

“Hey, look at me!” “Look what I have done!” It seems that in everyone one of us is a desire for self-exaltation. We want people to think we are intelligent and important. It started off in childhood. As little kids, we would say to our mom or dad as we did something new, “Hey look at me, mommy or daddy. Parents too get into this act of letting others know how great their kids are. On the back of the family car is a bumper sticker which says, “My Kid is an Honor Roll Student at Bay City Central.” “Or my kid is a starter on the football team.” “My kid has the lead in the school play.” As adults, we too get caught up in the Me-first, Hey Look at me syndrome. Someone asks us what we do for a living, and we are quick to tell them, that we are the head of a department, we are very successful at what we do. Even pastors can get caught up in this Self-exaltation game. I am the circuit pastor of this area, I have written materials for Northwestern Publishing House, our church is growing, or we have a big building project going on.

This self-exaltation creeps over into the area of Christian giving. A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to meet a potential father-in-law of my daughter. Presently, this man is unchurched. I don't know how we got on the subject, but he said to me, “You know what I can't stand about the Dutch Reformed in Grand Rapids?” I said, what? He said they flaunt in front of you that they give 10% of their income to the church, and then they don't help their kids out with their college education”. My quick response back was, that even in Jesus day there were church leaders who made a show in church as they took their heavy coins and dropped them in the canister at the front of church. Obviously that's not right. However, there was a widow who quietly put in two copper coins in that same church out of her love for her Savior. It was a generous gift, because it was all she had. But she didn't do it to be recognized as important.

As Christians, we don't try to draw attention to ourselves. Exalting ourselves has no place in the life of a Christian. Our attitude is that we are not full of ourselves. We are humble. We are extremely generous. Let's find out how this can be. “Walk to the beat of a different drummer!” 1)Me Last 2) Me Generous.

It was the Sabbath day, Saturday, and one of the Pharisees, one of the head teachers, invited Jesus over to dinner after the Sabbath service. This Pharisee wasn't being nice to Jesus – he invited him over because he and the other Pharisees wanted to watch Jesus and see if he would do something wrong, so they could arrest him.

The house was packed, and the time came for everyone to sit down at the table. Have you ever seen what happens on the first day of school, when students enter a classroom? Often times there's a mad-rush for the back seats – people are diving and elbowing each other. That's what Jesus saw at the house of the Pharisee – these grown-ups were trying to get the best seat – it was very much a “me-first” atmosphere.

Jesus noticed this, and so he told them this parable. He told them that when someone invites you to a banquet, don't show up with a “me-first” attitude. Don't rush to sit in the best seat. What happens if someone more prominent than you shows up, and then the host has to tell you to get up and move to a lower seat? You'd look foolish in front of all those people. Instead, when you're invited to a banquet, be humble. Take the lowest seat. And then the host will say to you, “Friend, move up to a better place,” and you'll be honored in front of all the other guests.

Do you know what the main point of that story is? Look at verse 11: “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Jesus isn’t just talking about table manners here. He’s talking about our relationship with God. Everyone who is proud before God, who thinks he is better than every body else before God, who exalts himself – God will someday humble that person. Sometimes that happens here in this world. It will happen for sure, in the world to come. But the one who is humble before God, who realizes that he’s not any better than anyone else, who believes that he’s just a lowly sinner, and humbly trusts in Jesus Christ for forgiveness – that person, Jesus says, will be exalted by God. Sometimes that happens here, in this world. It will happen for sure, in the world to come. Do you have that kind of humility running through your veins?

After talking to the crowd about humility, Jesus turned to the host, and said to him, when you give a luncheon or a dinner, don’t always invite just your rich friends, or your relatives. They’ll pay you back, and you’ll get your reward, that’s true. But when you put on a luncheon – invite people who can’t pay you back – the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. They won’t be able to pay you back, but you will be blessed. God will pay you back, at the resurrection of the righteous.

