

Message Summary

We were created to celebrate, to enjoy, and, yes, even to party! It did not take long, however, for God's original design of delight in himself to be distorted by sin. In the reality of this fallen world, we must start thinking differently to learn how to party God's way.

A kingdom perspective of parties begins with the one God Himself has prepared for us at his banquet table. This stunning reality ought to replace our pride with humility, gratitude, and sincere love. Jesus' company felt otherwise. A high-ranking Pharisee had invited Jesus to a banquet with other Pharisees. The people were ascribing the glory and allegiance once singularly the Pharisees' to Jesus instead. Being Pharisees entirely for the purpose of self-promotion and dishonest gain, these Pharisees were intent on catching Jesus in his words and silencing Him once and for all through death. Jesus, however, saw their heart. Proximity to the host of a first century party signified honor, and the Pharisees clamored for it.

Rather than insisting on the honor actually his, Jesus used the occasion to communicate a deeper spiritual truth. God sends us an invitation to an eternal celebration, where we are the bride and Jesus the heavenly husband. We can enjoy God's party forever! Forever, that is, provided that we show the proper response. We do not deserve to be at this party at all, and should be excited simply at the invitation. So, Jesus warns, clamoring for honor is dangerous. Someone else may come with higher honor than you, leaving you to shamefully walk to the place of lowest honor. We ought rather to embrace the lowest seat, overwhelmed with thanksgiving for being invited at all. Unthankfulness and grumbling betray a prideful heart that forgets God's good gifts. While the world's pattern is to run to the highest seat of honor, Jesus introduces the kingdom paradigm: *"whoever humbles himself will be exalted"* (v. 11; Mt. 23:12; cf. Jm. 4:6-10).

Jesus transitions from attending a party to throwing a party (vv. 12ff.). Jesus warns against inviting only our own friends for selfish purposes, who can pay us back by adding value to our lives. Instead, Jesus insists, we should find the poor, crippled, lame, and blind, not because they are able to repay us, but precisely because they cannot repay us. Doing so will reveal more selfish tendencies we did not even know were present, which in turn we must ask God to change in us. Surprisingly, Jesus teaches that such efforts will be rewarded, but by God Himself, in the resurrection of the just (v. 13). This kingdom perspective reinvigorates our desire to party even more – partying, that is, God's way.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

"Humility starts vertically, with a focus on living for God's honor." How is a vertical focus on living for God's glory the soil in which genuine love and honor for others is planted? (See Rm. 12:1-2; 1 Jn. 4:7-11).

What is the difference between the world's (exemplified by the Pharisees) perspective of exaltation and the kingdom's (exemplified by Jesus) perspective of exaltation (see esp. v. 11)? How does choosing the lowest seat actually lead to our honor, joy, and exaltation?

How does the hope of eternal rewards from God Himself enable us to love the poor, blind, crippled, and lame who cannot repay us? See Mt. 25:31-46; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Col. 3:1ff.

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. How can you outdo others in showing honor and love this week (Rm. 12:9-13)? Are you too busy seeking honor for yourself that you forget about exalting others?
2. Like the Pharisees, do you use a position of spiritual respect or leadership as a means of self-advancement rather than Christ-exaltation? Do you love the glory that comes from people more than the glory that comes from God (Mt. 23:6-12; Jn. 12:43)?
3. Does your life exhibit the unthankfulness and grumbling characteristic of pride and forgetting God's good gifts (see Jm. 1:16-18)? Are you always finding something to complain about? How can you cultivate deeper thanks to God for his good gifts?
4. Are you secure enough in Christ's calling to humbly live to exalt Christ and others that what others say about you won't impact you?
5. Do you only love others who can shower special favors on you? Does your honoring others have ulterior motives of self-gain?
6. Who are the "poor, blind, lame, and crippled," people who cannot pay you back, whom you encounter? How can you intentionally love people this week, precisely because they cannot pay you back?
7. Are you willing to make the necessary sacrifices to love to the needy without being repaid on earth, or are you selfishly clinging to worldly goods?
8. How can you use your meals this week, whether in restaurants or in your home, to intentionally honor others?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for inviting us to his heavenly party, where we don't belong, at the sacrifice of his own Son.
 - Pray that the Lord would uproot hearts of pride and selfishness and replace them with hearts of gratitude and thankfulness characteristic of a people invited to God's heavenly banquet.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that God would lead our church to specific ways to serve the "poor, crippled, lame, and blind" of Etowah County. Pray that we would diligently steward such opportunities with the costly effort and sacrifice required to honor them well.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for the children in Togo we support, and the party for them Christ Fellowship is sponsoring. Pray that God would arrest their delight in himself, convince them of their need for the gospel, use their lives for God's glory and others' honor, and bring them into His eternal celebration.