

Lessons From Sunday Dinner pt 2: Cruel, Self-Centered Legalism

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Let's go to Luke 14 as we continue through the gospel of Luke. If you're visiting today, we're going verse-by-verse, unleashing the truth of Luke and we've come to a section where the Lord has been invited to a dinner table to eat with of all things, his arch-enemies the Pharisees who are the leaders of the Jews. He accepts the invitation; he shows his grace, his patience, his mercy and going and dining with these people who have already avowed to destroy him. It's very interesting that as they're sitting at the table, he begins teaching lessons and I call this "Lessons from Sunday Dinner." I know the Sabbath day is not Sunday but it parallels with the Lord's day for us which is a Sunday.

Here we have part 2 entitled "Cruel, Self-Centered Legalism." Cruel, self-centered legalism. Beginning in verse 7, Luke 14,

"7 And He," that's our Lord, "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, 8 'When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, "Give your place to this man," and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. 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. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.' 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, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. 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.'"

I. in our outline as our Lord gives lessons from the Sunday dinner table is: the self-exalting rather will be God-humbled. That's what he says: the self-exalting will be God-humbled. In verse 7, the Bible says Jesus is giving the parable. You know the word "parable" just means "a story" or "an illustration" to present a spiritual truth. So, he's giving them this illustration and he's been observing as he's about to give this parable that the Pharisees and their friends come in and they're jockeying around, scrambling around in a contentious spirit, scrambling to get the seat closest to the host because that was the seat of highest honor. You've got to understand these Jews, particularly these Pharisees, were out-and-out externalists. That is, they believed everything about religion was what you put on or what was seen on the outside. They saw themselves as the greatest in the kingdom and they thought that that must be expressed physically and in every setting so they had to be in the highest, most esteemed place at the table because they figured themselves as the highest and most esteemed in God's eyes. Lots of arrogance here.

Then in verses 8-10, the Lord actually gives the parable and he says, "Men, when you're invited to a wedding feast, don't run in there and sit at the highest seat. Put yourself in the lowest spot and then the host who invited you may indeed come and exalt you and bring you to a higher place but if you put yourself in the higher place, the most honored place, and then that's someone else's seat, you're going to be disgraced when he asks you to sit down." The point is: don't assign yourself a position of honor, that's for others to do.

Of course, the Lord is teaching to whom? The Jews. He's teaching to the household of Israel, the family of God, if you will. So, let's make application for ourselves that basically parallels with the local church today in the family of God. We should not be seeking places of honor; we should not be seeking to be the head; we should not be seeking to be in charge. If that comes to us, accept it but it should not be the thing that you seek because spirituality is not what you get externally, it's what you are internally. That's the Lord's point. Do you desire to be a leader in the church? Do you desire to be a teacher in the church? Do you desire to have an office or a position of authority in the church? Then remain humble. Serve faithfully where you've been assigned by the present leadership. Selflessly offer to teach, serve, or whatever you can do in your own small group. Give it all to God and see if those already in leadership, your small group leader, your outreach leader, your pastor who oversees your area or whoever else, see if they might then come to you and say, "We see God's hand on your life. We see a spirit of humility and devotion and honor for the Lord. You're not in it for you, you're in it for the church." And then they will put you in that office, into that position. That's exactly what the Lord is teaching.

But I always like to bring out a balancing truth here because we are capable in our fallen flesh of getting out of balance on this side and getting into fleshliness and sin or getting out of balance over on this side and getting into fleshliness and sin. As the Lord is talking about humbling yourself, let's don't go to the other extreme. Some are so proud of their humility that it's apparent. Some have such a show of humility but their hearts are full of vanity. In Romans 13:7 the Apostle Paul gives a good guiding principle, "Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." There are places and positions and times where people are

honored among others. Let's not say that's not right and true. It's true in God's economy; it's true in the world; it's true in the church. But it's not something that should be sought. If you are honored by position or a place of service or leadership within God's church, accept it graciously, be thankful for it and guard your heart. Talk to yourself. Humble yourself about the position God may have given you that it's not of any good in you or any merit in you. It's all of grace and God gets all the glory.

