

Three Traits of True Godliness

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke again. Can you believe that? We're back in Luke. We're not only in Luke, we're in Luke 14, which is huge. What's huger still is [that] I'm going to preach on 15 verses this morning.

Miracles are still happening in the world today!

So, if you run into a cessationist, you can just tell him, "It happened and it happened today."

I was just reading. . . . What I do is [that] I keep reading ahead to where we're going to be headed just so I'm really familiar [with the text] when we finally get to where we're going to be. . . . I just was kind of going to preach three sermons on these 15 verses, but each of the sections that I was going to preach on individually just has one big main point and I thought, "You know, we'll just turn it into a three-part sermon and do a big text as a change."

We learned at the end of Chapter 13 that Jesus is. . . working His way towards Jerusalem. He's stopping by little villages and towns doing miracles, preaching the Gospel, calling sinners to repentance, and [then] some Pharisees approach Him and say, "Herod wants to kill you. Get out of our town." And He says, "No."

He's not worried. He's not fearful about Herod killing Him because He knows who is Lord. He's Lord, not Herod. He knows who is in control. He

is, not them. He knows He's going to die in Jerusalem and nobody's going to kill Him anywhere else before that time.

And so, He just continues ministering in that town. . . . When the bad guy, when your enemy is in town and you can't drive him away, then the next best thing to do is invite him over. As the saying goes, stick close to your friends and stick closer to your enemies. So, the leader of the Pharisees invites Jesus over to his house. Our text is about that thing.

Now, usually I read the section. Because it's long, I'm [not] going to read it. We'll discover as we go. But from these first 15 verses of Luke 14, we're presented with three traits of true godliness. Each of these sections teaches us about a really major trait that we all need to possess and have in order to be saved and to please Christ in this world.

The first is this, acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Look at Verse 1.

And it happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. . . .

Just stop there and remember it was the Pharisees who wanted Jesus to leave. He wouldn't, so then the leader says, "Well, why don't you come over to my house, that way you won't corrupt our city with Your miracles and teaching." And so look at the middle of Verse 1, and it was –

on the Sabbath to eat bread, and they were watching Him closely.

So He's invited in to have what is called the Sabbath meal, which they would prepare the day before and honestly, this leader of the Pharisees was probably very rich as many of them were. . . and invited Jesus over for this Sabbath meal. But they're not practicing hospitality here. This is a den of hungry snakes and they want to have Jesus as their next meal. Notice that Verse 1 says –

He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. . .

But then it goes on to say –

and they were watching Him closely.

So it's not just one. It's a group. . . whom we will discover in a minute is not only Pharisees, but some lawyers, some experts in the law of Moses. Look at Verse 2.

And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy.

Now dropsy is not a term we usually use today. It's kind of an older designation for what we know today as edema. When people have congestive heart failure, what happens is [that] their soft tissues, usually their feet and legs, swell up. You may have seen people with this. You may have had this. It's just swelling of the body that's called dropsy.

And you have to ask yourself, how did the guy get in the house? Who invited him to the party? Well, he's not a Pharisee and he's not a lawyer, so most likely, they found somebody who was visibly sick, visibly diseased, and they brought that person in and just happened to kind of loiter him in front of Jesus.

They have an agenda. They're going to try and entrap Jesus, that they might accuse Him. But look at Verse 3.

And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees. . .

This is who [are] there, lawyers and Pharisees, so now we understand who's there. . .

Jesus said, "Is it lawful to heal somebody on the Sabbath or not?"

He just comes out with it. He beats them to the punch. Before what has happened is [that] a lot of times, He's healed and then they've accused Him; now He just asks them outright. He beats them to the punch and says, "OK, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? Let's get it out on the table. I know what you're thinking. I know why I'm here. I know you're not trying to be nice to Me. You put this man in front of Me because you want Me to heal him so that you can accuse Me of breaking the Sabbath."

[A]t that time, the rabbis taught that you could not heal somebody on the Sabbath unless [his] life was in danger. If [a man was] going to die that day, yes, heal [him], otherwise wait until the next day to fix him. So that was the prevailing thought at the time. Of course, Jesus had healed other people. In Luke 4, He healed a demon possessed man on the Sabbath. In Luke 6, remember, He had His disciples pick some heads of grain while the religious leaders were watching. You know, rubbed their hands, blew the chaff out, and ate the grain which made them mad. And Jesus then told them that He was Lord of the Sabbath: "By the way, I am Lord of the Sabbath."

