Humility leads to more grace

1. Introduction

a. Having recognised that everything we receive is by God's grace and everything He pours out into our lives is for us to steward and invest wisely into His Kingdom we will now look at how we should do this in line with the values of the Kingdom lifestyle.

b. Jesus told several parables to help us understand how to respond to His grace in a way that recognises His goodness to us and value others as He does. These parables reinforce a value demonstrated throughout the gospels – that is the attitude of humility.

c. There are plenty of places in the Bible where humility is presented as being a godly attitude we should cultivate

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.*

1 Peter 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you*

d. All of those verses are very clear and the command to live out humility is obvious, but I love that Jesus takes things like humility a step further. He uses parables to verbally paint a picture that shows us what humility should look like.

e. In this session we will look at two such parables. The parable of the wedding feast in Luke 14 and the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18. Both of these stories involve the Pharisees. Pharisees at that time were the super-religious Jewish elite, who lived a very strict life of tradition and adherence to the law. The problem is, there was a lot going on under the surface with them. They were so consumed with power that the Jewish religion of the day had turned into more of a way to control people than it was something that pointed to the power and supremacy of God.

2. Humility or pride

Luke 14:11 *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

a. This is the statement Jesus makes at the end of our first parable. To be humble is defined as "having or showing a modest or low estimate of one's importance" It comes from the idea that the humble person will seek to take the lowest rather than the highest seat. They will prefer others to their own interests.

b. To better understand this we need to look at the opposite of humility, which is pride. The word pride means appearing above others. It is exposed in our first parable as the person who desires the best seat at the banquet so they can be seen by others. This desire is something that will cause much hurt too because it is the wrong attitude to have.

c. This parable is about one person who seeks the low place at a banquet and one who seeks the high place. One is humble and the other is proud. Let's look at this further and examine the thought process behind each of these people. Let's look at the proud person first and see what goes through his mind.

Psalm 10:4 *In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God."*

d. Here we have a little insight into the thoughts of a prideful person. Remember, the prideful man wanted the best seat? He had a plan for his life outside of God. He wanted to elevate himself by his own ability and wisdom, which is a dangerous way to go. Jesus was teaching us about an attitude. The proud do not have God in their thoughts. The proud have an attitude which says, "I'll do it my own way."

e. The humble on the other hand have a different way of looking at life. They look at life through God's eyes.

Prov.3:6 *In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

f. Here is the attitude of humility. It is a way of thinking that says, "I don't know what is best for me; I will trust the Lord God with my future." This kind of attitude is powerful because it will get the attention of God.

g. It does not however mean that we shouldn't do our best in everything we do. We should. It goes deeper however than talent and ability it goes to attitude. In truth you and I can't change very much. There is only one thing we can change, our attitude. Humility does just that. Humility senses a total dependence on God in everything.

h. Some people may think they are better than they really are. This is self-deception. This sort of person may be a know-it-all, someone who thinks they can get it done in their own power, someone that wants to be the leader at any cost or even a truly vain person. These attitudes are the opposite of humility. Humility senses a complete dependence upon God. It knows how low it really is. Humility considers God in everything it does, because it knows that He is the only one who can truly promote.

1 Peter 5:5 *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

i. When true humility exists in a persons' life something happens in the realm of God's kingdom. Grace is poured out. Grace is divine help. It is God interacting with those who have a complete dependence upon him for their direction.

j. The New Testament church was a beautiful example of humility and God's grace. They did things that no earthly human beings could do. They experienced so much more than pride could have ever achieved that it was astounding. They saw healings, the dead raised to life, miracles, signs from God and a revival church that is envied today.

Acts 4:33 *And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all*

k. How could they go so high in a state of power to accomplish these things? The only way was to first go down low, all the way to humility. Humility is the reason. Humility is the acting out of complete trust in the Lord. Pride is the acting out of trust in self. Which one would you have confidence in, yourself or God? The answer will be very telling.

