

REPAID AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Luke 14:1,7-14

TEXT: *One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched... When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

Arrogance is such a disgusting sin. No one likes to be around someone who always has his nose in the air. No one likes someone who is conceited and full of himself. A young girl walks away from a first date with the complaint: he is so conceited. All he talked about was himself. Little does she know that the guy is probably saying the same thing about her. But the truth will all come out on Face Book.

Such is the world in which we live. But more sad and terrifying than this is the fact that God, the One before Whom we must all stand on Judgment Day, also hates and despises the proud and arrogant: ***The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.*** Pr 16

That's why Jesus told the parable in today's Gospel Lesson to those invited to a special dinner party. The Bible says: ***When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable...*** It sets before us the perfect opportunity to listen to what Jesus says pride and humility, that we should humble ourselves in view of His promise to exalt us on the Last Day. For we will be **REPAID AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS**

The Bible reveals that the sinful nature, of all humans ever conceived, including you and me, is naturally arrogant and proud. The first commandment any of us ever broke was the First: "Thou shalt have no other gods." Even as infants, our God-given parents worked hard to do what is best for us, but we bawled and cried and wanted our own way. From the start, God says "Yes", and we say "No!"

Should we be surprised when we hear how Jesus' enemies carefully watched Jesus, looking for ways to criticize the Son of God? The Bible says: ***One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched...*** The Pharisees were that group of Jews who were "prominent" among Jews because of their careful observance of all the traditions of the Jewish religion. They were held up before the public as the Jew's Jew. They wore their religion "on their sleeve" -- literally. They prayed in public places so that everyone would see their piety. They wore

religious symbols in order to tell people that they were religious. They were arrogant religious snobs.

We do not want to be religious snobs. But we are! We "carefully watch Jesus" thinking that he really won't consider us as bad as those real sinners in this world. But let God's Law determine how bad I am! For example, Jesus says: ***I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*** Mt 5 Do you think for one moment that the culture in which we live considers secret lust to be a mortal sin? Do YOU consider it to be a sin? Remember when President Carter admitted to having lust for the opposite sex? Even back in the early 1970's, such an admission was a joke. But it's NOT a joke with God. The same thing is true about all the commandments. Lust for money is usually called "coveting." Lust for self esteem is a love for juicy gossip. Let God's Law be the judge. If His commandments are not perfectly obeyed from the heart, there is no cause for personal pride!

It is pride that gives us the audacity to expect that we deserve good things from God! When hardship and difficulties, pain and sorrow come into our lives, even good Christians wonder, why does this happen to me? The answer is: what do you expect? Who are you to think that you should expect one good thing from the Almighty and Holy God? You are a secret sinner! The world sees a fine upstanding Christian, but what is that in your heart?

Why not save God the work of teaching us lessons in humility and humble ourselves? It was Peter, the Apostle who once had his own problem with pride, who writes: ***Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*** 1Pe 5 Humble yourself by confessing what you already know through God's holy Law! Isaiah did that and he teaches us to pray: ***All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*** Is 64 Look around you right at this moment and see that you are surrounded by unclean people whose best and most noble works of love are still soiled and stinky like filthy rags! And if you don't think that these people here today do not believe this, then shame on you for judging their hearts!

However, anyone, even the unbeliever can know and admit that he is nothing before God. Even the unbeliever can grovel before God and call it "humility." But only you, the Christian can humble yourself with joyful expectation that He will lift you up and even reward you! Now how is that possible? That's the question that Jesus wanted the Pharisees to ask.

In order to wake these Pharisees up from their pride, Jesus reveals it with the law: ***...he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*** Jesus was not a popular teacher at that point! He just condemned everyone for his behavior! But at the same time, He offers them the opportunity to ask about how one can be exalted by humbling himself.

You and I know the answer. While God's Law debases us to the level of God's enemies, the Gospel elevates us to the status of saints. Speaking of Jesus, the Bible says: *Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.* Ro 5 Here is the ACTIVE OBEDIENCE of Jesus, his perfect obedience to all of God's commandments that is imputed to us through faith. Speaking of Jesus, the Bible says: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* 2Co 5 Here is the PASSIVE OBEDIENCE of Jesus who became our sin and was punished on the cross in our stead. Already in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, gave this blessed nickname to Jesus: *This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.* Jer 23 That is why Jesus says to all: *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* Jn 14 But through Jesus,

You see that we have nothing to lose, and everything to gain! On the Last Day, our bodies, humbled by the results of sin, will by our Creator's command be raised like was our Lord's body made glorious. On that day, you will be exalted before the entire world, beginning with your most humble and insignificant works. Jesus will say: *Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.* Mt 25 The proud and arrogant of this world will also expect the same glory, for in their conceit they imagined the God was impressed with them even without Jesus. He is surely impressed with their fine deeds! But to them Jesus will say: *Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.* Mt 25 For without repentance and faith in Jesus, nothing man does can save him from his sins and failures.

Believe me, it's not easy. It's not easy to be ridiculed by those who think that they know it all. But Jesus said: *If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.* Jn 15 This is not easy for the young who like to be popular and well liked by worldly friends. It's not easy to be honest and faithful while, like Jeremiah the Prophet complained: *Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?* Jer 12 It's not easy to work hard as a humble Christian, and then observe: *He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.* Mt 5:45 That's why we need the fellowship of believers gathered around the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. We need Jesus' promise that if we humble ourselves, he will indeed lift us up to live with Him forever in heaven.

You and I will may not be among the "rich and the famous" now but we are being kept by the mercy of God until we join all the saints in eternal glory in heaven. Amen.