So, Jesus gave a promise here: everyone who exalts himself. Remember the context: he's at this dinner table with these Pharisees who have an out-and-out doctrinal teaching that they should exalt themselves. I mean, we don't even have that today. We have people who exalt themselves but they had an articulated doctrine whereby they condoned such a proud and arrogant thing. So, that's the spirit, that's the trademark of these Pharisees and it's been true in every generation that fleshly, carnal men always prefer momentary glory over substantial eternal glory. It's always been the case.

Then Jesus says: everyone who does this, though, who exalts himself, will be humbled. Now, this is a principle that's true in life in general. Is it not true you just rise to fall? Is it not true that one rises up, give it a little while and then they're gone? We have so many good examples of that in the Scripture: Saul was made king by God himself and God sent Saul into battle and he said, "Now, when you go into battle, all the glory and all the spoil is to be unto me and unto my glory." Well, the first thing Saul did after he won the battle, the Bible says was he built a monument to himself and God determined right there in his heart, "I'm removing the kingdom from him." That took many years, but eventually Saul was removed, he was brought down and humbled and David took the throne of Israel.

Over and over we see this in Scripture. Absalom sits outside the gate. God had placed David on the throne of Israel. David was an imperfect man. David made some mistakes. David sinned. Absalom was bitter and resentful about his dad and he worked and he connived and he strived with everything in him to begin to turn the hearts of the men of Israel, the Bible says, off of David and onto himself. He would tell them, "Oh, if I were king, I would meet your needs. If I were king, you would be cared for." It sounds like a modern politician, doesn't it? "If I were king, you wouldn't even have to work. We'll have government programs for everybody." Basically that's what Absalom was saying and then the day came when he sounded the trumpet and he had all these men that he'd won to his opinion join with him and they run David off the throne and David is hiding out for his life but Absalom's riding a mule through the trees and gets his head caught in the trees. Old Lester Roloff, any of you know who Lester Roloff is? Boy, you talk about an old moss-backed Baptist preacher now. I love Lester Roloff. Lester Roloff said he got his head hung in the tree because he had long hair, he was a hippie. That's what Lester would say, "He's a hippie." I'm not saying he was a hippie but he had long hair. He got his hair caught in the tree and Joab, a loyalist to King David, came along and thrust a spear into him and killed him. Look, if you exalt yourself, you'll be humbled.

Nebuchadnezzar goes out on the balcony of Belshazzar. There's probably not been a greater kingdom on earth than the great Babylonian kingdom. Read what archeologists and anthropologists write about the ancient civilization of Babylon. It's amazing to read

about. The hanging gardens, all the things, he just stood on his balcony applauding himself for what he had done and it wasn't just too many days after that that God struck him down with madness and he's out on the grass grazing like a cow. God struck him down. "You exalt yourself," God says, "I'll make it my job to bring you down." But if God exalts you, listen to me, if God exalts you, no man can bring you down.

Let's go a little further here. II. The self-humbled will be God-exalted. The self-humbled will be God-exalted. Now, I understand the sovereignty of God. You can't bring out every doctrine you know and appreciate in every point, alright? What I mean is: by the grace of God, we're able to humble ourselves. That's what I mean by self-humbled. Notice what he says in verse 11 there, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Now humility, folks, is not truly thinking low of yourself, in the final analysis, true humility is more forgetting ourselves. True humility means we throw all of our preference and viewpoint aside and just cling to the truth of God's word. Wherever my natural inclination agrees with God's word, okay but anywhere and everywhere where God's word contradicts my natural conclusion and inclination, then I forget myself and I do what God says. Can I get an Amen there? Amen? Whether it's treating my wife or raising my kids or running my business or financial management, if I have good inclinations that are biblical, so be it but when I run across something in the word of God that contradicts me, God's right and I'm wrong, forget me. That's Christian humility. Jesus said in John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." That's humility. "I'm forgetting me," Jesus said, "and obeying my Father's will."

