

Jesus teaches us the Kingdom Life
**“Those who exalt themselves will be humbled,
and those who humble themselves will be exalted”**

(Luke 14, 11)

SPRINGLINE PARISH DIOCESE OF LINCOLN
YEAR C + TRINITY 12 + 2019, THE WORD OF GOD: LUKE 14.1, 7-14

Luke 14. 1, 7-14: Jesus at a Pharisee’s house at a banquet

14 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

⁷When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸‘When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, “Give this person your seat.” Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.¹⁰ 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 honoured in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹For **all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.**’

¹²Then Jesus said to his host, ‘When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³But **when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,** ¹⁴and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’

Introduction

Jesus loves to use the mundane, the everyday, to help convey the depth of God’s kingdom. As a *parable* it has a spiritual significance. A *wedding feast* was a recognised symbol for the kingdom of God and heavenly bliss. The parable is based on the practice of seating guests at table by rank and distinction. He uses the common experiences of people, the home or marketplace, farms and fishing boats, to reveal aspects of the way of life in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, the Kingdom is like a sower going out to sow, the Kingdom is like a dinner party.

Luke 14. 7-11 Places of honour.

A meal after the synagogue service on the Sabbath provided an opportunity for teaching in which Jesus made use of the imagery of a banquet. Jesus’ teaching here to guests is not simply good advice on a social level (Pr. 25. 6-7)

The more important guests would arrive last, and an unwary early arrival might have to be moved to a lower place so as to accommodate them. Far better to adopt a position of modesty and wait to be invited to a better seat. For **God exalts the humble** and debases the proud. Jesus is not, of course, commending the hypocritical attitude which deliberately takes a lower place in order to be publicly exalted later.

14. 12-14 The choice of guests.

This piece of plain advice is in line with what Jesus says elsewhere about deeds which receive their full reward in this life. (Mt 6. 1-2, 5, 16) People ought rather to do those deeds which God will reward. But this can be misunderstood.

On the one hand, Jesus is not condemning outright the holding of a party for one's family or friends – he himself went to such parties (Jn. 2. 1-11). **Jesus is condemning the attitude which does good mainly for the sake of a tangible, earthly reward.**

On the other hand, he is not saying that we should do good purely to get a better and longer-lasting heavenly reward. That would also be a self-seeking attitude! We should do good to those who cannot give us anything in return and leave the whole question of recognition and reward to God.

Key Message: Jesus teaches us about Kingdom behaviour, Kingdom life

It is very easy to read this passage from scripture and limit the meaning to social justice and ethics. **The real subject at hand is the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God, things work differently.** Luke has given us a clue that there is more at stake here than etiquette; in the parable **Jesus is calling for Kingdom behaviour. Taking the low seat because one is humble is one thing but taking the low seat as a way to move up is another.** And there is no point you invite someone so as to be invited in return. Instead, as Christians we are to have the heart of God himself to welcome and invite people who cannot repay in kind.

We are reminded of Jesus himself. Jesus truly reflects God's own heart and how he deals with human beings. Jesus said: *"I came for the sick not for the healthy. The healthy does not need a physician. It's the sick who need one."* He showed us what we are to do in our own lives as disciples of Christ. Jesus went to the tax collectors and sinners, he went to the last and the least of society, the women, prostitutes, the scum of society...the weak...the neglected..

Matthew 25.40 *"The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

Matthew 7:12: *"So in everything, do to others what you would have **them** do to you, for this sums up **the Law and the Prophets.**"*

The Eucharist, the Holy Communion, that we shall shortly celebrate is a prophetic celebration. It reflects the Banquet in the Kingdom because at Holy Communion we are all around the Table, without distinctions of any sort. We share the one bread and one cup and we belong to one family of faith around the altar. And we become the bread for the world when we feed the hungry and serve the poor. The Eucharistic meal is a prophetic symbol to the world where we celebrate the radical love of Jesus Christ for each of us as we partake of his body and blood. The Holy Communion pre-figures the prophetic and radical celebration of the Eternal Banquet in the Kingdom of God while we are still on earth because when we celebrate the Holy Communion we remember Jesus Christ, 'Yesterday, Today and Forever!' (Hebrews

[ST Mattapally]