

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

He's right, you know. I mean, he's Jesus so of course he's right. Jesus said, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." So, what does this mean? Well, it's not that complicated, Scripture is clear. The posture in which God calls you to think, speak, and just flat out live is one of humility. Jesus warns you, then, against exalting yourself and calls you to be humble. Jesus calls you to repentance and faith.

The Pharisees, at the beginning of the reading though, were quite the opposite. Listen again to what the Holy Spirit inspired St. Luke to write, "One Sabbath, when he [Jesus] went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy." Did you catch that? What were the Pharisees doing? They were "watching him carefully." That sounds great, right? Shouldn't you watch Jesus carefully? Yes, you should but the hearts of the Pharisees here were hearts that sought to exalt themselves and for Jesus to be put below them.

In the previous chapter of Luke's Gospel, chapter 13, Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath, but the ruler of the synagogue was angry with Jesus because he healed her on that day which was to be set apart. In the minds of the Jews their righteousness was not just found in observing the law, but they even had extra additional measures by which they thought they were able to observe the law and be righteous in the sight of God. Remembering the Sabbath day by keeping it holy is commanded by God but they didn't seek to sanctify it by the word of God and prayer especially as the Word made flesh was standing before them working miracles.

Desiring righteousness is a good thing. Desiring a righteousness, however, that finds confidence in yourself, and your own works is sinful and mocks God. This is far from righteousness as one can be as it's idolatrous and against the very essence of God's law and his very person. When Jesus healed this man on the sabbath he knew the hearts of the Pharisees who were watching him carefully not as men sitting at his feet like beloved disciples do but instead as wolves and snakes seeking to pounce and kill. Luke recorded the answer of Jesus, "And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?' But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, 'Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?' And they could not reply to these things."

In Romans 3, St. Paul wrote, "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

Look at the Pharisees as an example and learn. You want to think highly of yourself and place your confidence in your own thoughts, opinions, words, and deeds then be prepared for your mouth to be stopped. The Old Testament reading also illustrates this: "Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, 'Come up here,' than to be put lower in the presence of a noble." This is what Jesus says, as well, when he told the parable and saw the people take the places of honor, as this was a fruit of their self-

righteous hearts. You don't exalt yourself for you will be humbled. Go to a wedding and sit at the wedding party's table and be prepared to be asked to move in front of everyone watching you and to your shame.

The warning for you in all of this is that you would hear this word of the Lord today and take heed lest you fall. Dear people of God, examine your lives according to God's commandments. Ask yourself questions like, "what do I care about when it comes to how I live in this world? Who or what defines what I think is good and worthy of conforming my life to? Do I think I am entitled to the things of God? What do I trust in when I lay my head down at night or when I think about dying? Where am I looking for comfort, confidence, and certainty?" All these things, when you go through the commandments show you that you have indeed not fulfilled what God has required of you and your mouth is stopped. Humble yourself, repent. Desire what is righteous and seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness not the righteousness of men. Remember what Jesus said? "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The antiphon for today says, "Righteous are you, O Lord, and right are your just decrees. Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes." Looking to God in humility is looking to God as one who cries out, "Lord, have mercy." Humbling yourself is turning from your sin and looking to Christ for your righteousness. In your God given faith you know where your redemption is found, it's found in Christ for God has indeed dealt with you according to his steadfast love.

The Lord who healed this man in the Gospel reading is the same Lord who came down from heaven and did perfectly fulfill all of God's law as he alone is righteous. He is the one in whom is found no deceit yet was led as a lamb to slaughter to suffer in the place of the unrighteous. He is the upon whom God's righteous anger is poured out and satisfied it by the shedding of his blood. He humbled himself and was obedient unto death, even death upon the cross. He is the one who died and is raised. This Lord is your Lord, who name is the "Lord is our righteousness. Jesus is your Lord who humbled himself so that you are exalted and baptized into his exalted name which is above every name.

Baptized into Christ you are clothed with him and his righteousness. No longer does God count your sin against you but sees only the righteousness of Jesus. That's quite something as you ponder and take all of this to heart today. In your sin you are nothing but in Christ you are and have everything. Your sin is forgiven, and you have eternal life. Your righteousness, then, is a real righteousness that avails before God, it's the righteousness of faith which clings solely to Christ.

In humility hear the Lord's word and seek him. Cast your sin and care upon him and he won't let you fall. He's called you and as you sit here today waiting for his return you sit as those who know a word is coming. The day is drawing near when Jesus will say to you, "'Friend move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you." That's what you have as his people called out by name by the Holy Spirit and gathered around his holy word and sacraments. His promise is yours and you fix your eyes on Christ crucified and risen as your hope. Your faith is founded on Jesus Christ your God and Lord. You sit in humility now but a

humility that has a future glory beyond compare. You are exalted in Christ now and you will be exalted unto life everlasting. You are unmoved as you stand on his sure word. He promises you a place of honor at the eternal wedding banquet on that day on that final day when all sin, suffering, and death comes to end. He comes to call you to that place even as he has called you now to the feast of his Supper and you walk by faith hearing his word. The day is coming, though, when your faith will come to an end and you will walk alongside him face to face and with all of God's saints, his called people, forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.