

August 28, 2022  
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 14:1-14

## HUMILITY IN LOVE AND SERVICE TOWARD NEIGHBOR.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Our Gospel text this morning is much more than a lesson in proper etiquette at dinner parties. It is a lesson in Christian humility and love in service toward your neighbor. Holy Scripture records that Jesus dined with tax collectors and sinners of every stripe. (cf: Mark 2:16–17) In our text, He accepts an invitation to dine at the home of a leader of the Pharisees on the Sabbath Day.

To be invited to the home of a prestigious religious leader and break bread with the best and brightest of the Pharisees and lawyers would normally be a high honor, but this invitation is different. It is a trap and Jesus knows it. It was not His first interaction with the Pharisees. The invitation was not about scholarly discussion on the Psalms, the Pentateuch, or the prophets. The dinner is so the religious leaders can watch Him closely, wait on Him to make a mistake in His words or actions, and arrest Him.

In front of Jesus stands a man suffering from dropsy, what we call edema, a swelling of the body due to fluid build-up. Jesus knows the hearts of the religious leaders, so before anyone says a word:

***“Jesus respond(s) to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?’”*** (Luke 14:3)

It is an easy question. Is it lawful? If anyone would have the answer, it is someone in this room full of experts in the Law. But no one says a word. There is no discussion or whispering. Everyone remains silent – so – Jesus takes the man and heals him and sends him away.

The lawyers and Pharisees recognize that they have been caught in their own trap. They know it is not only lawful to heal on the Sabbath – but it is required. Healing is an act of common decency. It is loving your neighbor as yourself. If it were one of their own children or animals, they would have rescued it on the Sabbath. There was no shame, no violation of God’s Law in rescuing one of their own people – even on the Sabbath. They are speechless because they **dare not** answer. To answer **yes** would be to condemn the whole Pharisaic legal system which they so vigorously defended. To answer **no** would be to confess to Jesus that they did not love others as they selfishly loved themselves.

The religious leaders are blinded by their egos and so preoccupied with catching Jesus in their trap that they do not see the real problem. They do not see the man with dropsy as a man in need, but only a means to an end. They are blinded by their self-righteousness and animosity for Jesus. When Jesus looks at the man, He sees him for who he is: a child of God in need, suffering in the misery and the shame of his disease. In His love and compassion Jesus heals the man and sends him on his way.

Furthermore, Jesus sees the religious leaders for who they are. He did not have to go to the house that day, but His love and compassion is unlimited. His willingness to eat in the house of a ruler of the Pharisees among the religious elite demonstrates his love for all people. The lawyers and Pharisees are focused on the observance and enforcement of the Law and traditions of man. Jesus is focused on grace and salvation. The leaders are blind in sin and in need of healing and Jesus alone has the power to open their eyes and forgive their sins. Jesus comes ready to heal not only the man with dropsy but also to heal the sin sick leaders and cleanse them unto eternal life. But they refuse open their eyes and believe. Like those religious leaders, there are many people today who call upon the Name of the Lord, sit in His presence, and listen to His teaching, but are blinded by their self-righteousness, refusing to open their eyes and believe.

As the dinner guests jockey for position on the seats of honor, Jesus notices how everyone chooses their seats and tells the them two short parables. In the first parable, He teaches Christian humility. He is not suggesting that you merely pretend to be humble, while a self-righteous ego wells up inside. No. Regardless of your education, tax bracket, or station in life, humble yourself and consider others more significant than you. (cf: Philippians 2:3–4)

When invited to a wedding feast, rather sitting in the best spot, choose the least desirable place. If you choose the best spot, and someone more important than you (in the eyes of the host) arrives, you will be humiliated when you are asked to give up your seat for the more important guest. You will have to slink off to the lowest place. Instead, choose the least desirable place. Then the host will see you and invite you to move up, and you will have honor in the eyes of everyone else.

