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*When Humility Walks in the Room*

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Sermon Text: Luke 14:7-11, Hebrews 13:1-8, Psalm 119:1-16  
Mariner Sands Chapel

Dr. Gary Carr  
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A popular storyteller on NPR, Garrison Keillor, talked about Lake Wobegon, where all the children of the fictional Minnesota town were “above average.” Here is some good news: if you are like most people, you are way above average – at almost everything. Psychologists call this the state of “illusory superiority.” It simply means that we tend to inflate our positive qualities and abilities, especially in comparison to other people. Numerous research studies have revealed this tendency to overestimate ourselves. For instance, when researchers asked a million high school students how well they got along with their peers, none of the students rated themselves below average. As a matter of fact, 60 percent of students believed they were in the top 10 percent, and 25 percent rated themselves in the top one percent.

History may not repeat itself, but it rhymes. At the dawn of civilization, just as it is today, people tend to overrate themselves. When Cain presented offerings to God, he gave his best with a sense of arrogance. His brother, Abel, on the other hand, gave God’s best with a sense of humility. Augustine says “Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues. The higher your structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundation.”

Luke’s gospel tells us, that after rebuking the people in attendance at the meal for their lack of compassion and mercy, Jesus told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor (14:7) at the dinner table. Dining at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor. He saw their pride, how they thought of themselves better than they really were, seeing their faults in faint black and white rather than in vivid color, and assuming the worst in others while assuming the best in themselves. And that is what prompted Jesus to tell them all a parable, which we call “the parable of the wedding feast.” It is a parable revealing life qualities associated with Kingdom living, a short discourse in which the fictitious is employed to represent and illustrate the real. Some say that Jesus’ parable is about proper seating etiquette and contains a lesson on humility. But Jesus never gives mere etiquette advice like columnist Ann Landers. Instead, the passage pictures how one approaches God, as well as the call to humility.

Psalm 119 highlights the importance of our daily walk. It says, “Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who **walk** in the law of the Lord, who seek Him with their whole heart and **walk** in His ways.” In our passage from Hebrews, the writer describes what it is like when humility walks in the room of our daily lives; practicing brotherly kindness, hospitality, remembering those in jail and those mistreated, being content with what you have, and being careful to live a holy life. How you walk is how you live; how you live is what you believe; what you believe is whom you worship. Jesus Christ is the one God has provided to be our hope and our salvation. Jesus will be the host of the great wedding supper of the Lamb. He invites you in. You are made welcome in His very presence. How does that make you feel?

The prophet Micah said it best. Whenever we walk into the room, “What does God require? Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”