

“Where Do I Sit?”

Last week, the question before us was whether I am IN or OUT when it comes to the kingdom of God. We heard Jesus say – “And behold, some are LAST who will be first, and some who are FIRST who will be last” (Luke 13:30). This week the question is “Where do I sit?” – and we hear Jesus say, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Like last week, what Jesus says to us today points ahead to what will happen in the end of days. And yet, it’s not just about what happens in the future – Jesus connects it to your life today – revealing how the “now” and “not yet” are one and the same.

Will I enter into the kingdom on the last day? Am I IN? Jesus says, “strive to enter through the narrow door.” Today, do you enter through the narrow door – that is, do you live by faith in Jesus Christ, who alone is your narrow door into God’s kingdom?

Likewise, with today’s Scripture. Where will you sit in the end? Will you be humbled, or exalted? Will you be shamed, or honored? Well, where do you sit today? Who do you invite to your table? Who do you associate with – have fellowship with?

Go to any Middle School lunchroom and you’ll see that where you sit is a big deal. Where do I fit in? The same is true at senior care facilities! Do you sit with the guy who drools and drops food down the front of him? Do you sit next to the lady will ask your name 10 times during the activity?

Where do I sit? Where do I fit in? It IS a question about the last day – but we live it out every day. How much seniority do I have at work? Am I the best or worse golfer in this foursome? Who’s more beautiful? Who’s in the best shape, and who is not? Who has the most money, nicest house? Have the newly married couple invited us to their reception because they truly want us here – or, is it a “have to” invite? “Where do I sit?”

We are constantly playing “The Comparison Game” – trying to answer – “Where do I fit in?” We scan the room – judge all the players – and then try to sit a seat or two higher than we think we should – because our desire is always to be exalted.

Last week I said we typically get our starting point wrong – thinking everyone is IN the kingdom of God, when the Scriptures teach us – that everyone is born OUTside the kingdom of God. All are on the OUTside looking IN.

The starting point today is that we are LAST and LOWEST – and we get that wrong too. The Bible says, “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others MORE SIGNIFICANT than yourselves” (Php. 2:3).

NO WAY is our knee-jerk response. That person is not more significant than me! I’m better than that fat, ugly slob – more significant than the person picking up my trash or bringing food to my table – more than the dope pusher, the pedophile, the politician – the man with dropsy.

Playing “The Comparison Game” sets you on a path of “climbing the ladder” – but it’s an extension ladder that has no end! You’re always climbing – never reaching the top! Or, to use the setting for our Gospel – you are sitting at the table, but never enjoying the feast! You’re too busy looking around – seeing how you stack up – worried about being put to shame in front of everyone by being put in your place.

You see, the question is not just – “Where do I sit?” – but, “Who are you?” You must begin with the confession that I am a SINNER. That puts you in a proper position before God – and it puts you on level ground with every other person – for all have sinned, all are unworthy of God’s love, His gifts, His kingdom.

To consider others better than yourself is not just PRETENDING to be humble either – thinking you are better, and you’ll show it by how HUMBLE you can be. That’s like saying – “I’ll show God how humble I am.” That’s not humility.

Rather, humility is what you are. You are by nature a sinner – out – lowest – last. You are on the same rung as the man with dropsy, the poor, the blind, the murderer, the liar. But you are not alone.

You are connected to Christ by faith. That’s why Philippians 2 goes on to say – “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” You are given the mind of Christ – to humble yourself, to become the servant of all, to sacrifice yourself (your place) for others.

Think about that. Jesus is as IN as IN can be! It's HIS kingdom – and yet, He becomes as one who is OUT. He is despised, rejected. He associates with sinners, numbered with transgressors – becomes the criminal, the sinner, the One cursed by God.

He is FIRST and EXALTED – but becomes LAST and takes the LOWEST place. The Creator takes on creation. Jesus humbles Himself to become man – and yet, He IS God! He associates with everyone – sinners, prostitutes, the man with dropsy. He is the Host of the feast – and yet, at the Table, He is One who serves.

Jesus Christ is God FOR you. He is God IN you – for don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19)? He is God at work THROUGH you – for as the Scripture says – “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Gal. 2:20).

THAT Jesus calls all sinners to repent – to put aside your silly “Comparison Game” – and to have the same mind as Him. To be the servant of others. To consider them more significant – to see those whom the Lord has placed around you, and ask, what do THEY need?

This life of daily repentance – being taken down to the bottom rung of the ladder – is also one of being exalted to the highest place! Christ, with His blood, forgives all your sin – He renews your mind – He strengthens you for service in His kingdom.

And now, He invites you to “come up higher” – to sit at Table with Him – to enjoy the feast. “Come up higher” – you who are last, least, humbled – you who are dearly loved by God. Come and enjoy the feast, dear child of God – sit at Table with Him today, and for all eternity. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.