Then, Philippians 2:7-8, "But," this is speaking of Jesus, "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus threw out all reason, all logic of the day. Remember, not too far before he goes to the cross, his most loyal follower, Simon Peter, pulls him aside and says, "God forbid it. You're not going to the cross." You see, Peter wasn't humbled yet. Peter was being genuine and he thought, "No, you can't go and die." Peter was thinking like a man thinks, logically it just doesn't make sense. But Jesus knew what his heavenly Father said, "You're going to go and die for the sins of the children." So, Jesus being truly humble, forgot himself and did what God said to do. Again, let's not warp humility by a modern worldly view of humility. On the one hand in true humility to obey his Father's will, he goes to a cross and suffers the torment and anguish of death. Equally so, he forgets himself and obeys his Father's will and gives the most harsh, scathing, publicly embarrassing rebukes to the scribes and Pharisees and many others. He was a man's man in his word rebuking publicly the Pharisees. He goes into the temple with a cat o'nine tails, a whip, and he drives out the money changers with physical strength and vigor. Not just bowing down, he ran over them on that day. So, what's my point? God's will is what we do and that's true humility. Forgetting ourselves and lining up with God's word and that means we bow down, that means we give in, that means we turn the other cheek and we do those things. Other times, you have to be bold and courageous and firm and that's true humility because that's God's word. Forgetting ourselves and doing what God says.

Now let me just give you some insightful thoughts that I found on humility. The truly humble one is never troubled over whether they've been slighted by another. When someone takes advantage of you, is not considerate of you, do you register it down? Do you sharpen an ax and put it in your heart so that the next time you see them you might hack them to pieces? The truly humble man is not worried. He doesn't make a big deal out of being slighted by others. The truly humble man walks in a God-sufficiency. Humility is the foundation stone of Christian graces. The road to the honors of heaven passes through the gate of humility. Humility is unable to admire itself and is most often unknown to its possessor. Almost nothing grows on majestic mountaintops, the real fruit comes in the low valley. Augustine, an early father of the Christian church, said: "The sufficiency of my merit is to know that my merit is insufficient." Humility gives glory to God, pride takes glory from men. God is clothed in holiness, his children are clothed in humility. Jesus said this kind of spirit, this kind of man, this kind of woman, this kind of young person, will be exalted. This is a prophecy and it's a promise. What is the hidden key to humility? Faith. "I know God is going to reward me. I know God is going to work all this out so I can say no to self and walk in humility.

III. A third lesson, if you will, are a part of this particular session of lessons around the Sunday dinner table with Christ is: don't serve others for yourself. Interesting: don't serve others for yourself. These Pharisees had gotten into the habit of only and always having these wonderful sumptuous meals right in the presence and before many of their brethren who literally were hungry and starving. And at these wonderful sumptuous meals would only invite other wealthy influential people because those are the people that could do something back good for them. Jesus rebukes them for that. Look at it, if you will, in verse 12, he says, "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, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment.'" So in essence what he's giving us here, is a warning about serving and blessing others with the primary motive of ourselves. Actually, serving or blessing ourselves.

Now, these truths taught by our Lord are not to be taken out of the historical or biblical context. We know he's going to say here in verse 13, "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind." Incidentally, I'll tie this in in a moment, those were the categories of people who in this day were deemed as to be unusual sinners by the Jews because they had these diseases and these maladies because God was displeased with them. That's a false doctrine but that's what they held to. So, this was a real radical, startling thing for these Jews to hear him say. So, what does this mean? Does this mean if we're doing pretty well often, by the way, all of us in this room compared to the people in this day are pretty well off. All of us could find a way to scratch together a pretty good meal for folks if we needed to. Amen? Is he saying that in no way ever should you ever invite your friends or others, you must go to the very, very poorest of your culture and only feed them whenever you have a meal? Of course not. Don't go into the Scripture with a non-historical contextual interpolation on the text. That's not what the Lord is saying.

Let me give you some thoughts on that: 1. The Pharisees did practically everything they did out of pride and self-gain. So that's what he's dealing with here, people who did everything they did out of pride and self-gain. 2. Again, the context is the household of Israel, the church of Israel, and that parallels our local church family today. So, this does not primarily teach a lesson about helping the needy in general in the world though the Bible teaches that but that's not primarily what this is teaching. Other texts do teach that, this one does not. 3. This is certainly not a prohibition of having a dinner party for friends or family or relatives or business associates. Certainly you can do that. God's not against that but his point is that within the family of God, us the local church family at least, if there are those who are truly hungry and truly hurting, you must have concern for all the family and not just the few that can help you. That's the Lord's point. To only bless those who are wealthy or in your circle and doing that so that they can return something back to you is the mark of not having a Christian heart. So, he's not saying as long as there's a hungry person in the world you can't have a feast and bless your friends and neighbors. That's not what he's saying but he's saying, "You're at least responsible for those in the household of God who are hurting and make sure you're caring for them equally."