In saying that, He's saying, "I instituted the Sabbath; I created the Sabbath; I run the Sabbath as well as the rest of the universe. I can do what I want on the Sabbath, OK?" [That's] basically what He's saying.

In Luke 6:6–11, He healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath and they were filled with rage. In Luke 13, which is just pretty much in the near context of our text, He healed the woman who had been sick for 18 years *in* the synagogue, *on* the Sabbath, in front of everybody. So Jesus has been pushing this issue. He wants them to realize that it's not only acceptable, but necessary to do good on the Sabbath; that healing somebody on the Sabbath is not breaking the Sabbath.

And they knew this. Word gets around when you're travelling around the country with crowds of 10,000-plus, healing all manner of disease and sickness, raising the dead, and calming storms. That stuff gets around after you do it for three years in a small country. So they all knew about Him. This was not anything new to them.

Jesus is at the end of His ministry and they are very well aware of what Jesus is doing. They are very irritated at Him because multiple times He has exposed their religious hypocrisy and so they just can't bring themselves to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. It's pretty obvious who Jesus is. You just don't feed 5,000 *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, without being God. Or calm a storm or raise the dead. Those are pretty major things that only God can do.

And it goes to show, really, that salvation is from God. There's always this false, prevailing attitude, "If we could just see a miracle; if we could just go to heaven and come back; if we could just see God do something really incredible, all the unbelievers would see it and then they would just drop down on their faces and repent and give their lives to Christ." Yeah, like those people who saw the ten plagues, who were led out of Egypt and saw the pillar of fire, crossed the Red Sea, [and] had manna every day from heaven. [T]hey all dropped dead in the wilderness because of – unbelief. Miracles don't save anybody.

And these people, these religious leaders here before Jesus had seen many, many, many, many miracles. They were still not believing, which just goes to show that it takes God's grace to move into a person's life, to grant them repentance, to open their eyes, to soften their hearts, to illumine them to the truth so they can see their need and be saved because men on their own, because they love their sin so desperately will not let go of it.

So Jesus asks them to commit, is it OK to heal on the Sabbath or not? And you could just see them there. You've got to picture this in your mind. Here's Jesus, He's barely into his early 30s, which in that culture you are just still a punk kid. You can barely minister as a rabbi. And He's around all of these people [with] big, gray beards and long tassels and robes, and maybe some have phylacteries, the little box of the law lashed on their heads, the law written on tassels wrapped around their arms. They're very Jewish. They look Jewish. These guys who are Pharisees have memorized huge chunks of the Scripture. Not only that, not only have they done this, but what's amazing is, there [are] all these lawyers there who are... super-hyper-fanatic Bible thumpers.

And so, Jesus is in this room as the young kid and He asks them a very easy question, “Can you heal on the Sabbath or not?” They all know the answer. They all know the answer instantaneously according to their tradition, but they keep silent. *They keep silent.*

The question is why did they keep silent? Because I think they’re thinking that they want to see Jesus heal this guy so they can accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath. That’s what they’re after.

You see, they couldn’t bring themselves to acknowledge Jesus’ Lordship over the Sabbath; that He was Lord of all, that He was in charge. They just couldn’t handle it because Jesus exposed their sin and they saw themselves as righteous, as good, as holy men. And so they’re all looking around, each of them, after Jesus asked the questions, wondering [to themselves], “Nobody’s saying anything.” “Why don’t you say anything?” “*You say something!*”

And so Jesus, then, as they’re all looking, as they’re all crowded into this house, lots of them, reaches forward, touches the man with dropsy and just heals him with the power of God right before their eyes. Now that would have been pretty shocking, when you think about it. I don’t care how many times you’ve seen it, when God does a miracle, it’s stunning.

And so He does it right in front of their faces. This is the “in your face” Sabbath healing. Jesus wields the power of God. There’s no smoke, no mirrors, no strings or velvety curtains or special lighting effects. He just heals [him] right in front their faces after asking them the question.

