humanity in general has a counter-intuitive rationale. You say, “Jeff, what on earth are you talking about?”

When God created man He created us as a lesser trinity of sorts, comprised of 3 parts in our single being. We are spirit, mind and body. When God created us He created us with the spirit as the primary, the mind seeking to fulfill the drive and the desire of the spirit (which was fellowship and intimacy with God) while the flesh was left dormant.

When man fell the whole thing turned upside down so that now the flesh took the primary position, the mind seeking to fulfill the drives and desires of the flesh while the spirit is left dormant. This is man's present position apart from Christ. When Christ comes into our life we're “born again” as by the Spirit of God being restored (though still having a sin nature) to the original intent whereby now the spirit is “alive” again, (remember these Vs?) *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”*¹ Now the mind is once again seeking to fulfill the desire of the spirit and our flesh is continually fighting for that premier position in our lives and thus we have the war/battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

¹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Eph 2:1-5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Here's my point, the way we think "naturally" wasn't really the way God designed us to think. We think that in order to be great you've got to have power, position, be the big dog and at the top of the pecking order. That's not what the word of God teaches at all, Jesus said that if we want to be great in the kingdom of God that we've got to become the servant of all, the least of all, in fact the *slave* of all. Mark 9:35, "*If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.*"² We feel compelled to show strength, exhibit confidence, Jesus said we need to come as children, lowly and meek. We feel as though we need to make sure people recognize our value, if you want to be seen as someone you need to present/promote yourself as someone!

The bible teaches that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble, that promotion doesn't come from the east or from the west, but from the Lord. That far from seeking to be a man pleaser, a people pleaser, we're to be God pleasers. We think that the way to gain is to *grab* as much as we can, the bible teaches that the way to gain is to *give* as much as you can. It's what I call "kingdom rationale" and it simply runs contradictive to our natural way of thinking.

Jesus touches on this particular topic in today's text, that to go high is to be brought low and that to go low is to be lifted high... The context that creates this life lesson is found in a Pharisees house, notice.

Vs 1-2

It seems simply to be another day in the life of our Lord doesn't it? You can sense snare that they're seeking to set for Him. Now I don't know why they continued to place Him in a position whereby they wanted to see if He would really heal someone on the Sabbath. He's already healed people or done something to offend their interpretation of the Sabbath law on at least ½ dozen occasions before, it's not like they need more evidence (as far as they're concerned).

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mk 9:35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But let's set the stage and see the scene. It was a Sabbath day; after synagogue no doubt that we read that this "ruler" of the Pharisees invited Jesus over for lunch. But we note that it wasn't really because he was genuinely interested *in* Christ or wanted to learn *from* Christ but rather it was so they could "watch Him closely." The word "Watched" here speaks of "lurking" or to watch with malicious intent. Like when an eagle is swooping down on a field mouse. He's keeping his eye on that rodent, watching it intently, not because he wants to in anyway help it but rather he's looking very much so to harm it so as to devour it...same idea here. As the psalmist said, "*They only consult to cast him down from his high position; They delight in lies; They bless with their mouth, But they curse inwardly.*" Psalm 62:4

It seems that Jesus was always under the gun, always being subjected to scrutiny, people were always watching Him, wanting to know what He would do in *this* situation, how He would react in *that* scenario. Eyes were always upon Him and here's what you need to know; as a believer you deceive yourself if you think it's any different with you. People are watching you, they're subjecting you to scrutiny, they want to know what you'll do when *this* goes wrong, or when *that* tragedy breaks loose in your life, or when you're placed in a precarious position how will you handle it? In the 2nd book written to the Corinthians in ch 3 Paul the apostle speaks of how we're all (as believers) like living epistles known and read by all men. Written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

The point being that people are watching your life. Perhaps you've heard the phrase something to the effect that people might never read a bible but you can be sure that they're reading your life from cover to cover.

