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14th Sunday after Pentecost
Sermons
August 29, 2010

LUKE 14:1-14 "NOT WHAT YOU WOULD THINK1"

The coming of God's reign in Christ Jesus is often not what you would think. Jesus says and does things that often sound strange and bizarre according to the natural thinking and understanding of the world. God doesn't operate the way we expect Him or want Him to.

When was the last time you invited a bunch of poor, crippled, lame, and blind people over for dinner at your house? When was the last time you gave of yourself to someone who could never ever pay you back?

It's hard to think of such a time. It's not that we have never had anyone over for dinner before; we all end up inviting our relatives, friends, and neighbors for food and fun. Whenever we have a feast a celebration, we make sure to invite family, friends, and neighbors and in turn they invite us for their feasts and celebrations; this our standard operating procedure. It probably never occurs to us invite people we consider less than us, different than us, or those whom others reject. You and I would never think to invite such needy strangers!

But things are different with our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus does that which you and I would not think or consider. Jesus seeks out the poor, the captives, the blind, the lame, the rejected, the outcast. Jesus gives of Himself and serves those who can never repay Him. Jesus seeks after sinners and invites them to dine with Him.

God's reign in Jesus was certainly not what the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law thought it would be. They expected God's coming Christ to be similar to themselves; a Christ that held fast to the Law of Moses and the tradition of the elders; who interpreted the Scriptures the way they did; who separated Himself from those who were unclean and sinners; who was going to call God's people to live and act piously just like them. After all the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law hoped in the resurrection of the body, unlike the Sadducees. They took God's Word seriously; they sought to apply God's Word to every area of their lives. They took seriously God's call to be holy as He is holy. The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were good, moral, Bible believing, church going, and hardworking people. Do these people sound familiar? They should, because they are not unlike many Christians today, even us.

Our text in Luke 14:1-14 recalls an occasion when one of the Pharisees had invited Jesus to his house for dinner along with other Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. Jesus had already by this time earned a perplexing and questionable reputation in the eyes of many. On the one hand Jesus seemed to live, act, and interpret the

Scriptures much like they did, but on the other hand Jesus said and did astounding things that contradicted the teaching of the elders and violated their understanding of the Law of Moses; Jesus had forgiven a paralytic man his sins (something only God can do); He had healed a man with a withered hand and a woman who was crippled on the Sabbath Day (which they reckoned and denounced as unlawful work for the Sabbath). Some of the Pharisees already thought something had to be done about Jesus and others just had more questions.

1 Now it happened that He entered into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread and they were watching Him (intently). 2 And behold some man with dropsy was before Him. 3 And replying Jesus said to the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees saying, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to heal or not?" 4 But they remained quiet. And He took hold and healed him and released him. 5 And He said to them, "Who of you, if a son or an ox will fall into a pit, also will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" 6 And they were not able to give an answer to these things.

Jesus did not come to meet the expectations of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law, nor did He come to meet our expectations. Jesus came to do His Father's will, to bring God's reign and it is just not what you would think. The teaching of the elders declared healing and miracles as work not to be done on the Sabbath Day, but Jesus showed that saving and restoring life is in fact a fitting fulfillment of the Sabbath. The Pharisees themselves would pull their own sons or oxen from a pit on the Sabbath in order to save life; therefore how much more appropriate in the eyes of God for His Son and Christ to restore wholeness of life on a Sabbath Day Feast! Jesus' Word and actions had silenced their objections in a way they never would have expected.

Jesus' words and actions at this Sabbath Day Feast continued to turn the thinking and expectations of the world upside down as He began teaching all the guests at the feast and the host the Good News of the reign of God come in Him.

7 And He spoke to those reclining a parable, while paying attention to how the places of honor were chosen, saying to them, 8 "When you are called by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the place of honor, lest one more honored than you has been called by him, 9 and the one who called you and him will come and say to you, 'Give this place up,' and then you will begin to hold the last place with shame. 10 Rather when you are called, go and recline in the least place, in order that when the one who has called you comes then he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to higher place;' then you will be honored before all those reclining with you. 11 Because everyone who raises himself shall be humbled, and the one who humbles himself shall be lifted up." 12 And He said to the one who had invited Him, "When you make lunch or supper, do not call your friends nor your brothers nor your relatives nor rich neighbors, lest also they invite you and they repay you. 13 Rather when you make a feast, call the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind; 14 and you will be blessed, because they are not able to repay you, for it will be repaid to you in the resurrection of the righteous."

The natural thinking of the world dictates that a person must put himself forward and build himself up in the eyes of others if he is to gain the honor and respect of others. Just think about how we are instructed to present ourselves in job interviews. We are expected to toot our own horns and sell ourselves and our wonderful abilities to the potential employer. We need to distinguish ourselves from all the other candidates and demonstrate why we would be the best. For social and business elites one's image and status amongst one's peers is money and power; this is just the way the world works.

Most things in our culture today operate under the basic premises of building one's self up and you do me a favor and I do you a favor. We always invite our family, friends, neighbors, and business associates to dinner, feasts, and celebrations because we fully expect that they in turn will do the same for us. But the reign of God come in Christ Jesus is not what you or I would think.

Jesus teaches contrary to the thinking of the world that self exaltation is dangerous and foolish before God. Who can build themselves up before God? Who can lay claim to the places of honor at His feast? Who can claim that God owes them anything? Who can lift himself up in the holy and awesome presence of God? Only the fool, only he who wants to fall fast and be humbled!

The reign of God in Christ Jesus is not what you would think. Jesus, God's Son and Christ, did not come into this world in manifest glory and honor that He should be served, rather He came with His glory hidden in humble service to the poor, the captives, the lame, the blind, the outcast, the rejected, the sinner. Jesus came to seek, restore, and save sinners to God; He came to die and rise in Jerusalem for all impoverished by sin, for all held captive to death and the devil, for all who are alienated from God.

Jesus invites sinners to His Sabbath Day Feast and serves them His body and His blood for the forgiveness of sins; He invites only those who can never repay Him. Jesus bids the sinner, guilt ridden, troubled, and sorrowful to come to His Feast and leave forgiven and satisfied. All this, Jesus has done for you! Jesus cares not about your past nor your standing in the world. Jesus knows you better than you know yourself. Jesus knows your pain, your weakness, your brokenness and He calls you to come to His Sabbath Feast to be healed and restored; He honors you with His presence; He gives you His body and His blood to eat and drink and promises you forgiveness and the resurrection of the body!

As the Baptized whom Jesus has called to follow Him, as those whom Jesus has invited to His Sabbath Day Feast, as those forgiven and fed who can never repay Him, think no longer according to the world, but follow the call and teaching of the Lord. Be kind and generous to others; give and serve those who are dependent upon you and can never pay you back for you have been given Christ's promise of resurrection life, for you have been invited to the eternal Sabbath Day Feast of the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise God that His reign come in Christ is not what you would think! Amen.