And you can just see Jesus’ patience with them. He is trying so hard to. . . . I mean how else could He do it? “OK, the Messiah comes, He’s supposed to come, He’s supposed to be able to be a prophet, to do the works of God. You [Jews] all know that. It’s in your Scriptures. He’s going to come, help the lame walk and heal the sick. You know that in your Scriptures, right? So let me show you this, OK? Be healed. Did you see that? Did you see that, *again?* Like you have maybe hundreds, maybe even thousands of times before?”

They followed Him around. We've seen it. They've followed Him around the country, probably many of this same group. And before they even have an opportunity to respond, to accuse Him, "Ah, you've broke[n] the Sabbath," Jesus then again heads them off at the pass. Look at Verse 5.

And He said to them, "Which one of you shall have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?"

You know, He said pretty much the same thing in Luke 13:15. They knew. Jesus knew they knew that if their son fell into a well they wouldn't say, "Hey, I hope you don't die and drown there. We'll see you tomorrow when the sun comes up." No, they would rescue their son; they would even rescue their animal and that's why it says, if you look at Verse 6 again,

And they could make no reply to this.

In other words, they *would not* make a reply. First they kept silent, now they can't speak. Why? [I]f they speak, they will reveal themselves to be hypocrites because they know the answer to this question. Jesus knows the answer. They know the answer. And so they can't speak. If they do, then they'll show their hand that they're religious hypocrites.

As I was thinking about this. . . I just thought about this whole situation. It reminded me of the text in John 3:1. Let me just read it to you. You all know it. As soon as I read it to you, you'll all go, "Oh yeah!"

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Maybe this is Nicodemus's house; maybe he comes to Christ after this, I don't know. But what we can know for certain is this, the Pharisees knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus *had to be* the Messiah. They just say it, "We know you that are from God. No one can do these things." It [didn't] take a huge IQ to [figure this out]; to see [Jesus] heal, [hear Him] say, "I am the Son of David, the righteous branch. . . . This prophecy's about Me. . . . I'm the Messiah. . . . Believe in Me. . . ." [watch Him] fulfill all those prophecies [that they] all [knew about] because [they were] experts in the law. . . .

To fulfill those things time and time again and not understand who Jesus is? They knew it. Their problem was not with knowing, their problem was with submitting to Jesus as the Lord. They did not want to humble themselves. They did not want to acknowledge their sin. They did not want to submit to Jesus as Lord. But, this is the first great principle of true godliness. If you're going to be godly, you must submit to Jesus as Lord. There's no other way.

Godliness begins, continues, and will continue on into eternity with that great principle in mind. Jesus is the Lord, the Master, the King, the Messiah, the One we must submit to.

You remember what the angel told the shepherds the night of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:11 –

for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

The Messiah. The Lord.

It is what Peter preached to the Jews at the birth of the church. What did he tell them? At the first sermon he preaches, he says, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

That was the message preached – Jesus is Lord. Are you going to submit to Him or not? It's what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4:5.

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord. . . .

That's what they did. They went around preaching Jesus as Lord. Paul says in Romans 10:9,

for if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;. . .

It's all the way through the New Testament. You can't escape it. Jesus *is* Lord. The question is, is He your Lord? Is He your Lord? That is the issue.

When I've asked that question, I've learned that people are kind of slippery about this, so let me be very specific. I'm not asking you if you acknowledge that Jesus exists as Lord. He does. I'm not saying, do you give mental assent to that fact? What I'm asking you is, is Jesus the One who rules your life as Lord of you? That's what I'm asking.

Do you let Him rule your time? Your money? Your lusts? Your passions? Your gifts? Your work? Your play? What you listen to? What you watch? Is Jesus Lord of your life?

If you only believe in Jesus who is Savior, who is going to rescue you from hell, give you a good marriage, help you raise up obedient little children, make wise financial decisions. . . that's not good enough. Is Jesus the Lord, the Controller, the King, the Messiah, the one who needs to reign in your life? And maybe you're out there, maybe you're one of those people, and we run into them here at Calvary, and your Christianity just isn't working. Oh, you agree with the Gospel facts and you understand that Jesus is the Lord of heaven and earth. Yes, yes, yes. But He's not your Lord.

You say the right things, but in your heart, you don't want that Man reigning over you. You don't want Him telling you what to do. I mean, you want to escape hell, but you don't want a ruler that you have to submit to in every area of your life, both in thought and deed. But when you come to Christ for salvation, that's what you have to do in order to be saved. That

is the beginning of true godliness: to come to realize that you are a sinner; that Jesus is Savior, Lord, Christ; submitting to Him because He is Lord; believing in Him because He did live a perfect life, died on the cross, and was buried for our sins; and understanding Jesus Christ as Lord and Him crucified and resurrected. You then are transformed.