They were watching our Lord, why? Because they'd placed a man before Him who had dropsy; dropsy is a condition of excess fluid in the tissues of the body due to perhaps liver problems or kidney problems which results in this elephantine swelling in the face or other limbs. It's a sad indictment to think that they would use human suffering to "bait" our Lord. It's a great testimony (however) to our Lord that they realized that He couldn't *not* have compassion upon those who were hurting or in need of His touch.

with that in mind I would encourage you today that if you're somehow hurting, or in need of our Lord's touch upon your life, He's here for you, He wants to touch you and work healing and restoration in your life...look at Vs 3

Vs 3

Translation? Is it ever the *wrong time* to do the *right thing*? Think about that; is it ever the wrong time to do the right thing? Of course not, they knew that but what could they say? If they said He shouldn't heal Him, they're cold and heartless. If they say go ahead and heal him then they violate their own interpretation of the law. So, they brought him in there to place our Lord on the horns of a dilemma, but our Lord being a master at turning the tables placed *them* on the horns of a dilemma. Now the problem is theirs, not His.

Vs 4

No elaborate ceremony, He didn't push him down, no hocus-pocus or fanfare, the Lord simply healed him and let him go. Probably encouraged him to go ahead and leave to release him from the awkward environment he'd been subjected to.

Vs 5-6

We've seen the Lord use this rationale before, it's an argument that takes us from the lesser to the greater. If you'll show compassion to an animal (God's lesser creation) on the Sabbath; than you ought to show compassion to a human being (God's greater creation) on the Sabbath.

Let me encourage you with this thought process as it pertains to your interpretation of the scriptures. Anytime you understand God's word in such a way that it moves you *away* from principles like grace, mercy, compassion, forgiveness or restoration you've strayed from a proper application/interpretation of the word of God. That's not to say that God doesn't deal with sin in the life of His children, He most certainly does, but the motive isn't punitive, but rather it's to invoke repentance. The motive is restoration.

The thing that strikes me as so sad about this event is that they were so blinded by their own ways that they couldn't rejoice in what was going on even though the Lord was doing a radical work right in their very midst... I wonder how many times we're blinded by superfluous details from being apart *of* and/or rejoicing *over* a work of God right in front of us. God is doing an awesome work but because its not happening the *way* we think it should, *when* we think it should or *how* we think it should we can't even see it, we refuse to acknowledge it...we're blind.

Listen, man wasn't made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man. In other words God made the Sabbath to be a blessing for man, not to bring man into bondage and anytime we're seeing the word of God as bondage rather than a blessing we're simply not in line with the heart of God concerning the matter. Because God's word isn't bondage, it's a blessing, He's for us, not against us, came *not* to place us in bondage, but to set us free...

Vs 7-9

It's interesting how the scene starts out with them watching *Him* but before long we discover that in reality He's the one watching *them*. He "noted" how they chose the best places to sit, the places of honor, the high profile positions next to the host or the guest of honor.

The word of course that comes into mind (at least my mind) when I read this section of scripture is "humiliation". Looking to be in a position of prominence only to be humiliated when you're asked to move down...

Now the principle is beginning to come into focus for us isn't it? How that a man's pride will bring him low. If you rush, if I run in wanting to be placed in a position of importance looking to grab that place of prominence what's that indicative or symptomatic of? "Pride". It's a human disease, and we're all infected with it. But Jesus is seeking to administer some spiritual antibiotics here. The bible seeks to splash a little spiritual cold water on our faces and snap us back into reality regarding our proper place.

In the book of Philippians we read, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*” Philippians 2:3 In Romans ch 12 Paul said, “*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*” Romans 12:3 Translation? “Keep it real”. Instead of self-exaltation, try imposing a little self-humiliation: notice.

Vs 10

If pride brings you low than humility will lift you up, that’s the wisdom that Jesus is seeking to impart to us here. Now the trick is being genuine in your contentment in the lowly place. If you take it simply as a gimmick to be exalted that’s called *false humility* and is in reality a high form of pride...

I also want you to realize that Jesus isn’t simply encouraging us to exercise good manners here but He’s exhorting us in a lifestyle that in lowliness of mind genuinely esteems others better than themselves (Phil 2:13).

Vs 11

If this Vs isn’t underlined, highlighted or somehow having been drawn attention to in your bible make it so. It’s an incredibly common theme that’s threaded throughout the entirety of scripture. “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Not only do we see that principle pounded out *literally* in Vs like Proverbs 29:23 “*A man’s pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor.*” In James 4:6 “*God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.*” and James 4:10 “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*” But we see it portrayed in people’s lives *practically* all throughout the bible.

