Proverbs 25:6-7 6Do not honor yourself in a king’s presence. Do not stand in a place reserved for great people, 7because it is better to be told, “Come up here,” than for you to be humiliated before a ruler whom your eyes have seen.

             How interesting it is to have this text come up and to be able to speak about the death of Queen Elizabeth II at the same time. If anyone is the embodiment of what it meant to be a queen, Elizabeth was it. She ruled for over 75 years and do you know what I heard time and time again about her? “In her entire reign she did not cause a single scandal or even dust up.” That is pretty impressive. Impressive especially in today’s world and especially in view of her children and grandchildren who as royals are filled with scandals.

            As I sit back and contemplate this ruler, this person called a Queen and royalty, I can say a few things. First, she looked just like any grandmother or mother out there. She didn’t have a halo or glow or have anything about her that said, “Royalty.” She came across as so very ordinary. Yet, listen to what is said of her. Educated, smart as could be, a person who had influence over so many in so many ways.”

            If you want my honest opinion on why all of this is true, I will tell you. Elizabeth was humble. She is the very embodiment of our text and what it is about. She was more concerned for her subjects, for those around her than she was about herself. Just humble. She wanted to serve her people for the peoples’ sake. I think she did just that. Queen Elizabeth II, you weren’t my Queen, but I do acknowledge that you were an example of humble greatness. Thank you for the person you were!

            As I said, I think Queen Elizabeth was a modern day example of what this proverb is about. Let’s explore the lesson for ourselves under this theme: BE HUMBLE.

            Now as we start, the first thing I want you to do is draw you attention to the Gospel lesson that is before us. Here is Jesus, watching a crowd of Pharisees as they gathered together for a meal. Note that the text does not say Jesus was a guest, but that Jesus went into the house with the other guests. Our verses note, **“He noticed how they were selecting the places of honor.”** Let the simplicity of that verse sink in. Here were these men, rulers, religious leaders, supposedly men whose lives were firmly founded on the Scripture of God and yet we hear what they were doing. What they were doing was clearly contrary to what God’s Word said. Either they didn’t know this teaching, which I highly doubt or they didn’t practice what God’s Word said. Do you know what we have here? We have hypocrites! A hypocrite is someone who pretends to have faith. They try to act and look godly but in truth that is really the last thing they are.

            But let’s dig deeper. Notice the Gospel text was verse 1 and then jumped to verse 7. Here is what happened previously. As they were gathering, we are told the Pharisees were closely watching Jesus, in other words, they were very much aware that he was there. Right in front of Jesus we are told there was a man **“with swelling of the body,”** something at that time called “dropsy” but it refers to problem where there is an excessive buildup of fluids in the body. Jesus asks the Pharisees gathered, **“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?”** We are told, **“But they were silent.”**

            I can understand their silence. The question is right in their face. They were gathered as the religious leaders and yet, they had not invited Jesus or at this point acknowledged him. All they are doing is watching Jesus closely. Truth is, of all the people gathered, Jesus is the greatest among them, but these men refuse to see that. So Jesus is going to teach them. **“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?”** Great question. Who among these men, who in the entire room, who in the entire city, who in the entire world had the power to heal except Jesus! Jesus has already been doing miracle after miracle, hundreds of thousands by now and these men ignore and look down on Jesus. No wonder they say nothing.

            And then Jesus heals the man. We are only told that Jesus took hold of the man, healed him and let him go. A simple, sweet, clear display of power and greatness. You can guess their reaction by the next question that Jesus asks. He says, **“Which of you, if you son or an ox would fall into a well on a Sabbath day, would not immediately pull him out?”** I can tell you that Jesus asks that question because these Pharisees are upset, very ill at ease because Jesus in their eyes did “work” on the Sabbath. Never mind that it was a miracle, a divine disply of power and authority, they were unhappy because as far as they were concerned, Jesus had sinned by doing this work on the Sabbath. And yet, Jesus asks them a question that every one of them knew the answer to: every single one of them would have pulled their son or even their animal out of the well, even if it were a Sabbath day. And again, the Pharisees remain silent. Actually the text says, **“They could not reply to these things.”** They were out gunned and out maneuvered in every way.

            Now comes the revelation of our text. Note that Jesus applies the words of our Proverb to them because he saw what they did. These Pharisees have gathered at the house of a leader and they jockeyed for position. They did this all the while ignoring the man in the gallery who was greater than all of them combined. Jesus wants to teach a lesson, a religious lesson for all of them. He wants them to grasp that these words are not just meant for when we are before the high and mighty, but rather these words are meant for our everyday lives, as a guide for what is to be found in our hearts.

            If you really want to grasp the profoundness of these words hear them like this: **“Do not honor yourself in the Lord’s presence.”** Think of these words as occurring before the Lord. Think of it all as taking place in front the throne of God or even in the banquet hall of the Lord God! That fact changes everything. Would you actually appear before the Lord, the Almighty, saying, “Hey I am here. Everyone in heaven is really blessed now!” If you wouldn’t do that before the Lord God, then don’t do that in this world, in your life now. The fact is that men who can’t grasp the simple idea of the rightness of healing on the Sabbath, and of the need of humbleness before the Lord are men who are going to miss the awesome revelations of God’s grace and mercy in Jesus the Savior. And there, there is the real lesson of this proverb.