What Jesus is describing here is charity. The definition of charity, according to Jesus, is to give of yourself to someone else, and that person can’t give you anything in return. Don’t think you’re being charitable if you’re giving to someone who will eventually pay you back. Its like when you have someone over to your house for dinner. What is the thought you have or they have? Well, they had us over for dinner, we have to have them back, to pay them back. That’s not real charity in having someone over to your house for dinner. Real charity, Jesus teaches here, is one-way giving. Real charity is when a believer in Christ says to himself, “I will give, and it’s OK if I get nothing back. I believe that when Christ raises me from the dead, I will be blessed. I don’t need to be paid back right now.” Do you have that kind of charity running through your veins?

Have you ever looked in the mirror and said to yourself, “I don’t look so good today.” Mirrors do that sometimes. I know in the morning when I look at myself in the mirror, I go UG. The hair is all messed up, the face looks haggard, and the eyes droopy. The Bible does that too – the Bible is like a mirror, and as we read these things that Jesus says about humility, and charity, and we look at ourselves, our lives, our motives, our attitudes, we can see that sometimes, we don’t look so good. We know we’re supposed to be humble, but isn’t there a part of us that would rather say, “me-first.” Ever since we’ve been little kids, we’ve been saying, “me-first.” It’s “Me-first” in the work-place, “me-first” around our loved ones, “me-first” everywhere. We don’t like to be humble. And what about charity? Giving something, without expecting anything in return? Isn’t there a part of us that always asks, “What’s in it for me?” Why should I donate some of my money toward that? Why should I volunteer my time for that? Why should I go out of my way for that person? What’s in it for me? Humility and charity – is that really you?

God’s Word is like a mirror – we look into it and we say to ourselves, I don’t look so good. It shows us our sin. It humbles us and shames us. But God’s Word also shows us our

Savior. The Bible isn't just a book that makes us feel guilty. It's the Word of God that brings us comfort and peace and joy, because here in the Bible, we not only see our sin, we also see Jesus, our Savior. When you read about humility here, think about Jesus' humility. When he came into this world, he didn't scramble to take the highest place, did he. He took the lowest place. A humble birth. A humble life. A humble death. And there is no place more humble than the cross. That's as humble as you can get, hanging on the cross, dying with the sins of the world piled on your shoulders. Jesus took the lowest place, and humbled himself, for you and me. And when you read about charity here, think about Christ's charity. What he gave to this world – he didn't just give a portion of his income that didn't affect his lifestyle – he gave his whole life, something that you and I could never repay him for. That was his gift of charity to you – what amazing love, that Jesus would give you himself, so that you could be saved.

Do you know what happens when you ponder these things, and believe these things? God changes you. He changes you from someone who is proud, into someone who is humble. He changes you from someone who is self-centered, into someone who is filled with charity. That's what happens in our Sunday School – children hear the Word of God, and God changes them into humble, charitable people. That's what happens in our adult Bible studies. That's what happens every time you discipline yourself, to spend time in God's Word – God changes you, and you become this person who walks to the beat of a different drummer.

There is the story is told of Booker T. Washington. He was an African American who went from being a child of slaves to the president of a college. While he was president, a woman walked up to him who didn't recognize him, and said to him, "Why don't you come over here and chop some wood for me." She probably looked at the color of his skin and assumed that he was an ex-slave looking for work. Mr. Washington didn't resist. He politely chopped wood for the lady, and after it was all over – it took awhile - she gave him a couple coins and said, "now be on your way." A few days later this lady discovered that this man was the president of the local college. And so she went to the college and visited him in his office, and apologized for treating him in such a low manner. But Mr. Washington was humble. He said, "I don't mind working, and I had the time, so I was happy to do it. I believe in being humble, and chopping wood was the perfect way for me to be humble that day." That's humility. There's no "me-first" attitude there. Just being humble.

This is the kind of person that God is making you to be - humble. And charitable. Christians give and give and give. And often times, we don't get anything in return. But we're OK with that, because Jesus says in verse 14 that you will be blessed. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. There will come a time when God will exalt the humble, lift them up, and bless them beyond their wildest imaginations. And there will come a time when God will repay those who give so generously, while they're on this earth. Jesus tells us that a time will come, when God will honor all those acts of love, on the last day, when he raises you from the dead. Do you believe these things? Then you are a person who walks to the beat of a different drummer.