

Good morning, everybody. So every Wednesday we have a meeting where we get together and we do some service planning. We look at the weeks before, we look at some of the weeks ahead, and we kinda talk through the different elements that are gonna go into each Sunday. And this last Wednesday, the meetings usually last about 45 minutes. This last Sunday, Wednesday, we spent about 30 minutes talking about how to fit in all of the announcements and things that we wanted to celebrate that are going on in the life of our church.

And so I just want to piggyback off of some of the things that Katie shared and share a couple of more things. Number one, today is the 10th year anniversary of our Sherwood Oaks Bedford campus. Praise God for that. I'm grateful for that campus. It's kind of the door that God used to get me to be a part of Sherwood Oaks, and so I'm just, I'm grateful for the church that is there, for how God is growing that church, growing it in the community, the influence that they have in that community, serving people.

It is a thriving ministry that is down there in Lawrence County. And so I'm grateful to celebrate 10 years with them today and look forward to the next 10 years. Last Sunday, our Iglesia Hispana congregation got together and did a little party at Fairfax. Beach, and we got some pictures up here. They played some games, hanging out and just kind of having fun as families, played a little bit of volleyball as well.

And because it is an Iglesia Hispana get-together, it means that there's going to be food and lots of it, and it's gonna be really, really good. And so, you know, they had food, but maybe the best part is that while they were there at Fairfax, 6 people were baptized into Christ. We can celebrate that too. That's pretty amazing.

6 people being impacted by this important ministry as a part of our church. And then the last thing that I wanna celebrate, you know, we've been in this series called Block Party. We've been encouraging people to consider throwing parties in their neighborhood or on their street. And so far we've had 47 people who have either committed to throwing a party or have already done it. And so kind of an updated slide here of these lights that are shining around around our neighborhood, people who are stepping out in faith and hosting one of these parties.

I just wanna encourage you, it's not too late if you want to join us in that. And I have loved receiving pictures and updates and just hearing stories of people stepping out on faith to do one of these in their neighborhood or to invite others to do it with them. And so if you wanna let us know, you can send a message to me, sgreen@socc.org. I'd love to pray for that. So let me pray for all of this stuff that's going on as we dive in this morning.

God, you are good and you are at work and we are grateful to be a part

of it. Lord, we don't want to make the name of Sherwood Oaks known. We don't want to build the kingdom of Sherwood Oaks. God, we want to make your name known. We want to build your kingdom.

And so Father, thank you for all the ways that you are doing that. That we get to see and celebrate. Thank you for the ways that you are doing it that go unspoken and unknown. Lord, you celebrate that. And so Father, I pray that we will just be a people that are about your business, about the business of bringing heaven just a little bit closer to earth and helping people find and follow Jesus.

I pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. Well, hey, uh, woo, good morning. Uh, school gets started, uh, this week, and I know some of us are very excited for that.

Some kids maybe not, uh, exactly excited about that. And there are some things about this start of school, uh, that I kind of miss and wish would just follow us into adulthood. Uh, one of those things is that at the beginning of every school year, it, it's like you just get a fresh start. Start. Summer was this giant reset button and you're going into the new year.

You're not carrying any baggage from last semester with you. It doesn't matter what your grades were when you finished the spring semester. Everyone is starting with A's and it is up to you with what you do from there. And those are some things that I miss about the start of a new school year. But there are some things that I don't miss about it.

And one of them is navigating the lunchroom during those first days of school. Do you remember those days? Or have you kind of blocked them out? Trying to figure out where your friends are gonna be, which of your friends have the same period that you do, where you're all going to sit, and hoping that by the time you get your tray, that there's still a seat for you around that table. That awkward moment of when you realize, oh no, there's not.

Now where am I going to sit? I've walked into Jackson Creek lunchroom a few times and there's like a shudder that goes down my spine every time just remembering what those days were like. And you could just feel the room being roamed by the souls of poor middle schoolers who didn't get invited to sit at the table that they wanted to sit at. Is there a time or place in life where we are more aware of our social standing and position than that? And maybe for you, the middle school lunchroom, you like just rolled in there like I'm the king or queen of this place and everybody wanted to sit at your table.

I'm just saying, praise God for that blessing because that probably wasn't the story for most of us. Us. We walk into places and we feel maybe a little insecure, wondering where we fit. And we're not middle

schoolers anymore, but I think that we live in a world that is relentlessly organized around status. We've learned somewhere along the way that if you don't advocate for yourself, then no one else will, that you want to be seen with the right people, you want to do the right things to get noticed.