Now, an honest assessment of our present situation, I'll say in America, and the situation in ancient Israel 2,000 years ago would lead one to the conclusion that we have very, very few truly hurting needy people. We have people who don't have as much as others but compared to what they called needy and hungry in this age, we really don't have any. We have extensive social welfare programs and there's good in those. I think they're abused but there's good in those and we have many, many ministries that do many things that help those who are without so we don't have the poor and the hungry like they did in our Lord's day. So let me give a warning to the modern liberal and the modern progressives as they call themselves, who want to go to the Scriptures and do an eisegesis interpolating onto the Scriptures their socialism and try to make Jesus look like he was teaching some socialist or communist doctrine. That is not true. That is perverting the doctrines of Christ. I'll remind you that when Jesus Christ left this earth, he left untold thousands if not millions who are hurting and hungry and diseased that he chose not to feed or heal. Not that he didn't have care and compassion, he fed and cared for untold thousands but his main mission was a spiritual mission. So, don't you be intimidated by this crowd out there that does not love our Christ nor love the word of God but uses it when it's convenient, they think, for their socialist liberal doctrine. That's not what the Lord is teaching.

While we should, as Christ's followers, certainly have a heart to help all the truly needy that we might find in our lives, this particular text is about the household of God and those who under the guise of all things, the guise of saying they're spiritual, would brazenly feast themselves and neglect their brothers and sisters around them. That's the point the Lord is making.

Look, if you will, down at verse 13. He says, "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed." So, the heart that's in tune with God will always be a heart that cares for the truly needy. Those who despise those who are truly hurting and through fault of their own have needs and need help, if

you despise them and somehow call that Christianity, the Lord is saying you don't know what Christianity is. But it is interesting, is it not, Jesus still spends time with those kind of people. He still has dinner with those kind of people, the Pharisees. It shows his great patience and love for all sinners. But what a warped perversion these Pharisees had to have promoted such selfishness and proud ambition while at the same time cultivating, willfully cultivating an outward, even calloused, contempt for the poor around them.

Again, the primary application of this principle is that we are to show equal care for one another in the family of God. But the lesson, though, we might not find any truly needy. I mean, honestly, when we go to bed tonight, will there be any in the family of Grace Life Church who just didn't have anything to eat? I just don't think that's true. If you do, we want to help you. By the way, we do that all the time. We take up offerings every week and give out thousands and thousands of dollars to help people and want to do that. But can you say as it was in this day, people will literally go to bed and say, "There's no food in my house today." There may be a few of those but often we find drugs, alcohol and other issues and you can throw all the money you want at that but unless you help them deal with their responsibilities in those areas, then you're never going to really help them at all.

So, within the community of faith, we might not have this problem but let me ask you this by way of application: what's in your heart today about those who are not like you in the church? What's in your heart about those who are not in your social circle in the church? They may not need food like these people but the principle's the same. You can still be as proud and contemptible toward those who don't fit in your circle. That's what we want to make sure we avoid. So, he says here in verse 14, "and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you," and that's the key issue there. Do you serve others in the household of God even though you will get nothing in return out of it? The Pharisees would not do that.

Here we have the Lord rebuking these excessive, proud, evil and selfish Pharisees. Secondly, we understand that it is not wrong to fellowship with believers who we have things in common with, that we just want to hang out with. But we should also always be readily available to serve and to minister to any and all in the household of God who have any genuine need whether or not we get anything back in return. That's the mark of true Christianity. There's a powerful parallel to this that I've mentioned a few times lately and that's Matthew 25. In Matthew 25, again it's the judgment setting and Jesus has returned and he's separating people like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, the sheep representing his true Christian children and the goats representing those who are unbelievers and not sheep at all. And Jesus commends the sheep and says, "I commend you because when I was in prison, you visited me. When I was hungry, you fed me. When I was sick, you took care of me." I forget all that he said but he said, "You gave of yourselves for me when there was nothing you could gain in return." As a matter of fact, it was worse than that, this was a season of persecution and when Christians were being persecuted by the culture, ridiculed by the culture, scoffed at by the culture, locked in jail for their Christian doctrine, lost their jobs because of their Christian doctrine, he said, "You went and served and ministered to them. Not only would you not get anything in

return when you did that, but it's going to label you one of those Christians and you might get in trouble for helping them.” But he says, “That's a true Christian. You literally went to the crippled and the lame and the hurting in the family of God and took care of them.”