We could mention Moses; there he was, and somehow in some way he knew (the bible informs us [Acts 7]) that God had placed a calling upon his life to lead the children of Israel out of bondage. He sees an Egyptian abusing an Israelite and he kills him and buries him in the sand. “Here I am, your strong, competent and confident leader!” But his plan backfired, they didn’t follow him they *feared* him, when Moses learned that it was getting around that he’d killed an Egyptian he fled into the wilderness and for the next 40 yrs he would be humbled. Tending sheep, being brought low, from powerful in Egypt to a sheep herder in the wilderness. He was humbled, such to the extent that when God finally called him he had to be convinced to go because he’d lost any/all self confidence he had earlier on as a young man. He had to be shown miracles, told God’s name, convinced that God would give him the words; I mean this was a man who was emptied of self...completely. What happened? God exalted him, gave him a position of power, and prominence over the nation and used him in a way that was 2nd only to Christ in the nation of Israel... Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Saul was just the opposite, started humble (the least man in the least tribe) even hiding at his coronation ceremony. Though he was a head taller than all the other Israelites he was “little” in his own eyes (1 Sam 15:17). But through the course of time he got puffed up and prideful in his heart, tried to play the part of the priest in making a sacrifice. Samuel came upon him rebuked him and told him that God had rejected him from being king and as he turned away from Saul, Saul grabbed his robe and it tore and Samuel told him that even so the kingdom had been torn from him and given to another (namely David) who was better than him. In humility he was exalted but his pride brought him low and his life ended via attempted suicide on the battlefield after he’d reckoned that all was lost. He threw himself on his spear but ultimately an Amalekite came by and took his life.

We could see the principle portrayed in David’s life, in Jonah’s life, in Peter’s life, so many illustrations and examples in the word of God but I think you get the point. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

I suppose the 2 most prominent examples would be found in Satan and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ Satan sought to exalt himself. We read in the book of Isaiah, *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.”* Is 14:12-15 On the other hand we have Jesus, of whom the bible tells us, *“who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*³ Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted. The way up...is down.

Vs12-14

Now you should realize that Jesus wasn't saying that you can never have your friends over, but only invite homeless people all the time. The verb tense is such as to say, “Don't always *only* invite family, friends and those who can/will repay you.” Don't give to get back in return, don't form a mutual admiration club of sorts.

But rather keep your motives in check by blessing people in such a way that they really can't bless you back in like manner. One has said, “You can't have your reward twice.” You can either be rewarded now in the form of repayment, or you can be rewarded at the resurrection whereby your reward will last forever, it's up to you. Our motive for sharing/giving should be for the praise of God and not the applause of men; our hearts should long for eternal rewards in heaven as opposed to temporary recognition on earth.

³ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Php 2:6-11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The bible declares, “*He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, And He will pay back what he has given.*”⁴ Now to an extent that’s a relative statement because there will always be people with more than you and people with less than you but again the idea is to bless those who can’t bless you back in like manner, don’t take the “what’s in it for me” mentality but rather do what you do to be rewarded of God not recognized of man. It’s that counterintuitive frame of heart/mind, to be great, serve, to gain, give, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and in due time...He will lift you up.

Prayer Points:

Lord Jesus we want to have Your heart. Help us to walk in humility, to not set our minds on high things but rather that we associate with the humble. Lord there’s never been anyone who deserved to be in that place of honor more than You yet You came to serve and to give Your life away, may we heed Your example and do as You have done. Father we need Your grace... You’ve stated that it’s to the humble that You give Your grace so may we remain in the place of humility, that You might bless and glorify *Yourself* in *our* lives.

Jesus humbled Himself more so than any other man. He did so by living a sinless life yet dying a sinners death upon the cross. It’s through His death that we obtain eternal life. How so? By humbling ourselves, turning from our sin and trusting in His work upon the cross on our behalf. Believing in the sufficiency of His sacrifice, the shedding of His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. If God’s calling you today, humble yourself in His sight and believe upon Jesus Christ

⁴ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Pr 19:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.