3. The parable of the wedding feast

Luke 14:7-11 *Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honour, saying to them,* ***8*** *"When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honour, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him,* ***9*** *and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person', and then you will*

begin with shame to take the lowest place. [10] But when you are invited, go and sit in 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 table with you. [11] For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

a. Jesus taught the power of humility and the weakness of pride in this parable. He gives us wise instruction how to conduct ourselves in life. The setting is a banquet in which there are high-class seats along with less important ones all the way to the cheap seats. Some seats represent honour and prestige and others a low class level.

b. Upon entering the banquet hall, you perceive the different locations and importance of the seats. What is your first thought as to where you will sit? This is the message that the master was teaching. Do you really want to sit in the prominent seat or take a lesser one and be unnoticed?

c. If you want the prominent seat and rush over and sit down in it without regard to anyone else, you may be in for a surprise for pride has a way of bringing you down. It has way of deflating you from the lofty position that you have put yourself in. After being seated the possibility exists that you may be asked to move to a lower place so that someone of greater importance can be seated. What a humiliating experience that would be! Especially for someone who is filled with pride and a desire to be at the top.

d. People who put themselves at the top have only one way to go, down. On the other hand, if you take the back seat in humility you have only one way to go, up! Which way would you rather go? As he finished this parable Jesus made the statement that tells it all.

e. He plainly said that God is watching all of us and that a principle will always apply to the proud and to the humble. Whoever is proud will go down. Whoever is humble will go up. Which way would you like to go? I would like to go up, not by my own wisdom but by God's grace.

f. When pride takes you up it is only temporary. When grace lifts you up, it is permanent.

g. The humble person is very powerful because they are trusting in God and have self-control. A prideful person is very weak because they are given over to the desires of the flesh and have no self-control. Jesus taught this parable to show us the difference. He wants to give us happiness and fulfilment through the power of humility. When we put our trust in the Lord we will never be disappointed. When we put our trust in our own ability we will always fall short.

4. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector

a. Jesus told this parable in response to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else.

Luke 18:9-14 *Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: [10] "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. [12] I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' [13] And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' [14] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

b. Once again, in this parable, Jesus contrasts two different people which were viewed very differently by the people. One held in high regard the other despised.

   i **The Pharisees** were members of a very influential religious party. Many times, Jesus chastised them for not practicing what they preached to the people. In turn, the Pharisees did not like Jesus very much and were always trying to find ways to make him look bad in the eyes of the people.

   ii **Tax collectors** were people who worked for the hated Roman Empire. They collected tax money from the people and often cheated them. In turn, tax collectors were considered to be sinners, and the people did not like them and wanted nothing to do with them.

c. However, Jesus challenges the general view by exposing their motives and attitudes. The Pharisee in the Temple seeks to establish his superiority in the place of prayer. His 'prayer', which consists simply of telling God all about his own good points, ends up exalting himself by the simple expedient of denouncing the tax-collector.

d. The tax-collector, however, is the one whose small faith sees through to the great heart of God and he casts himself on the divine mercy. Jesus reveals what the divine judge would say about this: the tax-collector, not the Pharisee, returned home vindicated.

e. This parable makes a powerful statement about what, in Paul's language, is called 'justification by faith'. The wider context is the final judgement, in which God's chosen people will be vindicated after their life of suffering, holiness and service. Though enemies outside and inside may denounce and attack them, God will act and show that they truly are his people.

f. But this doesn't mean that one can tell in the present who God's elect are simply by the outward badges of virtue, and in particular the observation of the minutiae of the Jewish law. If you want to see where this final vindication is anticipated in the present, look for where there is genuine penitence, genuine casting of oneself on the mercies of God. Those who approach with humility and humble themselves before a holy and righteous God.

g. This is why Jesus said, *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt.5:5)*

5. The magnet of meekness

a. Humility is about taking on Jesus' yoke and like Him, becoming gentle and lowly in heart.