Now, brothers and sisters, we're in that day. I watched on Fox News this week a couple of brothers who had a reality show where they were going to rebuild old homes and they were promoting it like it was going to be a great thing and then the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community found out that they were evangelical Christians and believed in Bible morality and they bullied the leadership at the Home and Garden network and they dropped the program, just canceled it. Our own Shirey brothers here who have Shirey Ice Cream had the same thing happen to them this week. Someone found out that they had a strong biblical position on homosexuality and the owner of a business in town was bullied and they dropped the Shirey Ice Cream and said we don't want to be associated with that. This is Muscle Shoals, Alabama. When are they going to take one of the excerpts of my sermons and say, “You're a faithful member there,” and say, “Boycott his business.” Then we'll know who knows Christ. The Christians will line up and say, “I'm with you, brother. Count on me.” You might not have done everything perfectly – by the way, do we have any perfect Christians in here? But your love for Christ is genuine and good and we stand with you regardless. Not only might we not get anything in return, it may cost us but we're with you. I, for one, am kind of glad a clarifying day is coming for the household of God. And we're going to see more and more and more, as a matter of fact, I understand that the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered community has rallied together untold millions of dollars and they're working in the south now to do these very things so expect more of it to come. But what's my point? When it's difficult, when brothers are hurting, when there is nothing to gain for yourself, true Christianity is you'll go and minister and care and serve that brother or that sister.

So let me in conclusion say this of this section anyway: let's examine our hearts to see if we indeed have that kind of an attitude. Let's purposely renew a spirit of serving all and everyone in the household of God, especially at times and with those who can give us nothing back in return.

IV Real briefly, there's a kingdom truth here that everyone is welcome. Everyone is welcome. Again, what was the theological position of the Jews? The theological position of the Jews was that if you were crippled, if you're lame, if you're blind, then you're wicked, you're sinful and you're not welcome in the fellowship. And Jesus says to these religious leaders, “Look, when you give a dinner, you invite the crippled, you invited the lame, you invite the blind.” What is he saying? “All are welcome in my family. Not just the high muckety-muck elitists of Israel, not just the prominent theologians of Jerusalem, all are welcome. All of those you think are too dirty, too vile, too corrupt, too sinful, they're welcome at God's table.” I love that. If you're a prostitute, you're welcome if you repent and turn to Christ. If you're a liar, if you repent and come to Christ, you're welcome. If you're thief, if you repent and come to Christ, you're welcome. If you're a homosexual or bisexual, if you repent and come to Christ, you're welcome. If you're an adulterer, if you repent and come to Christ, you're welcome. It matters not who you are,

all are welcome. That's the message. It's a kingdom principle. Now, we've been accused, just this last week the internet's been buzzing that I teach a doctrine of exclusion and hardness. Look, here's the way it is: if you repent and turn to Christ, everyone's welcome. If you don't repent and come to Christ, you're not welcome for membership. You're welcome to come and hang out some but you're not welcome for membership. That's the way God builds his church.

Al Mohler is right and those of us around the country who believe in biblical morality and have a little bit of courage left, I believe that's a big problem for some of you. Some of you stay out of trouble not because you're tactful but because you're a coward. I have some cowardice too but I choose not to be ruled by it. It's a day for men of God to stand up and be counted. And it's going to get worse like Dr. Al Mohler who preached forth here in our conference when he was preaching to the Mormons. You know, I abhor Mormon doctrine but I'm glad they stand for biblical morality. I abhor Roman Catholic doctrine but they seem to still stand for biblical morality. I'll work with anybody that would help me kill a snake, Amen? Look, I love my Mormon friends, I love my Catholic friends but we need them to know Jesus in a true way. I just hate their church's doctrine. We may not go to heaven with these folks but we may go to jail with them. And when we do, this doctrine that Christ teaches, it costs you something, nothing in it for you but you'll love and stand with your brothers and sisters when the hurting needs you.

