

Trinity XVII

September 22, 2024

Ephesians 4: 1-6 & Luke 14: 1-11

Today we see Jesus invited to a banquet at a Pharisee's house, not because the Pharisees loved Jesus, but because they wanted to watch Him, evaluate Him, and catch Him saying something or doing something they could use against Him. The Pharisees and the lawyers gathered to sit in judgment on their neighbor, even to sit in judgment on Jesus. See how they had exalted themselves!

Jesus used this opportunity to give them a good lesson. But before that, he healed the man and sent him away.

What is happening here? How do we see this account?

Well, let me tell you: between the Pharisees/lawyers and the poor man of dropsy, Jesus clearly chooses to reach out first to the man before turning to them. He went down to the level of the poor man; He joined him in his condition in order to raise him up; He shows them that instead of running for the highest place, they should be running toward the lowest place, the place of least honor, the place of disgrace and humiliation.

It doesn't matter what your neighbor thinks about you. What matters is what God thinks about you. Here, God reveals that He thinks very little of the one who exalts himself. But He thinks very highly of the one who humbles himself, who seeks the lowest place, who makes himself the servant of all, who considers others to be better than himself.

That's what we learn from St Paul in his letter to the Romans: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12: 3)

What this means is that we should recognize that God is the One who gives us the measure of our faith. And knowing this will prevent us from pride and will encourage sober judgment. Every one of us should know the limits of his or her own gifts. At the same time, we need to acknowledge the gifts that others possess and that everyone is divinely placed into Christ as an important and vital element of the Body of Christ. None of us is here by accident.

God has made us so that we can live heavenly life. But we cannot get there with the load that we carry on our heads. We cannot get there with our lives full of pride, full of ourselves. You see, a prideful man is so full of himself that he would never make room for the Holy Spirit in his life. Such a person is blinded by the spirit of this world as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4: 4. Since they cannot see the glory of God they cannot enter his kingdom. That's what Jesus meant when he told Nicodemus that one must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. That "born again" has a name in today's gospel which is humility. Here Jesus is saying that humility is the

mark that would identify the citizens of his kingdom. Humility is the sign of good disciples. Proud people make fake disciples.

The best place for the Christian is the lowest place, because from there, our exaltation, our being lifted up again is a sure thing.

Whatever you will become tomorrow, depends on wherever you position yourself today. It's a matter of place.

That's what St Paul is teaching us in the epistle today. "Walk worthy of your vocation." You can only walk worthy of your vocation when you are constantly living in the presence of God.

That's what Jacob realized when he was running away from his brother Esau. In Genesis 28, he had a revelation of God in a particular place called Bethel. There, God promised to bless him, to watch over him, and to be with him all the days of his life. It happened at Bethel, the house of God. Our Bethel is what Paul called the Body of Christ. It's where we experience the bond of peace; it's where we learn to better serve and worship God. It's where we learn that we are all children of God and are called to live in unity, forbearing one another in love.

All this happens when we open up to the God who speaks to us in his word and to the God who offered himself to us at the communion rail.

May his grace help us today and forever.

Prayer

Father, we asked earlier this morning in the Collect for you to uphold and encourage us by your grace that we would be continually given to all good works. We ask now that by your grace you would break our pride and show us how we each fail in those good works. Grow us in godliness and in Christlikeness, and as we grow in humility and grace, we ask that you strengthen our unity and our witness of the Gospel's power. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. Amen!