

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
1 September 2013  
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
Luke 14:1-14

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

We didn't set out to do it this way, but we couldn't have planned it better if we tried.  
Here we are, Grace and Trinity,  
together gathered around our Lord's Word,  
and, soon, the giving out of His Blessed Sacrament.

Here we are, gathered together, 3 years since I first preached the Gospel into your ears.  
The Gospel text for today was the basis for the first sermon I delivered.

Much has changed over these three years, and yet much still stays the same.

One of those things that stays the same, always and no matter what, is Jesus—  
as Hebrews says, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*" (Heb 13:8)

And today—just like 3 years ago, and just like 2000 years ago—  
Jesus came to the home of a Pharisee in order to eat bread.

Now, where do you think He sat?  
Put it this way: if Jesus came to *your* home, which chair would you give Him?  
If you had enough warning,  
would you wipe the spit-up off,  
or have it re-upholstered,  
or would you buy a new one?  
Would you sit at the head of table, or He?  
Would you serve Him first?

Of course you would!  
You'd bend over backward for Him.  
You'd give Him the seat of honor.  
You'd wash His feet and ask for His hands also.  
You'd want to care for His wounds and bandage His feet.  
You'd cook your best meal, and then apologize that it's not good enough.  
You'd lose sight of everything else and fix your eyes intently on Jesus and Him alone.

I know this because of how you've served me and my family these past 3 years.  
I know the lengths you've gone to care for us, to provide for us, and to defend us.  
You've truly served us as honored guests.  
If you would do that for me—a called servant of Christ—and for my family,  
I can only imagine how you'd do it for Jesus.

The problem is, the people we're called to serve don't always look, talk, or act like Jesus.  
It's easy to speak of how you'd serve Jesus—  
or for that matter, me, or the president, the rich, or the famous.

But what about the man with dropsy? (Lk 14:2)  
 What about the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind (Lk 14:12)?  
 What about your neighbor with the messy yard,  
     or the man in line at Dillons who doesn't speak English,  
     or the homeless guy looking to buy another pack of cigarettes,  
     or what about your mother-in-law?  
 What about those who are difficult to love,  
     or who don't deserve your time,  
     or who don't ask for forgiveness?

This is where today's reading takes us.  
 It's not just about proper table-etiquette—  
     if it were, we'd be figuring out how far up we can go, without going too far.

Remember, Jesus came to the home of a Pharisee *in order to eat bread* (Lk 14:1).  
 He didn't come for honor, or new upholstery, or the first cut of steak.  
 Jesus came to eat bread;  
     He came to eat bread *on the Sabbath with sinners*—  
     the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,  
     the man with dropsy,  
     the Pharisees and lawyers,  
     and even with you and me.

With Jesus, things are a bit different.  
 For Him, honor is exchanged for humility.  
 Exaltation and glory are best seen in suffering and the cross.  
 That's how it is with Jesus.

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

Jesus doesn't exalt himself.  
 He doesn't come for the highest seat,  
     or the place of honor,  
     or whatever the best is you might offer.

Instead, He wants your worst:  
     your sin and shame and guilt.  
     He wants your pain, your sorrow, your brokenness.

He doesn't need you to serve Him, but He knows that that He must serve you.  
 You are in need, not Him.

So Jesus humbled Himself.  
 He took up the cross, with it all the shame, and torture, and injustice that this world has to offer.

As St. Paul says, “*He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” (Philippians 2:5-8)

Today’s Gospel reading is not about table etiquette; it’s about Jesus.  
It’s about Him flipping our world on its head.

Serving when He should be served.

Loving those who, by all accounts, are unlovable.

And most of all, forgiving those who neither ask nor deserve it in the least.

He’s “*Lord of the Sabbath*” (Lk 6:5),

which means He can heal and wants to heal—especially on the Sabbath!

And He’s come to heal you.

Take a look around and see who *He* invites to *His* meal—

“*the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind*” (Lk 14:13)—

yeah, and He even invited you.

He fulfills what He demands.

He invites those who cannot pay Him back, no matter how hard they try.

And He invites us to do the same.

He invites us to forgive those who really don’t deserve it.

He brings unexpected neighbors into our lives,

that by serving them we might *entertain angels unawares*. (Heb 13:2)

He draws us together, Grace and Trinity,

under one roof,

under one Word,

under one Baptism, Absolution, and Eucharist,

into one Church, redeemed by one Lord, Jesus Christ.

He who humbled Himself and took the lowest seat,

now invites us to His table!

And together taking the lowest place by confessing our sin and shame,

we are invited today, “*Friend, move up higher*” (Lk 14:10).

Welcome to the Lord’s Table, the Lord’s Feast, the foretaste of Heaven, *for you!*

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*