            And in a way that is always our struggle too, isn’t it? We think we know so much. We think we have it all together. We think we are people of great faith and spiritual grasp and yet so often our words and actions say that we are just the opposite.

            Take for instance the question, “How would you rate your faith?” Contemplate that for a moment. On a scale of 1 to 10, with ten being the best, what would you say of your faith? But wait a minute, for I want to speak of a few things important to the question.

            If we are going to speak of faith, then please note that faith is really something composed of three different things. I prefer the theological way of expressing these three thing: cognition, emotion, and volition. Let’s explore what these three things are.

            To  have faith on must first have “cognition.” Cognition is a term that means “applied knowledge” or “knowledge that you make use of.” We can further help our understanding of this term if we also briefly speak of intellectual knowledge and spiritual knowledge.

            Intellectual knowledge is knowledge that is in your head. It means we know something, that we have its facts and figures in our heads. So, we may know about Jesus. Know his history, his teachings and such. We may even study them and can recite them without hesitation. But this knowledge makes not impression! It creates no emotion in our lives. We have this knowledge, book knowledge, smarts, but we can put it to use. You could say that is just leaves us cold.

            On the other hand, there is spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge is not just a bare knowledge of the mind but it is a knowledge that has an effect on our heart and mind. Spiritual knowledge takes the facts of Jesus and applies them. It believes them, puts trust and confidence in them. We not only know the history of Jesus, we know that Jesus lived his life for us. We know that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world from sin, our sins. We know that every jot and tittle about Jesus has a direct effect on our lives. Such spiritual knowledge or “cognition” is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We know the truths of Jesus and those truths impact our lives.

            There there is emotion. Our cognition has an impact on our emotion. Mind you, this emotion is not faith itself, but rather is affected by true and genuine faith. We do not put our confidence in the emotion but rather put our confidence in Jesus and what he has done. True faith impacts our emotion. When we know the promises of God in Jesus there is an emotional response. God’s truths affect us. We like them, we lay hold of them, we apply them to our daily lives and personal needs. We strive for greater grasp of these promises of Jesus. You cannot have faith in Jesus and remain unaffected by his grace and power. You can’t remain “emotionless” before Jesus.

            IN the same light we need to speak of “volition.” Volition is our will. Our will is changed and altered by the Gospel message of Jesus. The Holy Spirit moves us to hate sin and to desire a life filled with good works. Our very outlook on life is changed. God’s will actually becomes our will, our desire in life or our volition!

            When these three things are present in our lives then we have the very essence of faith. As our Lutheran Confessions tell us (AAC, Art. III): *“Faith is not only knowledge in the intellect, but also confidence in the will; it is to wish and to receive that which is offered in the promise—namely, reconciliation and remission of sins.”*

Now let’s see what Jesus was teaching. Here were these “religious leaders” and before them was a man who had already demonstrated his power and authority through thousands and thousands of miracles. Jesus even does a miracle right in front of them. I would think just on the basis of that one would grasp that Jesus is someone to be listened too and learned from. Fact is, these are the men who in a few months will see to the death of Jesus. Instead of realizing Jesus greatness, they will exalt themselves before him and declare Jesus some sort of trash to be thrown out of their lives.

            Such is our world and I fear that such is the battle many of us face. Is Jesus your God and Lord? Do you yield to his wisdom, his revelation of truth, which is the Bible or are you still out there deciding that you know better, that you see better, that you deserve a higher seat at the banquet of God? Why have so many decided that God couldn’t give us a complete, sure, truthful and flawless revelation of himself? I am asking why do so many people of our world reject the Bible as the truth of God. Why do so many people, think that getting to heaven is a matter of being a really good person and such? Do we still, seriously think we can earn God’s heaven by our own works and powers? It that were true, then why in the world did God even send Jesus? We didn’t need Him! If works are true, all we need is the Law of God, but recognize that mankind in his silly state, now rejects even the most basic of God’s Laws. We think we are going to get really high seats at God’s great banquet in heaven, but recognize that if you think it is about you, you have basically in your heart unseated God. This is not good.

            Me, I just cling to the wonder of God. God reveals we are sinners, completely and totally. God in his love for us sent Jesus to atone for our sins. Jesus lived the perfect and holy life we cannot live and then Jesus went to the cross to pay for our sins. Don’t you understand? That’s why we have crosses in our Churches and such. Because on that cross Jesus atoned for us! He paid for each and every sin of ours and the entire world. Jesus then rose from the dead, physically rose from the dead, and in that resurrection declared us heirs of eternal life. We live because Jesus does! We are forgiven because Jesus said so. We are forgiven children of God because of the victory and redemptive work of Jesus. Heaven is my home, Eternal life is my gift in Jesus.

            Faith means I trust Jesus. I know what he has done and it is done for me. It is done for you and for all who simply believe what Jesus says. The truth is, when you get to the eternal banquet Hall of God, as you are standing in the gallery, Jesus will come to you and because of simple faith will say, “My friend, come in. Take a seat next to me. Let us give thanks to the Lord for his grace of salvation.” In other words, I don’t care how you might rate your faith, I care about how God sees your heart. When Jesus and his victory is in your heart, then the victory is yours. Let God be God! Let Jesus reign. Put yourself entirely in his hand. Amen.