V. Last point. There is a true reward for those who serve for God's glory and the good of others. There is a true reward and that's what the Lord is getting to here. He said, "I want you to be men whose hearts have been changed. The old root of pride has been poisoned, I wish it was all the way gone, don't you? But when you've been saving the old root of pride and self first and it's been cut up some and you strive in progressive sanctification to walk in such a way that you want to live your life for God's glory and the good of others," and he says, "if you do that," again he's talking about mainly the household of faith, "if you do that, there's a reward coming for you." First of all, notice what he says in verse 14. He says "you will be blessed." You will be blessed. The word "blessed" there means "happy." He says, "You will find when you give of yourself to serve other brothers and sisters that can do nothing for you in return, you're going to be happy."

There you go. We can fix depression right there. There's a lot to this, folks. It's not a trite little statement from a pulpit, there's a lot to this. Some believers are not happy because they've not broken the selfish, stingy spirit. They don't even realize it but what they think about is themselves all the time and they've learned to listen to themselves complain about their condition instead of talking truth to themselves and saying, "You know, you could be in hell. That would be a lot worse." That's truth that Christ has saved you. Is your motto "Woe is me"? Are you depressed? Are you discouraged? Are you down-cast? Then yank yourself up by the nape of the neck, find the truly needy in your church family or in the community around you, expend your energy serving them and rejoice that they have nothing to give you in return and you'll find some happiness creeping up. It might scare you.

Look, I'm not making light. I've tasted being down-cast. I've experienced some depression. It's no fun but I got through it by somebody rebuking me and helping me quit thinking about me and thinking about the Lord and others. Jesus said, "If you do this, if you will give to those and serve those and minister to those who can do nothing for you in return, you're going to be happy." Boy, don't we want to end this life with men not thanking our deathbed but men being thankful for us?

Lastly, that's a temporal kind of reward, not that happiness doesn't just go into eternity but even right now we're going to be happy but then he says in the last part of verse 14, "for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Now, this is the first resurrection of all those who belong to God who will inherit eternal life. There is a new age when the church is resurrected and it will be given new eternal glorified bodies and we will have bodies fit for the company of God and of angels and there will be our reward. So, isn't it interesting here: at first the Lord says do that for those who can't give you anything back but there is something coming back. There is going to be a great reward for you if you live this way but it's in heaven. It's in heaven. You know, if you compare temporal rewards to eternal rewards, that's like comparing the seed to the plant in full harvest. There's just no comparison.

So, if we give ourselves selflessly to truly serve the truly needy among us expecting nothing back in return yet looking only to heaven for eternal rewards, that's what we want to be about and there will be a great reward for us. Finally, an example from Jesus, Hebrews 12:2, "fixing our eyes on Jesus," isn't that a great place to fix your eyes? "The author and perfecter of faith," there's a lot in that phrase but it means he modeled the true faith, he modeled what it really looks like. Now, what did he do? "Who for the joy set before Him," don't miss that phrase. "Who for the joy set before Him." In other words, when Jesus went to the cross he was focusing on his future joy. Yes, it was awful, it was terrible beyond comparison as he was the substitutionary atoning sacrifice, the guilt offering for us, however, he did it focusing on the reward that was coming. "Who for the joy set before Him," the Bible says, "endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." For the joy set before him there is eternal reward.

Let me ask you something then: what is Jesus' eternal reward? What was that joy? What was that reward out there that gave him the strength to go ahead and endure the cross and despise the shame of it? Isaiah 53:10, "But the LORD," that's God the Father, "was pleased To crush Him," that's Jesus, "putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering," here's the reward, "He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand." He will see his offspring. He knew that, "I'm here facing crucifixion. I'm here hanging on a cross. My Father has turned his back on me. My Father is acting toward me as if I were guilty in sin and as if I were a vile sinner and I'm enduring this because these are like birthing pains, through this redemption process, I'm cleansing for myself a great and mighty family of people." And one day when we get to heaven, we will be presented to Jesus as his reward. He will see his offspring and we are his offspring cleansed by him, redeemed by him, washed by him, made righteous in his righteousness, clothed in his glory and he'll say, "Man, that was

worth it! Look at my reward,” and he will treasure you, joy over you, welcome you and love you for all eternity. Wow. He's our reward and we're his reward and that's why we stay strong. That's why we stay fast. And that's why as Jesus was teaching this lesson during Sunday dinner to the Pharisees, we gladly and regularly and actively care for, minister, serve, financially give whatever to our brothers and sisters in Christ even if they can do nothing in return because there's a joy out there waiting for me and I'm working toward that joy, not what they can do for me. Amen.

Happy Mother's Day.

Let's stand together, alright?