Proverbs 25:6-7 Do not exalt yourself in the king’s presence, and do not claim a place among great men; It is better for him to say to you, “Come up here,” than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman.

Now here is an interesting text. It is from the Book of Proverbs, a rather well known collection of wise sayings and helpful hints about life. Actually Proverbs can be divided into three sections. Chapter 1-9 is about the Superiority of Wisdom. The second section is from chapter 10-24 and contains mostly proverbs from Solomon and then closes with the collected sayings of other wise men. The third section begins with chapter 25 and has some more proverbs of Solomon collected by the king’s men and then sayings of other wise men. It is an interesting book to read and many of the proverbs are still very wise even by today’s standards.

So now we are back to considering the words of the text before us. You have really got to wrestle with these words. Now since I believe that every single portion of God’s Word pertains to or relates to Christ our Lord and Savior, well, you might stare a long time at these words and try to figure out how Jesus fits in. The nice part is that Jesus helps us. So in order to understand our simple proverb and what it means for us today we will indeed need the help of the Holy Spirit through God’s Word. We will try this theme out: **DO NOT EXALT YOURSELF. 1st. The King and Great Men. 2nd. Know where you stand. 3rd. Let the King exalt you.**

Now here is the first thing I want to do. I want to have you listen again to the words before us and then immediately after that I want you to contemplate how Jesus uses this lesson (for surely He did!) as he sat with the Pharisees. So first the proverb itself: **“Do not exalt yourself in the king’s presence, and do not claim a place among great men; it is better for him to say to you, “Come up here,” than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman.”**

Now Jesus’ use of the lesson: **“When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’”**

Wow! Did you see and hear how Jesus applied the words of the proverb. Clearly Jesus understood the heart of the lesson even though kings and noblemen are spoken of for before Jesus there were no kings or noblemen just Pharisees, just members of a particular Jewish sect who thought they were important. What Jesus saw them doing and perhaps what they did to Jesus is what motivated him to speak the words he did. Let’s dig deeper.

You do note that the original proverb does speak of a king, of great men and or noblemen. Now in our world today, especially here in the USA we don’t know much about such like kings and queens and nobility nor do I think you need to. Because in truth, it doesn’t matter who you are or where you live, it doesn’t matter your position or job. No matter where you are or what you do, somewhere and somehow there is a pecking order. There is always someone over someone. It may be obvious or it may not be but in truth almost everyone should grasp and understand there is a pecking order. In other words, someone answers to someone!

As you think about this I hope you are as awed as I was. There is always someone to answer to. The student to the teacher the teacher to the Principal to the Super to the School board! The laborer to the foreman, the foreman to the boss the boss to the contractor the contractor to the man with the money. It goes on and on. I can’t think of a single situation where there isn’t some sort of pecking order, some sort of hierarchy or structure that serves to govern whatever is going on. As we grasp this, it then becomes apparent that God, through his spokesmen, is trying to tell us that it is always best to observe the pecking order, to be aware of the hierarchy of the world. What fascinated me most in grasping this is that we don’t often realize the hierarchy or structure and when that happens things go wrong. It goes wrong because this hierarchy is a matter of respect, honor and obedience. If the student disses the teacher who disses the principal and on and on, recognize that order and structure breaks down. When the law is ignored pretty soon the ignoring of the law becomes the hatred of those who are to uphold the law or the ignoring of the law leads to groups who thinks the law doesn’t pertain to them. Either way, when this simple truth begins to get ignored, society, no matter what its structure will falter.

Think of this idea in regard to Jesus. At the banquet Jesus was at, there was no higher authority than Jesus himself. Yet the people before him were exalting themselves, they were thinking they knew more, or were more important than they really were. The end result is getting humiliated. Sometimes in the real world the end result is getting harmed or causing harm. And in the spiritual world, such behavior is usually pretty deadly.

Fact is, those men before Jesus should have put him at the head of the table and then sat at his feet and done nothing but take in every word he had to say. Yet the majority of the men at that banquet were probably a big part of the crowd that eventually shouted “Crucify him, crucify him!” All because they exalted themselves before the King.