And then you begin the life of trying to, like all of us who know Christ, trying to submit to Him more efficiently, because while we know we need to do that, it seems like it's a never ending task and we need to submit to Him in never ending degrees and if we don't, then He brings little circumstances into our lives to make sure we learn the lesson. And we all know how painful that is. But He does it because He loves us, because He wants us to learn to submit.

Now every time it happens... it just comes upon me, all these things, and I just can't do it all. It's not working. And then I just realize, "Oh Lord, I need you." And I realize I *always* need Him.

"What do you mean? I don't need You when I'm feeling good. I don't need You when I've got money. I don't need You when I'm satisfied in myself." Of course, I need Him more, really, then than I do when I'm sick and on my back, desperate.

Yes, we need Jesus and we need to submit to Jesus as Lord and this is the first continuing and last principle of true godliness – Jesus is Lord. And He is trying to teach them that. "I want to show you something. See this sick man here? I'm going to heal him. Do you know why? Because I'm Lord."

Secondly, flowing from that as a necessary outcome of that, we need to practice humility. Look at Verse 7.

And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests...

Now these are all the Pharisees and lawyers here.

when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table...

Jesus was so good at observing people. I just like this. When you watch, He just goes through, He sees things in nature. He sees how people act. He sees little attitudes and little things and what they say and do and He can turn anything into an opportunity to preach. It's great.

Look at Verse 8, Jesus continued, saying to them,

When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.

You know, you're invited over to someone's house and there are a lot of other people in the entryway and you're crammed in the kitchen and the host says, "Listen everybody, dinner's going to be in 30 minutes. Head out to the living room and get a place."

What are you thinking? What goes through your mind? Are you one of those people who think[s], "Man, I'm getting there quick so I can get a good seat." That's right. I'm afraid that many people clamor for the best seats without thinking of other people. I've seen this especially in youth, who, I think without even thinking, it just comes so natural to us since we're sinners and we're selfish and youth, not having grown in the Lord much or maybe not even knowing Christ [they] just think, "Hey man, I want a good seat!" So [they] bolt there and leave all the seniors to stand and work on their varicose veins.

At times I've had to remove youth from their high place and tell them to sit on the floor, in a low place so that those older people can be honored. Growing up in a family of eight children, our family was formidable. People hardly ever invited us over. You don't invite over ten people. We could go into any room and just fill up any room and play with all the Ming Dynasty vases. It was scary. *It was scary.* Our parents told us, though, from a very young age, repeatedly told us and warned us every time we went

somewhere, “Do not sit in the chairs!” Why? Because we would just clog up the house. We’d take up every seat. So we would just instantly go in and sit on the floor so that the older people could sit in the good seats.

When we came over, it was scary because we didn’t know anything about used food. Do you know what used food is? It’s the food that waits until the next day. We never had used food at our house. There was no resurrected anything the next day. We were like locusts. Whatever was put on the table disappeared every single night. So, if you invited us over, we just kind of came in force.

So my mom and dad had to tell us, “Make sure you sit on the floor. Just sit on the floor.” They didn’t give us insights into this, but they saw what was happening. We were just clueless, you know, “Hey, there’s a big chair, I’m going for it.” “Hey, the world’s about me!” And that’s what we thought.

You might be out there thinking, “Yeah, those youth, they’re so proud and selfish. I’m glad I’m not young anymore,” but be careful. We could talk about wanting a good parking place at Calvary Bible Church. If you wanted to get nasty, you know, get that good spot; so the senior citizens and mothers with little kids could hike here from the north 40. Um-hmmm. Um-hmmm. As long as we get a good spot, that’s what matters.

Or maybe we could talk about church pot lucks. When you know there’s going to be a pot luck, [you know] we’re going to eat at a certain time and so you start navigating toward the back corner near the door so you can bolt for that place or you can get in line first so you can get [to be] the first to eat the best of the food. And then, of course, get that nice place as well. Of course, you would never do that, would you?

It’s pretty quiet in here.