Matt.11:29-30 *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ***30*** *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

b. The word the bible often uses to describe someone who is humble is meekness. In May 2005 Mike Bickle received a prophetic word from the Lord: "Meekness is the magnet that attracts God's favour." God is deeply attracted to meekness. It attracts His favour, His power, and His blessing. Why?

c. The dictionary definition of meekness is the quality or state of being meek : a mild, moderate, humble, or submissive quality. Some of its antonyms are arrogance, conceit, haughtiness or pride.

d. Often when people think of meekness they equate it with weakness but they are not the same. Meekness can be defined as faithfully cultivating a servant's heart in order to benefit others above ourselves in regard to honour, privilege, and position. Walking in meekness or

humility is not the same as the personality temperament of timidity that is rooted in the fear of man and low self-esteem. Meekness is to have power over our selfishness

e. Jesus wants an entire kingdom of people who live lives of meekness. One of the ways that God works meekness into our hearts is by allowing us to experience problems and challenges with others. God is the One who sets up relational collisions. He will allow us to have relational problems that cause us to argue and assert ourselves in arrogance in order to expose the pride in our hearts.

f. To respond in meekness is to exercise self-control over asserting our own rights, power or opinion and choosing to respond with love and understanding valuing the other person more highly than ourselves. Meekness is exercising self-control over our own power for the sake of others. Every time we have an interpersonal conflict with someone, we have the opportunity to oppose pride and prefer the other person above ourselves.

g. The essence of meekness is rooted in who we are preoccupied with. The meek are preoccupied with Jesus as their source and owner of everything they possess. Therefore, they are grateful for it and they use it with a servant spirit and with generosity. If we see that everything we have received is a gift of grace, then we will not view it with a boastful or proud attitude.

h. The meek know that they deserve God's discipline much more than any measure of (small or large) blessing that He has given them before people. The meek refuse to manipulate or exert pressure on people to promote themselves.

i. The Lord will raise up a victorious end-time church in the context of great social hostility (Mt. 24:10). This is the optimum context in which love and humility will grow the fastest and deepest. As Joseph was trained in the prison so will the end time church be prepared in these days of difficulty and turmoil.

j. It is in this environment that we will learn the strength and power of "going low", of taking up our calling in humility, putting our trust in God's love and mercy. The Lord is training His Bride to relate to others with the law of kindness in her mouth. A church who expresses humility through the things that she speaks.

6. Humility brings healing

a. James gives us one of the most practical teachings on humility in the Scripture. Humility starts with our families, marriages, and children, then extends to the marketplace, friends, and enemies.

James 1:19-20 *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;* ***20*** *for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.* ***21*** *Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

b. The measure of our anger is the measure of our unperceived ambition. If we respond with anger, then our relationships will be injured, causing us unnecessary pain. However, if we walk with humility then our speech will bring healing not division.

c. As peacemakers, we are to seek to bring peace and not stoke the flames of fiery arguments. We must put biblical conviction above our political opinions and arguments.

Matt. 5:9 *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*

d. As believers, we must preserve the bond of peace in the spirit of unity. We must be able to disagree with those who hold different views in a spirit of grace that respects and values their dignity.

Eph. 4:1-3 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

7. Conclusion

John Piper identifies five truths that Jesus taught us about humility.

i **Humility begins with a sense of subordination to God in Christ.** "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master" (Matthew 10:24). "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter 5:6).

ii **Humility does not feel a right to better treatment than Jesus got**. "If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!" (Matthew 10:25). Therefore, humility does not return evil for evil. It is not life based on its perceived rights. "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps. . . . While suffering, he uttered no threats, but handed [his cause] over to him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:21–23).

iii **Humility asserts truth not to bolster ego with control or with triumphs in debate, but as service to Christ and love to the adversary.** "Love rejoices in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). "What I [Jesus] tell you in the darkness, speak in the light. . . . Do not fear" (Matthew 10:27–28). "We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus's sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

iv **Humility knows it is dependent on grace for all knowing and believing**. "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). "In humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

v **Humility knows it is fallible**, and so considers criticism and learns from it. But humility also knows that God has made provision for human conviction and that he calls us to persuade others. "We see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). "A wise man is he who listens to counsel" (Proverbs 12:15). "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

b. Imagine the impact the church would have on our world if we all learnt to walk in humility. As we go through this season of shaking let it prepare us in humility and meekness so that we will be those, like the early church, who, empowered by grace, see the sick healed, the dead raised, miracles and many signs of God's power as we see true revival break out.

Luke 14:11 *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

1 Peter 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*