

Proverbs 25:6-7

Luke 14:1,7-14

Hebrews 13:1-8,15-16

“Steady our hearts, O God and
remind us to deal generously and
conduct affairs with justice.” AMEN!

What is going on in this section of Luke?

Why does Jesus try his hand
at teaching etiquette lessons?

What could be next?

Lessons on what fork to use for salad?
How to pour the wine?

It's tempting to stay on the surface level today
and follow Jesus' example of politeness
when it comes to taking a seat at the banquet,
but we'd miss the real lesson today,
wouldn't we?

Luke leads us with words
that leap off the page.

“Jesus was going into the home of
a Pharisee leader for a meal on the sabbath.”

Not just any Pharisee, but a leader.

What did he want from Jesus?

Why did Jesus go there?

Today's reading tells of Jesus' third visit
to a Pharisee's home for a meal.

The first one came in chapter 7,
in the home of Simon the one
who refused to give common
courtesies to Jesus;

no kiss of greeting;
no water to wash his feet.

That encounter ended with an unnamed woman
being a substitute host to Jesus and
receiving forgiveness.

The second meal at a Pharisee's home
is in chapter 11.

That visit tells of the host being surprised
how Jesus didn't wash-up before dinner.

The host didn't say anything but Jesus knew
his thoughts and launched into a full-scale
attack on the way Pharisees pretend to
be holy, but in truth neglect justice
and neglect other people by

denying them knowledge that God loves them
so as to gain higher respect among people.

It is clear having Jesus over for dinner
is a risky endeavor for the host.

Why try it a third time?

Before we come to try and answer that,
we need to know a few things that have
happened in Luke's account since our
reading last week.

Last week, you may remember, was the lesson
when Jesus healed the bent over woman on
the sabbath and received a synagogue
leader's response that healing

should happen on the other six days,
not on the sabbath and there was division.

After that in the Bible, comes the encounter
when we find a group of Pharisees warning
Jesus that Herod Antipas is coming to kill him.

These warning Pharisees get a response from Jesus.

“Go and tell that fox for me.”

Jesus did not adjust his schedule according
to the demands of Herod.

We know Jesus will go to Jerusalem and
there encounter the betrayal, suffering, death
and resurrection, but Jesus won't be
deterred in his purposes of healing
and teaching and reflecting
God's love.

A purpose that included eating meals with sinners...

Chapter 13, concludes with Jesus' lament and prayer
how he desires to "gather the children of
Jerusalem as a hen gathers her
brood under her wings."

And now it is dinner party number three,
in the home of a Pharisee on the sabbath.

Jesus will come to the meal when invited
even when the track record does
not prove positive.

He will come unafraid to eat in
the presence of sinners and nobodies;
reveal things about God no one expects.

The pericope starts with the statement that
they were watching Jesus closely. :-)

What will he do, say, what rules will he break?

But, it is good for us to understand that
not all Pharisees were enemies of Jesus.

Some may have been watching him and
waiting for miracles.

When we consider them to be a monolithic entity
that universally rejected Jesus in everything
he said and did, we fall into

a dangerous category of people who
lump individuals into a large group of people
with permission to label them
the “bad guys.”

Luke is careful to let us know that
some Pharisees came to warn Jesus and
thus some were paying attention to what
he was doing and saying and
even attributing him to be a prophet.

So, they are watching him closely.

But look Jesus is watching closely, too!

And what he sees is people rushing in
to get the best seats for themselves.

If you've ever been to a concert, theatre, or
any event that has general admission seating
then you know of the kind of rush that
can occur as people zoom in to get
the best places.

Sometimes pushing and shoving
with angry growls accompanies such events.

It's very likely you've been one of them that
has rushed and saved the best seats for yourself.

I know I have.

In this dinner party scramble for the best seats
Jesus watches and sees the ugly side of people,
but this is not just about giving away
the best seats to others.

It is bigger than this because Jesus is
speaking about kingdom things.

The Bible often refers to dinners and banquets
to be examples of God's inclusion and
presence at such events and

a foretaste of the banquet feast in heaven.

Meals, banquets and wedding feasts, though,
can bring out the worst in human beings, too.

Not only were people jockeying for best seats but
they were only inviting those who would
invite them later.

The banquet feast was
made into a transaction.

Something done to gain a benefit or increase in
status so that one might become elevated
over another.

We understand this logic all too well.

It is the foundation of capitalism and quid pro quo.

Now, I'm not saying everything
associated with capitalism is bad.

I give this, I get that.
It sounds fair.

The only problem is Jesus doesn't
believe we should live that way.

And if we claim to be followers of Him
then we better pay attention to this
gospel lesson today.

Take it home and read it again.

It is clear Jesus teaches of another way
for human beings to live, a way that is not
quid pro quo.

A life where there is no equation that promises
if you do this, then you get that.

He proclaims God's economy
to be a gift economy.

Jesus is not only calling us to recall
the heavenly inclusion for all people at
the banquet feast but calling us to

a way of living that will not
be a transactional exchange.

No one can understand this kind of call
unless you have been "given to" without a cost.

If you've received this kind of grace,
you might understand. (Pause)

This is hard teaching because we have drunk
from the breast of capitalism and
have strived to be self-sufficient and
even clawed our way to upper and
middle class positions,
but we also know there's
more to life.

Jesus draws us to this “more” and calls for us
to stop counting, measuring, and weighing.

To stop saying, “I deserve this and you don’t!”

I don’t deserve anything, none of us deserve
anything and yet God gives us so much.

The question then becomes what will
we do with God’s infinite love?

God’s gift economy is not a capitalist economy.

God’s economy is one where everyone is
invited and everyone has a seat.

AMEN!