We do this. We’re good at it. Do you ever argue over the remote? What you’re going to watch? What you’re going to eat? Sure. You want to be first. You want to be best. Now we’re all factories of pride. Selfishness just flows through our veins. What you have to realize is, humility comes on purpose. Pride comes naturally without thinking, without making an effort.

Selfishness and pride come easily, but humility is an act of will against our will. We know that James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 say,

**GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE
TO THE HUMBLE.**

You don't want God to oppose you. You go through the Bible, it's scary [what] kinds of things that happen to proud people, really proud. You think of Nabal. Do you remember Nabal in 1 Samuel 25, the husband of Abigail? You remember David and his men, they're running from Saul and David and his men are... in their prime. They're young men in their 20s. They've got energy. They're buff, man, they're like assassins. They're warriors. And they cruise around the country trying to do the will of God and not get killed. But, if David [wasn't] their leader, they would have been pirates, probably. And David shows up to Nabal, whose name, of course, means fool.

Now, do you ever wonder who would call their kid that? You know, you're at the hospital, "Honey, what should we put on the birth certificate? Come on, we've got to decide. Let's call him Fool!" It just doesn't seem very good. It was kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy in Nabal's case.

So, Nabal tells David, "Listen, who are you? I don't know you. I mean I don't let anybody come around here asking for food. Who are you? Get out of here!" And [Nabal] sends him packing.

Well his wife, who was anything but foolish, Abigail, realizes that her husband Nabal has just signed his own death warrant. [She] hurriedly gathers up a bunch of food, because David's men probably would have come in there and struck him down and taken whatever they wanted.

So Nabal's wife, Abigail, takes a bunch of food, quickly runs, humbles herself before David, gives him and his men all of this food and she decides to tell her husband. She has to wait [though,] because he's home getting drunk.

And we read this in 1 Samuel 25:37–38 –

In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things...

That she spared his life...

and his heart died within him so that he became like a stone.

[He] probably had a stroke. Verse 38 says –

about ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died.

God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. We could talk about Jezebel, who decided that because she heard her husband kind of lamenting that he couldn't have Naboth's vineyard, decided to falsely accuse Naboth, try him, and have him executed so her husband, the king, could have that vineyard. She was very proud about it and boasted about how she snagged that vineyard away from a guy unjustly.

Of course, there was a little prophecy about her. One day that prophecy came true. She's up in her palace and she's painting her eyes, putting on her makeup, and doing her hair. So she gets all beautiful – before they cast her out the window. She bounces off the castle walls, bloodying them up before she hits the ground with a splat. Then the horses trample upon her in the street. Finally, they think, "Well, maybe we ought to go and pick up her carcass and bury it." But they go out there, the dogs had eaten her.

Or we could talk about Nebuchadnezzar, who was a very proud man. The Lord said, "You're proud and I don't want you to be this way anymore. You'd better stop. You do this again, there [are] going to be serious consequences." So what happens? "Is this not Babylon the great that I have built?" Then seven years of eating grass like an ox until he learned his lesson.

Or we could talk about Herod Agrippa in Acts 12, you remember the story, Acts 12. There he is giving his speech and the people go, "Oh, the

voice of a god and not a man!” And he’s like, “Man, I like this, I really like this.” He’s soaking up the glory that should have been given to the Lord like a dry sponge. And then remember what the text says? Verse 23 –

And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory and he was eaten by worms and died.

Now, that’s exactly the opposite of how it usually works. Usually, you die, are buried, and *then* the worms eat you. In this instance, they ate him so that he died and then they buried him and then they ate him the rest of the way.

God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And Jesus goes on to illustrate this. Look at Verse 10 in our text, He says –

But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say, “Friend, move up higher”; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.

Apparently, these Pharisees and lawyers were so eager to have a place of honor that they didn’t even stop and ask the host where they should sit or be seated by the host, they just grabbed the places of honor. Imagine sitting in a room with Jesus, the Messiah, the Great Prophet predicted in the Old Testament, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Creator of heaven and earth, and [then you] let him sit in the bad place while you clamor for the good place. That is not good.

Jesus decides to kind of thrust in the sword the rest of the way. Look at Verse 11.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

That phrase appears over and over again in the New Testament. Proverbs 25:6–7 says –

Do not claim honor in the presence of the King.

Of course, that's what Jesus was, the King.