And if you don't take the seat, then someone else is going to grab it. And that people who wait to get noticed usually just get left behind. And if you've ever lived in this comparison-driven, self-promotion world and gotten caught up in that, you know that it is absolutely exhausting.

Which is why I love that Jesus invites us to a better way to live. If you have a Bible or Bible app, we're in Luke chapter 14 this morning. You can turn there with me. Week 5 of our series Block Parties, and we've been going through the Gospel of Luke, looking at these different times when Jesus found himself at a party. Typically food was involved, people were there.

Sometimes it was people that, you know, you'd want to be seen with. Sometimes it was people that you didn't want to be seen with. As people of kind of ill repute that most people tried really hard to not be seen with. But in the background of, of every single one of these dinner encounters that we've looked at so far are the Pharisees, this group of people who are watching Jesus not with a curious eye, but with kind of a judgmental, critical eye. They're trying to trap him, they're trying to catch him in something.

And yet Jesus goes into these parties and And he's just himself. He's confident. He loves people well. Others are drawn to him.

And we're gonna see in this passage that we're looking at today that this group of people who sometimes are in the background of the story are now right at the forefront of it. Look at it with me. I wanna go up a few verses from where Katie started. Mark 14:1 kind of sets the scene for us. One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat at the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

So a few details I don't want us to miss. One, it's Sabbath. This is a holy day. This is a day of rest. It's also a day of feasting.

It's a day of celebration. Is a day of being with friends and with family. The second thing I want us to notice is that he is in the house of a prominent Pharisee. This is like one of the main religious leaders. And so this dinner party, this Sabbath party and dinner was probably filled with other Pharisees, people in his kind of sect and people that were leaders in the community.

And so this is kind of the setting that Jesus is walking into when And what we see is that he is being carefully watched.

Luke uses this word, it's just one word in Greek, but he uses this word a few times.

And every time he uses it in his gospel, what he's trying to indicate is that Jesus is being watched with hostile intent.

They're watching him, trying to build a case against him. One commentary I read said the dinner invitation was not generous, it was a trap with a tablecloth on it.

And the bait for this trap was a poor man that these prominent religious leaders pulled off of the street to use for their own advantage. Verse 2, there in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling in his body.

What we would call that today is edema. He had this painful swelling in his legs and his joints. It could have even gone into his organs. It was causing him to suffer. And in his culture, to have this disease was not just to be ill, it was a social stigma.

People with this disease, they were thought that they brought it on themselves, that it was a disease of excess. It was a disease of self-indulgence. And so not only was it physically painful, it was socially painful as well. This person was probably an outcast. It would have made him religiously unclean.

It would have made him And so the only reason why he would have been invited to this dinner party is so that the Pharisees could prop him up as bait to try to trap him.

People look down on him, but not Jesus. And we see in verse 3, Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?

But they remained silent. This probably isn't really a question that they had to think about before until Jesus came along. You didn't heal people. You just didn't do any work on the Sabbath. And so is it lawful to heal somebody on the Sabbath?

So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away. And then he asked them, if, if one of you has a child Or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out? And they had nothing to say.

You know, they tried to use this man that everyone undoubtedly looked down upon, thought that they were better than everyone but Jesus. And Jesus heals him and he sends him on his way, which is Fine, except he had the audacity to do it on a Sabbath day, and we don't do work on Sabbath days, and I think maybe healing is work, and so, Jesus, you

just broke God's law. And they think, oh, we have him.

But then Jesus reveals that the only reason why they invited this man was to use him, and they didn't care anything about him. And he says, "If you had a child, if you had an animal that was stuck on a Sabbath day, doesn't your law permit to pull them out?" Yeah. And the point that Jesus is making is, why do you hypocrites, why do you hypocrites look down on me healing somebody on a Sabbath who is in need? Somebody that you look down upon, somebody that you were only using for your game when you would pull one of your animals and rescue them.

He exposed their hypocrisy and it left them silent.

Sounds like a really fun dinner party to be at, right? Man.

And it's not over yet. It's kind of just beginning.

We see in verse 7, when Jesus noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable. A couple of things to notice here before we get to the parable. Number one, Jesus went into this dinner party knowing that he was being closely watched. And so now you have the one being watched watching the ones who are watching him, and he's noticing something about them. He's noticing about the way that they move around the room and the way that they're kind of trying to jockey for the position of honor.

And this people watching causes him to tell a parable. A parable is a story. It's a— It's a story that doesn't just have a moral principle, it has kind of a kingdom principle. It talks about and tries to really teach like what does it look like to live in God's kingdom? How do we act?

How do we behave?