The lesson still applies today. Isn’t it exalting yourself above the king and the noblemen when you decide that you know more than God, when you decide that you can do this thing that God says is absolutely wrong? Isn’t it exalting yourself before the King when on Sunday morning, the day He has given for His Worship and praise you determine there is something more important than Him and His praise. When God’s Word speaks and we don’t defend it or finally live by it what is that but deciding you are more important than the king? Is that not the very lesson that Jesus is trying to get us to grasp? There is a pecking order, and God is at the top! Not God as you want to see Him or understand Him but God as He says He is! To ignore this is, well, I’m sorry, do you want to be humiliated?

That’s a harsh point isn’t it? No one likes to be humiliated or have that feeling of being put down or even put into place. But when we exalt ourselves, when we exert ourselves over the top person and then get put in place, don’t blame the top person, blame yourself for not grasping the reality and simplicity of the way things are. And that is just in this world.

When it comes to the spiritual world, yes, to God’s world and kingdom the implication of being humiliated is eternal. Do you really think you know more than God? Do you really think that the world has now become so sophisticated, so knowledgeable that we don’t need God, that we have become our own gods who will direct our own path? What will you do when you are confronted by the King? What will you do when it is clear that you have taken to sitting on His throne and calling Him silly…what will you do?

That’s why I think the simple command here is: **“Do not exalt yourself in the king’s presence.”** This is not about being humble and being a person of service. This is about making sure you know that the King is the King and you are not! (Now it is true, that in his application of these words, Jesus does address the “Prominent Pharisee” but study those words. Is Jesus telling him he is going to earn heaven because he invites this one or that? Or by those words is Jesus pointing out to this man how he really does nothing without some sort of benefit coming his way? In other words, he is a pure hypocrite. He is more concerned about being prominent and being exalted than about serving the Lord and having the proper grasp that God is God.)

And the beauty of what Jesus concludes should not be missed. Jesus says, **“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”** Do you get it? If you exalt yourself before the King, trust me, the King will bring his judgment upon you and you will get put in place. But when you yield to the King, when your attitude and heart recognizes and grasps that the King is the King and no one else, the King will then exalt you. Here is the wonder of God’s love for us.

Why do I say that? It is clear in God’s Word that the way to eternal life and salvation is not our works or our acts, not what we accomplish but rather how we regard the King. Is God in first place in your life? I don’t mean you say he is, but is He? Do I see that reflected in your life? Do I see you defending His Word? Do I see you here giving praise, glory and honor to the King like he wants us to? We can go even deeper.

The King, yes, our Lord and Savior Jesus, has clearly told us about sin and the horrid consequences of that sin. Jesus has clearly taught that this sin is so great, so damning in your life that you don’t stand a chance on your own of being a part of God’s kingdom. Does this reality set in? Do you grasp this truth? Do you accept this truth? In other words, do you understand the horror, the damning horror of sin, big or small, once in a while or persistent? You are a sinner and have no standing, not a bit before the King.

But the King also tells us that when we put our all in Him, when we believe His promises and redemptive work, everything changes. The King, because of his love for us, takes us in our humble, sinful state and exalts us. He forgives our sins. He does this for us because that’s why He went to the cross. To win our salvation. To overcome the debt of sin that weighs horridly on all.

By the way, if you are the poor, the lame, the blind, the crippled (those in spiritual need of the Lord and that is everyone!) then don’t you think that as you get invited to and sit in on the Banquet of the Lord that things will and do change for you? Won’t you get stronger as you eat the feast of God? Won’t you get more confident and wise as you watch and listen to the word of your King? And when you enter the banquet and the King gives you new clothing to wear doesn’t life just get better because he has affected you?

So why would you get invited, attend His banquet and then sneak out, get your old clothing back on and then continue to act like one who has never been blessed by the King? And if you do that, what does that say about your attitude, your standing before the King? That you have walked out on Him? That you have rejected His blessings? That you think the old lame and blind life better?

The Lord knows who and what we are. The Lord knows our weaknesses and strengths. The Lord knows where our heart is at. Is it in Him and his wonder and strength or is it in us? If you understand this then you know that when it is the King we exalt, then the King will bless us, forgive us, grant us salvation, yes, the King will exalt us forever in his presence. What a joy to hear the King say to us, **“Come up here.”** With the King there is salvation and hope, joy and wonder, healing and forgiveness. Trust Him. Exalt Him! Give Him the glory in everything. Amen.