And do not stand in the place of great men;

For it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here,"

Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince,

Whom your eyes have seen.

There's nothing wrong with being honored by other people. If it happens, it happens. You try and take it with humility. You try to give glory to God. People come up to me [and say], "Oh, Pastor Jack, it was a great sermon." And what you don't hear me saying is, "Lord, to You be the glory; to You be the glory."

Years back, I was at this seminary banquet at the Shepherd's Conference Week, like it always was. I thought Lisa had signed us up and she thought I [had] signed us up and so, right before we were ready to go, I just called a couple hours right before that. We were dressed, we were ready to go and I called up and said, "What time is this starting?" The secretary said, "Well, it's starting at such and such a time, but you aren't signed up." And it was then I realized that since neither of us signed us up, we weren't signed up. We just thought that each other had signed us up, but we [both] took that for granted, never really checking, and then we finally kind of got synchronized. We realized, "We don't get to go!"

So then we thought, "Let's just go on a date." So we said OK. We got the kids distributed or whatever and we're getting ready to go when we get a phone call, "A place has opened up. You can come to the banquet."

Great! So, we're all dressed up. We're ready to go. We shoot over there. You know, we had been a lot of other times before. You get your number,

which is your table number and we're usually at table number 38 or 42 back in the dark corner of whatever large room they're in. But this time, they gave us the table [number] and it said "1" on there. And I thought, what is this? They must have reversed the order and put "1" in the back, table 50 in the front or whatever. So, we went up there and realized we were sitting right in the front with John MacArthur and Dr. Mayhue and Iain Murray, who is General Editor of Banner of Truth Publishing, this incredible writer, godly man, conference speaker. We felt like guppies in an ocean full of killer whales. It was a little intimidating.

Of course, all my classmates are sitting back there with their binoculars saying, "Is Jack up there? They made a mistake! He's one of us!"

So we suffered through it.

Every once in a while that might happen. *Every once in a while that might happen.* But I'm still waiting for that action to happen where I get to fly first class. It hasn't quite happened yet, but someday! Someday! I might die before it happens, but. . . .

Somebody honors you, that's fine. Somebody blesses you, that's fine. Give glory to God. Be thankful. That's fine. But don't seek it. *Don't seek it.* I just want you to know, if you're used to being honored, it gets more and more difficult to be humble. Because you think when you come into the room they should throw down the red carpet. . . . "Could I kiss your ring?" "Sure."

Pretty soon, you think you're something when you're not. Then, humbling yourself becomes increasingly more difficult because you become deceived. You're really just a sinner saved by grace and everything you have has been given to you by God. When it says, God will humble you if you exalt yourself and exalt you if you humble yourself, it is clear here that God's the One doing that. He *will* humble the proud and He *will* exalt the humble.

Do you remember when Mary said in her Magnificat in Luke 1:52. . .

He has brought down rulers from their thrones and exalted those who were humble.

Isn't that interesting? All the princes and kings and all those who had the pomp in this world got pomp for a little while. Those who humbled themselves and were, I don't know, the street sweepers in the far edges of the city, in the ghetto, those people who feared God, those are the people who are going to be greatly exalted in the Kingdom of Heaven. You may be one of those people.

You may be one of those people [who] no one knows. You may never make it up here to this incredible place of honor [*laughter*]. This [podium] is nothing more [than a place where] people can throw rocks at you. But, yeah, you may never make it up front and nobody [will] know that you're a super leader or whatever. You may never write a book or whatever. Just serve the Lord. Be godly. Be the godly mom, the behind-the-scenes person. Let others take the fame. Let others take [honors] and what happens is... when you get to heaven, they're going to be so far back there, they're going to need a telescope to see you next to Jesus on the platform.

He's not going to let you out give Him. He's going to honor those who choose to humble themselves, but if you're proud and you're stubborn and you won't bend and you're looking for attention and fame and accolades and praise in this life, God will swat you down. He'll make sure you learn your lesson. It'll be painful.

The third great characteristic of godliness we find in the text is, give out of love, not earthly reward. This is another manifestation of having Jesus be Lord of your life and living in humility. Look at what the text says in Verse 12.

And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him,...

Notice first... Jesus' courage is amazing. He's the young man in the room, but what does He do? He goes after everybody universally [saying],

“You guys clamor for places of position,” and then He drives in the sword, twists the blade. Now He goes for the host, the leader of the whole group of them, this ruler of the whole group. To the one who invited Him, and he says to the leader (look at the middle of verse 12),

When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends. . .

