

Serving God Is Risky Business---Version B

Luke 14:1,7-14

Serving God Is Risky Business in the lives of believers today and in the past. Jesus taught and demonstrated to us in being a servant when He called His disciples together and said: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be a servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28). We are reminded that Jesus came into world to transform all people--- not pick and choose. Jesus came for those who wanted to changes their lives where love compassion, Kindness, caring and hope came. Jesus was considered a radical who came to open people eyes the way life was supposed be with God because that was the way his Father created us. Remember Jesus heal the women who was hunch over for 18 years on the Sabbath and leaders weren’t very happy with him.

In Gospel Reading today. Jesus was invited to a feast. The feast was given by one of the leaders of the Pharisees. Now we might think this is strange. So often the Pharisees seem to be enemies with Jesus. But Jesus was a common topic of discussion. What better entertainment than to have Jesus at your party. He told such stories. And everyone was talking about the miracles he did and the things he said. Why, what a better evening's entertainment than to get to know a potential Messiah over meal.

Well Jesus arrived at the party and watched the people. Jesus was a people watcher. He observed things that people did and from his perspective as the Son of God he saw things others didn't. He saw how the guests were trying to get the best places, the places of honor at the head table, for themselves. He also noticed who the host had invited: friends, your brothers or sisters, relatives, and rich neighbors to a dinner party. But more importantly Jesus noticed who was not invited. I imagine that as the guests began to make their way to be seated at the table Jesus took the lowest place at the table. Since it was a party he thought he should talk about a party and since the people were interested in having the best place with the best people he would talk about that too. Jesus tells a parable which is central to the way God's kingdom works. If the guests take the lowest position possible at the meal, chances are the host will ask them to move up in position.

On the other hand if they come to the meal assuming that they would surely have a seat at the head table, it would be terribly embarrassing to be asked to move to a less favorable seat.

Did you know humility is one of the hallmarks of a person of authentic faith and a central principle in the kingdom of God. Luke 18:14 details a story of how a Pharisee and a sinner went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee suggests to God that he is so thrilled he is not a wretch like the man who prays beside him. On the other hand, the sinner can do nothing but hang his head and beg for God's mercy. Jesus responds, "I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

In James 4:10: it spells out that humility is the way of advancement with God. "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." Now Jesus turns to the host of the meal and talks about hospitality. "Don't give a dinner for your friends or family and rich neighbors. Rather invite people who have no possible way of paying you back. Invite the poor, crippled, lame, and lame and you will be blessed by God in the end." Throughout his gospel, Luke has focused on Jesus' heart for the poor and socially unacceptable people of his day. In fact, the sure sign of the presence of God was to be, "good news" for the poor. Messiah's mission was to bring healing to the sick, sight to the blind and freedom for the oppressed. Hospitality is one of the marks of the faithful community. " In Hebrews 13:2 it said: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Those who sought to entrap Jesus in the breaking of Sabbath laws missed the point of his healing ministry, failed the test of humility and were self- serving in their hospitality. And so let us be aware that, "Jesus is coming to dinner!" Whenever we reach out to bring hope and healing to others, or open our hearts to those who others reject, Jesus comes to dinner. In one of Rick Warren, in his best-selling book *The Purpose Driven Life*, pointed out: "Thousand of books have been written on leadership, but few on servanthood. Everyone wants to lead; no one wants to be a servant.

We would rather be generals than privates. Even Christians want to be 'servant-leaders', not just plain servants. But to be like Jesus is to be a servant. That's what he called himself.... It is possible to serve in church for a lifetime without ever being a servant. You must have a servant's heart". Real servants do not promote, boast, or call attention to themselves.

Whatever we do to serve the Lord, regardless how small or great, we perform each task in quiet, as all glory goes unto the Lord. Real servants “put on the apron of humility to serve one another” (1 Peter 5:5). If recognized for their service, they humbly accept it, but do not allow the recognition to distract them from their work. If you want to be like Jesus, you have to be a servant of Christ. Jesus said, “I came to serve, not to be served.” (Mat 20:28).

We are called as people of faith as servants for Christ to become a community of hope and healing -- a place of hospitality where humility is the mark of greatness. Are you a hospitable person? What about with people you do not like? You may not have to invite them into your home, but how do you treat them? How do you treat people at church? Really, how do you? Some people in any given church would say they are not treated well as far as feeling welcomed or connected! Yes, our church is different, and perhaps much better than others, but I believe we can be even better for our Lord's glory!

One of the most important calls that Christ gives His church is to be welcoming to people. That means hospitality which values others, which exhibits humility, a host that demonstrate a generosity. It is a hospitality which creates community with all of God's children, which treats the least among with respect and equality for there is no head table when Jesus is the host. When we follow Jesus approach, barriers are broken down and we are free to create human community, to grow and share and learn from each other - and to admit that we need each other. Perhaps when we know that we do need each other and then we will realize we need a listening ear, a caring hug, the friendship of others, a respect of our opinions, a concern for our difficulties just as all humans do. Another point to true hospitality shown one another in the church building or when we leave the building needs to blossom a deeper hospitality whereby people come to know that God loves them and cares for them, too. In this regard Christian hospitality always finally needs to involve some word of witness to God's love in Christ.

And when we see those different than ourselves in our common humanity, when we recognize them as God's children as well, we can see Jesus in our neighbors, we can break bread together and begin to form the kind of relationship, the kind of community that God calls us to do - together.

We are ambassadors for Christ aren't we? Jesus uses us to be His welcoming arms to draw people from the outside into His presence! He is the Seeker; we are the ones He seeks, and sometimes we are the ones He uses to seek others. It is God's desire that all of His children will be saved, and, yet, few will accept His grace. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to save people, and we are the instruments through which He works. So, we must be a church who welcomes not only Believers, but also those who may never before in their lives have been inside of a church.

Have read the insert yet in bulletin starting September 18 here at The First United Methodist Church of Warren/Bristol, every Sunday, from 10-11 a.m, in Fellowship Hall. The children will be studying the foundation of all Superheroes from Old and Testaments! This invites All children to experience the love of God

Last Sunday night we had about 20 of us got together at Ames' house had pizza, fun and conversation about having a youth Group. The interest is there for youth and adults who might help. It exciting about the new possibilities Warren/Bristol and Barrington Youth Group future. Planning meeting set September 11 and September for regular meeting. Prayers and support for both are needed.

Again the apostle Paul encourages us toward such Christly hospitality when he writes to the Philippian Christians in chapter two of his letter, "Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ... who humbled himself and took on the form of a servant and ... became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."