

SUNDAY, March 30, 2025 Lent 4 "Bread for Sharing"

Psalm 32 759 VU Luke 14:7-14

You have been invited to a formal dinner at a castle. You are not sure why or how but you are asked to bring a guest. Arrangements are made and all is prepared for travelling and accommodations, the clothing you are to wear and as you are getting ready for the dinner you question and doubt your reason to be going to this dinner. You are not sure why you received this invitation but there is to be a formal gathering time prior to the actual dinner.

You go to the gathering time but you do not know anyone in the room but as you start to mingle around the people you notice a few celebrities which you like. You recognize them from favourite television shows, your favourite movies and because you like listening to their music. Eventually it is time for everyone to sit down for dinner. All are asked to find a seat at the table so you and your guest sit side by side at this long table. Then announcements are made about what is to occur for the dinner.

All are asked for each person to stand and identify themselves just briefly. It is your turn and so you introduce your guest and yourself. Applause occurs and the host for the dinner asks the two of you to follow them from one end of the table to another. This dinner you soon learn is in your honour. And there are two people who are also asked to move-- the two people are your favourite tv star and their guest and you and your guest are to take their spots. They are escorted to the far end of the table where you first sat. The tv stars are a bit angry and don't want to go. But you just patiently stand. You say it's ok, and you'll go back to the other seats. But the host insists and the tv stars finally move.

What do you do? What do you say to the other people? Then the host states, you are my honoured guests and you are to sit near me- for the simple reason- you are my honoured guests. But you state simply: but why me? And then you state were we not all invited to the table? Will we receive the same food and service? Yes, the host states. But what is important is that this place is for you- just like everyone else has a place at the table. This is your place.

How realistic is this story? Probably not so much- celebrities are just that- they crave and receive attention, they like to have the place of honour, special attention and require special care and concern. But what about you? Have you ever found yourself offered a different place for seating at a gathering/ banquet or such an event? How did you feel? How did those around you respond? What do you say and do?

In our scripture reading from Luke 14 Jesus is at the house of a leader of the Pharisees. It is the Sabbath. He noticed how the guests chose places of honour close to the leader. He then told them a parable about being a wedding guest who sits in the wrong place and is escorted to the lower place in disgrace. He tells them that they should choose the lower position so that if they are to receive a place of honour they will be moved to do so. It seems odd for Jesus to be teaching etiquette lessons but there is more to this than where it is appropriate to sit. For we know that when a banquet is held there are special spots reserved for guests--if a wedding- close family members sit near the wedding couple; if a time of mourning, those close by are again those who grieve as close friends and family members. But when Jesus tells this story he states, "it is all who humble themselves [who] will be exalted and those who exalt themselves will be humbled. "

SO the question is what are we to do if being honoured, should we also be humble? Jesus then states that to truly be humble is to invite to the table those whom you would not normally invite- poor, crippled, lame, blind. And the reason is because these are the people society looks down upon and in His time, could not repay them or return the favour of a dinner invite. Yet they will be blessed and repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

As we have been learning, Jesus is the Bread of Life. The one who nurtures, feeds, teaches and leads us to live a full life following his example of how to live and love others. As we also know that bread is a staple of most peoples' diets in its various forms. When Jesus called himself the bread of life he knew that people would understand this but he also wanted to inform everyone that a part of eating and being with others at meals, is to share respectfully what one has to offer and one does this by honouring and respecting others.

The essence of honouring another is about recognizing the inherent worth of another person regardless of background, position or achievements. As people of faith, we are to honour God through worship, obedience to his commands and how we serve others. This includes living life that reflects God's character, Jesus' teachings and striving for integrity in all that we do. As we honour others we also create an environment of trust, cooperation and positive outcomes.

When we consider how we share with others in Jesus' name we do so with expressions of love and compassion, and we recognize their value and treat them with kindness and respect. I share with you this story whose author is unknown:

Two boys were walking along a road through a field, when they came upon an old coat and a badly worn pair of shoes. Off in the distance a farmer was working his field. The younger boy thought it would be fun to hide the coat and shoes, and then wait in the bushes to see the farmer's expression upon finding his things missing. The older boy thought about that, but then told his friend that the farmer must be awfully poor to have clothing so worn. Instead he suggested that he would put a silver dollar in a shoe, then they could hide and watch the expression on the farmer's face. Silver dollars were worth a lot to a boy in those days, but the boys agreed that this was a good idea so they each did it. By and by the farmer came out of the field and put his foot in one shoe. He pulled his foot back out, reached into the shoe, and withdrew the coin with considerable surprise. The farmer looked around and couldn't see anyone, so proceeded to put on the shoe again, and then to try the other one. Finding the second silver dollar, the farmer knelt on the ground and prayed aloud to the Lord, rejoicing because he would now be able to help his wife, who was sick, and his children, who had no bread.

They had no bread, but through the actions of these two boys he now had \$2 to buy medicine and food. He was honoured for who he was and the boys learned what faith and love and caring for another really meant.

Romans 12:10 says "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." As Jesus shared the parable of the banquet we too need to remember that we each have a place at the table. Sometimes it is 'at the children's table', sometimes it is beside the guest of honour. And sometimes one is just a guest. But all will be fed. All will receive food and be nurtured and all will come to know that the One who invites us to the table, also said that if we eat the bread he offers, we will never be hungry. If we drink the cup of the new covenant we will never be thirsty. Christ Jesus invites us to the table, where the last become the first. Are we will to share the Bread of Life?

PRAYER

God of grace and love we praise you for you have created us in your image and you call us to share Christ's love. Help us to hear Jesus' words of honouring others as we share his message of hope. Help us to tell others that through him we are made humble and yet also exalted for He has taught us to live each day with joy in our hearts, and hope for tomorrow. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.