Implied, like these men,

or your brothers

Implied, like these men,

or your relatives

like these men,

or rich neighbors,

like these men,

otherwise they might also invite you in return and that will be your repayment.

Ow! *Ow!*

Don't invite people like *this* to your house. And all the guys are [saying], “Why not?” Because they're your reward. Look at them. Not all that great. But you know what, isn't this what we usually do?

“Who do you want to invite over?” “Well, let's invite somebody who's going to give us this or treat us in this way or maybe help us get a discount or increase our business or move our influence or who's fun and will entertain us or whatever. We often think of the person that's going to help us the most. But look at Verse 13. Jesus corrects this reward seeking mindset, and He says,

But when you give a reception, invite *the* poor, *the* crippled, *the* lame, *the* blind,

And just stop there. The culture's different from ours, so people who were poor, crippled, lame, [or] blind depended on relatives, friends, and just strangers to support them. There was no welfare system like [in] our country. There's a little difficulty, I think, with people trying to figure out how to apply this text. We'll talk about that in a second.

When you see [the word] "poor," and we've talked about this before and I'm going to keep talking about it because a lot of people think "poor" is anybody who doesn't have financial resources. No, that's not what it means in a Biblical sense. The poor are those who, because of circumstances out of their control, have... things come upon them that, no matter how hard they work – they work their fingers to the bone and they [do] everything they can – they can't support themselves. They can't make ends meet. They're poor.

The Bible does not call drunkards poor, though they may be financially poor or addicts, drug addicts, or gamblers or impulsive spenders or lazy people or gluttons. Those people, though they might not have any finances [and] may be poor in the world's eyes, they're not poor in a Biblical sense. They're in sin. There's a difference. When you look at the Scriptures you'll see very clearly that what God says to do about those kinds of people, as opposed to those who are truly Biblically poor, who because of circumstances find themselves in need. Our country spends \$700 billion, I looked it up this week in the federal budget, on human services... helping, Medicare, Medicaid, whatever you want to put in there. It's the largest portion of our budget, more even than defense spending, which is huge.

In those times, they didn't have any of that. They didn't have any \$700 billion spending budget to help people who, a lot of times because of their own choices were poor. No, they didn't have anything like that. You had to help them. So Jesus is saying, "You know what? When you invite somebody who's blind and crippled and lame and poor to your house, they're not going

to be able to repay you.” And that’s what’s cool about it is that they can’t repay you.

That’s why Jesus says, if you look at Verse 14 again,

and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Notice Jesus says you will be paid. You will be repaid. Any sacrifice you make, food for them, time for them, energy spent on those who are truly in need. Any time you give to somebody like that, God’s going to repay you for them. He’s going to pay your bill.

One time I took a friend out, my brother and I took a friend out. He was moving and this guy didn’t have very much money, so we said, “You know what, we’re going to take you out to this really nice restaurant and we’re paying.” He said, “No, no, no.” I said, “Yeah, we’re paying.” He said, “OK.”

So we take him out to this nice restaurant, a steak and seafood place, and we have this great dinner. He has to go to the bathroom. He gets up. He comes back. So we ask the waiter, “Can we have the check?” The waiter says the bill has already been paid. We look at our friend who’s already poor and he’s got this smile on his face. So, we start rebuking him and he says, “Well, now I *really* have to go to the bathroom.”

He went. . . and my brother and I talked about it. We said, “Let’s just stuff his jacket pockets full of money and we will get back at him.” What happened was, he gets on his jacket, his coat and we’re getting ready and we’re giving hugs and, “We’re going to miss you,” and la la la. And he puts his hands in his pockets and I’m thinking to myself, “Uh oh, I hope he doesn’t feel those,” and he doesn’t say anything. He says, “Well guys, it’s been great,” and he starts walking toward the door and he starts flicking out \$20 bills on the floor. He knows we’re going to pick them up. He’s got this little trail of money.

So, we're kind of like chickens behind him, pecking these things up so the waiter won't get them. Anyway, we finally get to the door, we open the door and he has *sprinted* across the parking lot and he's getting in his car and saying, "I love you guys!" And that's the last we saw of him.

Sometimes it backfires.