Does it work this way in real life? That is not the point of the parable. The point of the parable is the danger of the sin of idolatry. The idolatry of me, myself, and I. The pride of thinking too highly of one's self. Jesus says:

***“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”*** (Lk 14:11).

Fellow Christian, do you desire to be viewed important and exalted for your deeds and accomplishments, or are you content in your left hand not knowing what your right hand is doing? (cf: Matthew 6:3) Do you view those in a lower tax bracket or with less education as unworthy of your time or are you a friend and helper to the least and the lowly? Do you thank God you are not like other sinners, the gossips, gluttons, and adulterers, or do you humbly cry out to God to be merciful on you, a poor miserable sinner? (cf: Luke 18:11–13)

If you are honest, you recognize that your sinful heart is curved in on *itself*, exalting *your-self*. You and I enjoy nothing more than sitting in the pharisaical judgement seat and throwing stones

at of others we deem lower than ourselves. You even twist Jesus' teaching into self-righteousness saying to yourself: [sarcasm on→] "*Gee, look at how humble I am. Look at the sacrifices I've made... the time and money I've given to the church, and my works and deeds.*" [← sarcasm off] That is not true humility. That is pride disguised by the lies of the devil, puffing yourself up in exaltation like the leaders in our text. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.

In the second parable Jesus teaches us what it looks like to behave and act like as a Christian in love and service toward our neighbor. He says:

***"... when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*** (Luke 14:13–14)

So I ask you dear Christian, can you find yourself in our Gospel text? Are you the humble or the exalted? Do you only receive family, friends, and rich neighbors – or do you first receive those who cannot repay you? The fact is – if we use our text as a measuring stick, you and I are merely Pharisees trying to get to heaven by means of our good works of the Law.

In any action statement, if **you** are the subject of the verb, it is a Law statement. If you say: "*I did this and that to please God*" – it is a Law statement. If you say: "*I did not do this and that to please God*" – that is another Law statement. But in almost every action statement where one of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity is the subject of the verb, it is a Gospel statement. The Gospel alone saves. God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do all the work. Within the Gospel of Jesus, there is no room for human pride, works, or deeds to earn God's favor. Your earthly position and all your hard work accomplish nothing toward your salvation.

Jesus' two parables are less about proper etiquette at weddings than they are about how the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom works. The Law does not exist to exalt you. When you use the Law of God to exalt yourself and admire how spiritual, religious, and wonderful you are, and you are going to be humbled. Boast in your goodness, and the Law will put you in your place: dead in your trespasses. Justify yourself with all the good you have done, and the Law will reveal you for the sinner that you are. There is always someone better than you. But be humbled by the Law, take your place among sinners as the chief of sinners, and you will be exalted by the Bridegroom Himself as He says to you:

***"Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you."*** (Luke 14:10)

To be sure, you and I are in the text. You and I are the Pharisees. You are the man with dropsy. You are the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. You and I are dead in our sin and in no way deserve an invitation into the Kingdom of Heaven. But thanks be to God that He sent His only begotten Son into our world to suffer and die on Calvary's cross so that you and me and all mankind might be sanctified by His blood. Jesus says: "***... he who humbles himself will be exalted.***" And since you and I cannot – Jesus did it in our stead.

No one will ever exhibit any more humility than the King of Glory who left the glory of heaven, humiliating Himself by taking on human flesh, living among the sick and sinful, just so He could

be beaten to a bloody pulp and murdered on the cross of Calvary in the place of sinners. St Paul writes:

***“For [y]our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [you] might become the righteousness of God.”*** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The point of the parables is the danger of the sin of idolatry, idolizing self in pride and thinking too highly of one’s self. It is Jesus alone who took all your sins of idolatry, self-righteousness, and your loving yourself more than you neighbor and covered them all with His blood at His death on the cross. For the sake of His blood, He forgives you of all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Baptism the Holy Spirit breathed new life and faith in your sin deadened heart and has given you an invitation to our Lord’s eternal banquet which has no end... the Resurrection of those who die in Christ Jesus. There is no way possible you can repay Jesus for His work of salvation on your behalf. He has done all the work. You merely receive His gracious gifts. But that does not mean you and I do not have work to do. Our Gospel text this morning is a lesson in Christian humility and love in service toward your neighbor.

Christ Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection gives you the freedom and courage to live each day as a child of God. Jesus didn’t worry about the social consequences of His day – and He has freed you to live likewise. You were given the name Christian in Baptism. What does a Christian do? A Christian loves the Lord with all their heart, soul, and mind – and loves their neighbor as themselves. A Christian considers others more significant than themselves. (cf: Philippians 2:3–4) Jesus says:

***“Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*** (Mark 10:45).

A servant is not greater than his master. (cf: John 13:16) Jesus came to serve you in His life, death, and Resurrection. You were buried with Him in Baptism and given the promise and salvation and new life in heaven. He comes to serve you in the preaching of His Word and in His Body and Blood in the Lord’s Supper. He strengthens you to love and serve your neighbor. And after you leave this vale of tears, He will greet you and serve you at the feast of the Lamb with has no end in heaven.

Amen.

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