And Jesus tells this parable that probably felt a little close to home. And he says, when someone invites you to a wedding feast, and whenever a parable is about a wedding feast, It's kind of sign for like a kind of end of days parable, a culmination of all thing kind of parable when God will sort all things out once and for all.

And so 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 to you and say, give this person 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 to a better place. Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests.

So again, Jesus is not teaching dinner etiquette here.

He's teaching what it means to live with Jesus as your King, as your Lord, what it means to live with an attitude and a posture that reflects God's kingdom, not the kingdom of this world, not the ways of this world. The ways of this world is that you're jockeying for position, you're elbowing people out of your way, you're trying to get the best seat, and Jesus is saying that's not the way of God's kingdom. That's not the way of those who claim to love and follow him and teach about him.

He closes with verse 11, "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all those who humble themselves will be exalted." and those who humble themselves will be exalted. And with this statement, Jesus pulls together the scene with the man at the beginning of the dinner party. He pulls together the elbowing and jockeying for position that he sees in the Pharisees and how everyone was fighting for the best seat. They used people to make themselves look better, and they were trying to maneuver to make themselves look better to the one that they were trying to impress.

Jesus uses a couple of words here. One of them is exalted. The word picture in exalted is being lifted up. It's like you're down on your back, you can't get up, somebody reaches down, gives you a hand, and pulls you up. That is, The word picture of being exalted, it's being pulled up.

Word picture of being humble is falling back. It is falling back in line. It is falling back from the spotlight.

When we feel like we have to lift ourselves up to sit in the right seats, Jesus is telling us, man, that is a dangerous and exhausting game to play.

Because if self-promotion is up to you and your efforts, then what happens if you don't get invited to that seat?

If making yourself known, if achievement and being seen by the right people and getting that promotion, whatever it looks like, getting that validation, if that is up to you, you in your own efforts, then what happens in your soul if that invitation doesn't come?

If that seat isn't offered?

If that recognition goes to someone else?

And it cuts deep.

And it makes us think, man, if this is up to me, then I'm not— I'm not worthy of it. I feel a sense of shame and defeat. It's demoralizing. But I think equally as devastating is if on the other side, what if

it's up to you and you do get in that seat?

You do get that promotion. You look back and you're like, because of my hard work, I am here. Look at what my hands have accomplished. Have done. I'm telling you, there are some account in scripture that warns against those things.

There's some really good reasons why we don't want to necessarily toot our own horn, talk about our own achievements, look to ourselves for our own validation.

And God honors humility. And when we, when we get in these places and we feel like, look, this is because of the work I have done, and it's just as damaging to our soul as when we don't get that invitation, as when we don't get that promotion is when we're not noticed.

I think the life that Jesus is inviting us into is a life that just simply trusts God, a life of humility that doesn't fight for position or power, a life that values others even above ourselves.

The parable that Jesus tells— God is the host of the party.

And he's the one who will invite us up when we fall back. The question is, will we trust him?

Will we trust him enough to choose a position of humility and fall back instead of fighting to be noticed, fighting to be seen, fighting for the best seat?

And if you're not sure that he's going to lift you up when you fall back, then you're gonna feel a lot of pressure to do it.

On your own.

So Jesus challenges these religious leaders, but I think he's also challenging me, he's challenging you, that instead of being seen and recognized and honored by others and fighting for that, to trust that your heavenly Father will see you, will honor you, will recognize you, he will exalt you. And because it is a kingdom parable that Jesus tells that has this wonderful wedding feast imagery, I think what he wants us to know is that your humility may not be immediately rewarded with being exalted.

It may not come in the way that you desire it when you desire it, but you can trust that God sees what is unseen and will one day honor that humility. It'll honor it in the right time. And we'll lift you up.

There's so many people that I've had the blessing of being able to see just walk this passage out in my life who have been a model of this for me. One of them is sitting right over here in the front row,

Maggie Mobley, our executive of ministry. And if you know Maggie, you know that she humbly walks with the Lord. She just embodies that. When I came on staff at Sherwood Oaks in 2017, Maggie was kind of working in our women's ministry, and Claudia noticed in her, sitting on the second row, Claudia noticed in Maggie a humility, a coachable spirit, leadership gifts, and started pouring into her and handing ministry off to Maggie.

And she was promoted to the director of our women's ministry. And as she humbly and faithfully served in those places, more people started to see her giftedness and we wanted to give her more and more opportunities. Maggie never fought for any of the seats that she's been in. It's just been a recognition of God is at work in her and we need to get out of the way of what he wants to do.

We didn't lift Maggie up, the Lord lifted her up. We just got out of his way.