Well, listen, there are a lot of things here that I could say. I'm just going to give you one principle. If you want to give and not get earthly rewards, like Jesus is saying here, just give anonymously. That's it. That will fix it in every case. *That will fix it in every case.*

You can give anonymously in a lot of ways. If you give to missions, you know, missionaries don't get a little receipt saying, "Here's money from Calvary Bible Church. Four percent came from so-and-so, three percent came from..." They don't get that. They just get a check from Calvary Bible Church and they can't pay you back.

You know somebody who's in need in the church? Just drop off the groceries on their porch. Send them the gift certificate with no return address on there. Do the "doorbell ditch" thing. It works! You've got to be fast. If you're older, you probably don't want to use that technique. You know, you're trying to get away, "Hey, there's so-and-so! Look, they left this on our porch." Make sure you're young enough to get out of the way before they open the door.

There are a lot of different ways you can give anonymously and it's so great. I have people [who] have given me so many things, [the list] could just go on forever. I've been given money, especially when I was in seminary... Every time I was just extremely desperate and I was fretting and asking God to help me and then I almost lost hope, then it would just fall out of the skies. We had money on the porch, money in packages, money in the mail, money just sent from who knows who, and gift certificates and things... We never knew who gave them to us. We still don't know.

I remember one time we had, I think it was Nate, the insurance paid for part [of his delivery] and we had this huge bill. I had to make this, like, car payment. We went down there to make the payment... at the hospital and...

the bill's been paid. I say, "So, how'd that work?" They said somebody paid it and I said, "Well, who?" And they said, "Well, the name's right here. Let me just pull it up." And she pulls up the record and pulls it out of her file and she says, "Oh, it's blacked out."

So, somebody owns my kid.

And when they get to heaven, they can have him back.

That's how it is. I've had books sent to me. . . . This one guy at our other church was called "the book genie." We never knew who he was, but he was just a guy who said, "I'll buy the pastors any book they want."

"Ooh hoo wah hah hah. . . ."

We have to have this discussion. Do you understand how dangerous that is? We all want libraries of thousands. Have you ever seen the Library of Congress? Nothing. That's *nothing*. We all want first editions, too. We just asked for books and they just showed up and we never knew who it [was].

So what happens when that happens? Who do you praise? God! Bingo. See that? That's why anonymous giving is so great. You give God the glory, other people are blessed and since they don't know who to thank, who do they thank? God. And to God be the glory.

But then in the Resurrection, who repays you? God. That's how to do it. You want to obey the verse? You will be repaid at the Resurrection. Give anonymously.

Finally, look at Verse 15, which is a transition verse between, kind of the end of this section and the next one. We'll get into it in the weeks to come. Verse 15 –

And when one of those who were reclining *at the table* with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

And you know what? That is true. If you just make it into the Kingdom, you're going to be blessed. If you just get into the door, even if you're least in the Kingdom of Heaven, it's going to be incredible. Just get in. *Get in.*

And whoever said this had wisdom enough to realize, you know what, if anybody makes it, it's going to be incredible. It'll be an incredible blessing just to get there.

And it's true. So true godliness starts and continues and never ends with submitting to Jesus' Lordship. Secondly, true godliness must be accompanied by humility, a voluntary submission of your will to the will of Christ. And third, true godliness must perform acts of love to God and others, not expecting anything in return in this life, knowing that God will repay you at the Resurrection.

Those are three *huge, huge* traits of godliness that all of us need to pray for, pursue, and cultivate in our lives by God's grace, so that He can be glorified.

Now, let's pray.

Father, we just thank you for this text and what it teaches us. What a great God you are! I just thank You, Lord, for Your kindness to us, by giving us Your Word, by giving us Your Son, by sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. If there be anybody here today who doesn't know You, I just pray, Father, that You would just bless them; that You would open their heart. Help them to see the truth. Help them to understand that You are Lord, that they are sinners, that You died on the cross for our sins, were buried and rose again on the third day and that, by trusting in You alone they can be saved. Oh Father, make this happen today. Help us all to share the Good News, that others might come to know Jesus as Lord and then pursue humility and pursue giving out of love for you and love for others, not earthly reward. And Father in doing that, may we make a huge impact on our community, our friends, our co-workers as they see us voluntarily take the last place, that You might be honored. Father, help us to be that way, for Your glory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.