

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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You're Invited

Luke 14:1, 7-14

**TWENTY SECOND SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

28th August 2022

Luke 14:1 On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

Luke 14:7 When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable. ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; ⁹ and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹ For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Luke 14:12 He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Jesus does not reject love of the family or friendly relations. What he does not accept is that those relations regularly claim priority and become privileged and exclusive. Jesus reminds those who enter the dynamics of the kingdom of God, seeking a more human and fraternal world, that acceptance of the poor and the forsaken has to take precedence over relations based on self-interest and social compromise.

Is it possible to live in a disinterested manner? Can we love without expecting anything in return? We have strayed so far from the spirit of Jesus, that often even friendship and family love are a trade-off. Let us not deceive ourselves. The way of gratitude is almost always long and difficult. It is necessary to learn things like these: to give without expecting much in return; to forgive without requiring recompense; to be patient with disagreeable people; to help while looking only for the good of the other.

It is always possible to cut down on our own interests; to sometimes give up little advantages; to put joy in the life of someone in need; to give away some of our time without keeping it always to ourselves; to work with others in small freely given services.

Jesus makes bold to say to the Pharisee who invited him: “Blessed are you if they cannot repay you”. This beatitude has been so long forgotten that many Christians have never heard it spoken. Nevertheless it contains a message Jesus loved very much: “Blessed are those who live for others without any recompense. The Heavenly Father will reward them.”

JOSÉ A PAGOLA - *Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C*

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Dining is a notable characteristic of Jesus' ministry, a feature underlined in Luke's Gospel (in this Gospel Jesus is shown eating about twice as frequently as in the other traditions). Breaking down religious taboos and ignoring social and religious barriers were ways of making the proclamation of the Kingdom of God clear and tangible. In particular, meals—always regarded as sacred and as an act of communion— were used by Jesus to show that God excludes no one.

KIND OF WRITING

As such, the open table fellowship belongs to a series of prophetic gestures made by Jesus: his baptism, the calling of the twelve, the entry into Jerusalem, the cursing of the fig tree, the action in the Temple and the words over the bread and wine at the Last Supper. A prophetic gesture is a brief action or drama, performed to draw attention and to make the message of the prophet tangible. Open table fellowship was particularly “edgy” and is found in scenes, parables and disputes.

KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA - *tarsus.ie*

THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In ordinary society the normal practice is to be self promoting, always seeking to be one step ahead or to find ways to have one's reputation enhanced. Jesus sees this as evidence of shallow behaviour, guided by a mistaken notion of a person's true worth. The value of humility as taught by Jesus is that our understanding of our worth is not dependent on being better or more important than somebody else. It is not about comparison at all. Our true sense of self comes from within. Hence the significance of Jesus' command to the man who had invited him to the meal. The next time he has a dinner, instead of using it as an occasion to further himself, why doesn't he invite all those people who can't repay him? No doubt that suggestion ensures that Jesus was not invited back, but it gently exposes the often shallow ways in which people deal with each other.

SEAN GOAN - Let the Reader Understand, Year C

1. The parable brings out two contrasting experiences, but each in its own way can be a moment of grace, a moment of truth, a moment of growth. You may be able to recall such experiences in your life. In the first (verses 8,9) we discover that we had claimed a place that is too high for us; we are not as selfless, generous, or compassionate as we thought we were. In the second (v.10) when others point out a goodness in ourselves that we may not have acknowledged to ourselves. How have you grown through such experiences?
2. In verses 12-14 Jesus warns us against the danger of ulterior motives in doing good. We can do good things partly because of the benefit we will get from what we do. That is natural but can lead to disappointment and resentment when our expectations are not met. When the good deed, in itself, is our reward, we have a greater freedom. Feedback will be a bonus but not necessary. What does your life experience tell you about this?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - *Intercom*

READING PARABLES

We must know how to read parables; our problem is that parables are a way of teaching we are not accustomed to in our cultures. We are much more used to edifying stories which tell us of good people whom we are invited to imitate. But a parable is different: its purpose is to capture one particular moment, a deep moment when we experience grace in some way. If – as often happens in the parables of Jesus – there are details in the story, they are there to stimulate our imagination and so to help us re-live that moment in our own experience.

Today's parable invites us to enter into two precious moments. Don't hurry; take each one separately and stay some time with it. The first is in verses 8 and 9: we suddenly discover that we have claimed for ourselves a place that is too high for us; we are not as selfless, generous or compassionate as we thought we were, while we see before us people who really possess these qualities. We had accepted the role in which the community had placed us – as priest or religious or "prominent Catholic" – but in a crisis our frailty is revealed to ourselves alone or to the community; to our embarrassment, we go and take the lowest place. The parable is telling us that when grace comes into our lives it is like that, it is always an opportunity for spiritual growth, painful though it may be.

On the other hand, there is the experience of verse 10, that touching moment that happens every once in a while, when we are made to feel good about ourselves. We were looking after a sick relative, minding a neighbour's child, working hard at our job, doing it all without fuss but taking for granted that it was the right thing to do; then a person, a Bible passage, or a spiritual book showed us that we were doing something wonderful and, in fact, living the story of Jesus.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - *Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels, Year C*

In Luke's Gospel, a key part of Jesus' ministry is table fellowship. The feast that is described here emphasises hospitality to strangers, and not just any strangers. Jesus speaks of a preferential option for the poor, the cripples, the lame and the blind. This parable urges us to be open to real people and their very real stations, breaking down societal barriers to embrace real relationships. This is where one encounters the energy of the Kingdom on earth. The feast in today's gospel is a great celebration of inclusivity and unity. It emphasises once more the reversal Jesus talks about, where the 'highest' take the low seats and the world is turned upside down for the better.

What situations in your local community need to be turned upside down, so that those considered least are given preferential treatment? Bring these to prayer. What are you being called to?

Being considered 'ritually impure' is a practice which continues today. In our Church people are excluded from the Table because of their sexuality or personal situations. How can we embrace Jesus' inclusivity in our local church community?

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT – Go Deeper