And the humility that Jesus is inviting us to live out doesn't feel like we have to fight for our spot and elbow for it, that we have to get others to see us.

Humility trusts that the Lord sees us and that that is good enough. It trusts that he is a good father who will lift us up up at the right time.

I think sometimes the seats that we fight hardest to keep or earn might be the ones that Jesus is inviting us to give up, to surrender over to the Lord, to trust him. And not that he's going to take us from it, But that we don't feel like we have to have our place in those places to feel validation and love and importance.

And as you walk with this kind of humility, here's what I think that you'll be able to find. Number one, man, you're gonna be able to love others well. You're not using them for your own advantage. You're not trying to climb over people. You're able to see people and be with them, see them, with the image of God implanted on them, not as someone to be used to your advantage or gain.

When you walk with this kind of humility, you become the non-anxious presence in the room.

And instead of being hyper-aware of what others are thinking about you when you walk into a room, you're able to just set that aside and see other people Notice them, rest in the Lord and just be you. And that kind of awareness of God's presence brings a peace in our own life that is like light that draws people in.

Walking with this kind of humility and trust in the Lord, it means that you are probably going to find that you're the one that people

come to whether you have the position or not. And yeah, sometimes the position is nice.

But having the integrity, having the personality, the humility to just be seen as the person who is wise, who is safe.

You may not have the positional authority, but you have the respect of those around you.

And I just wonder if there's a place in your life where you are working really hard to make sure that you are being seen in a certain way.

Is there a seat that you are trying to hold on to? Is there a seat that you're trying to grasp for? A reputation that you're trying to manage? An image? That you are trying to project.

For some of us, maybe it's work. We need people to know that we are competent and successful because we want to get ahead. We need to be in that certain seat to feel a sense of validation and importance.

Relationally, maybe you need to, to, you, you need to be a good friend. Not just that you want to be a good friend, like you need to be the friend friend that people reach out to when times are hard. And if you find that they reached out to someone else, you, you think, well, what's wrong with me? Why couldn't I do that? You need to be a good and generous neighbor so that people in your neighborhood think well of you.

You need to be the one that has it all together that other people come to.

We can even apply this to our spiritual life. We need to be the person that is seen as being uber serious about our faith, that we're doing the right things, that we're saying the right things.

We've got our lives put together. And listen, I don't think that there's anything wrong with those things. Like, we should aspire to be good neighbors. We should aspire to be good friends who love well and come alongside of others when they're hurting. We can even aspire to getting that promotion, to being recognized on the job.

There's nothing wrong with any of those things. The action and the outcome may not be what's wrong. It's what's inside of your heart that needs to be in that place in order to feel like you matter, that fights for recognition, in self-promotion.

In this series, we've been talking about what it looks like when ordinary people like me and you make room for others.

What I found in my own life is that you can't really make room for others if you are too busy trying to secure your place in that room.

If you're too busy wondering what other people are thinking about you, it's really hard to make others feel welcomed when you're consumed by self.

And the one teaching this lesson at the dinner table that night is the same one who, who put into practice these things that he shared with his these Pharisees that he's having dinner with. He goes down and he takes a knee and he washes his disciples' feet, the feet of the same people who hours later would abandon and betray him. And Jesus didn't just teach about taking the lower seat, he took it for himself. He gave up the riches of heaven to come into this world to lay down what was right for fully his and to take up his cross.

But it didn't end in that humility. The, the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 2 that God exalted Jesus by raising him back from the dead. He exalted Jesus by giving him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess on heaven and on earth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Jesus trusted the Father, and so he fell back and God lifted him up. Man, may we live with that same kind of trust and surrender as we walk with him.

I don't know where you are walking this morning and what life looks like. I don't know how this message hits you, this morning.

If you need to talk with somebody, pray with anybody, we'll have some people in the room that'd love to come alongside of you. Or if you are tired of fighting for your own way, trying to prove your own worth, man, just know that there is a God who loves you. You do not have to earn it. He's given that love freely. If you're ready to step into a relationship with him, We'd love to help you with that.

You can go up and see the people with the lanyards. And we're gonna come to a time of communion.

Come up, grab a cup, take it back to your seat. Remember Jesus as he gave his body and he broke, or his, his gave his blood to invite us into a relationship with him, laying himself down so that we could be in relationship with the Father. Jesus, thank you for it. I gotta pray that we will emulate that action and attitude of Jesus as we walk with others.

Help us, Lord, to not be so focused on ourself that we miss what you want to do in the lives of other people, and to take part of that, Lord, as we humbly serve and follow you. Thank you for doing that for us, Jesus. We remember and celebrate that now. Amen.