

**Gospel and Sermon Transcript -12th Sunday After Pentecost - August 31, 2025**

Welcome to worship.

There are traditions around Labor Day

that are probably past saying now.

And that's just as well.

So wear white whenever you feel like it.

You heard it from me, like I have any sway over these things.

There is a tradition, though, that I do want to lift up

as one that I hope we continue to embrace.

And that is in our life as church,

our scriptures often ask questions,

like, who is this Jesus person anyway?

And then this time of year, if you think about any lesson

that we hear or read, the question

is, what does it mean to follow?

And what does that look like?

Even today, a parable about a dinner

is one of those ways in for us about what it means to follow

Jesus.

One announcement about the Order of Service itself,

we're sort of relearning receiving the offering,

because we haven't done it for a while.

And I haven't done it in this context before either.

So we all have different practices.

So here's what we will try today,

that after the sharing of the piece,

I will speak a word of encouragement.

Bob will pass the plate among us.

And then we will have an offertory prayer.

And then he will replace the plate.

And then we'll go into the communion part of our service.

I hope that my words were as clear as the picture is

in my head or in somebody else's head,

but that's what we'll try today.

### **The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 14th chapter.**

[INAUDIBLE]

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.

And he noticed how the guests chose places of honor.

And he told them a parable.

When you were invited by someone to a wedding banquet,

you don't sit in the place of honor

in case someone more distinguished than you

has been invited by your host.

And the host who invited both of you

may come to you and say, give this person your place.

And then in disgrace, you would start to take the lowest place.

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 honored in the presence of all

who sit at table with you.

For all who exalt themselves will be humbled.

And those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Jesus also said to the one who had invited him,

when you give a lunch and/or a dinner,

do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters

or your relatives or your rich neighbors

in case they may invite you in return and you would be repaid.

But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled,

the lame and the blind, and the blind.

And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you,

for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

The gospel of our Lord.

[INAUDIBLE]

Maybe seated.

### **The Sermon**

Grace and peace to you.

Long ago, in a high school far away,  
before there were active shooting drills and bomb threats,  
jock rock, a long planter bench affair that  
ran the length of a corridor, established, reflected,  
and enforced the social structure of high school.  
As it turns out, the prime real estate on jock rock  
was at the end cap, where several other corridors merged  
into a bit of an atrium.

It was the place to see and be seen.

And this is where varsity athletes, cheerleaders,  
A-listers, and their plus ones, got to hang out.

Now farther down the rock, B-listers, junior varsity  
ball players, new kids who are still proving themselves.

This school had 2,500 students at the time,  
so there wasn't room on jock rock for everybody.

Not only in terms of physical space,  
but in terms of psychological space.

There was this suburban legend that if you transgressed jock  
rock by sitting in a place not for you,  
you had a very good chance of getting an extended tour  
of the inside of a locker.

People knew where they stood.

Alas, there is nothing new under the sun.

At Shabbat, Jesus invited as a party guest,  
people are giving him kind of a side eye  
because they're trying to size him up.

And he can't help but to notice and point out  
the jockeying proposition that seems to be going on.

It may have been true in Jewish households  
and definitely true in Roman households.

Where you sat at table reflected and defined  
your place in society.

So Jesus trots out an ancient proverb  
about being careful where you sit and not trying  
to put yourself above where you need to be.

He also makes the point that if you're  
trying to climb the social ladder,  
well, maybe that's not the game at all.

So inviting people in hopes of being repaid

in a quid pro quo fashion, well, that doesn't fit either.

Let me hasten to say that Jesus is not going

Emily Postal about seating charts.

Oh, he's doing something far more explosive than that.

He is subverting a social order.

A social order that I remember Pastor Daniel Erlander

describing as being like a pyramid.

Oh, pyramids.

Where have we heard about pyramids?

Except for ancient Egypt.

Pyramids built on slave labor.

And Pastor Dan's winsome illustrations

included the big deals at the very top of the pyramid,

weighting it down and smushing everybody else.

Jesus is going after the pyramid scheme.

And lest you think that, oh, well, this is only something

that Pharisees play at or Romans play at,

remember that charming little vignette

where Jesus and his buddies are walking along

and they too are jockeying for position

to sit at Jesus left and right when God returns and sets

all things right.

Who gets to be at the head table?

Evidently, this is our tendency.

Because we like the pyramid scheme.

And it's the very thing that Jesus subverts and pushes back against.

The Erech in this has anything to do with the boys upbringing.

You remember his mother, that song she sang before he was born about the poor being taken care of and tyrants being toppled.

Do you remember his opening sermon?

In Luke's Gospel, I love that it takes place on level playing field ground.

And Jesus there pronounces a blessing for the poor and says, look out, big deals, because things are about to turn.

So the pyramid scheme is old news.

But it seems that God has this way of embodying and bringing good news into places where there is old news and even oppression.

It's about a month ago now, I think, that the Anglican church and the Lutheran church in Canada had their first combined Emancipation Day celebration service.

It was on Zoom.

And some of you may have seen it.

The bishop, Ali Tote, from the Alberta Territory Senate  
was one of the speakers.

And he talked about a place at the table.

And he said, it is no longer that marginalized groups  
are the waitstaff or even the main course being  
used as a resource for the rest of us.

But instead, that the table becomes more a circle  
where everyone has a place as equals.

I guess it was a week or two ago now  
that Canada Lutheran put out its latest edition.

Maybe you've seen it.

Bishop Susan Johnson reflecting a bit on her 18 years as bishop.

I had to turn to that first because I thought, oh, man,  
I'd love to get her take on this.

She said that she has seen a few things in 18 years.

A church that is becoming more generous,  
a church that is becoming more open,  
a church that is inviting more people to the table.

That sets to mind some words I read this week  
from a commentator named Trey Clark, who



is at Fuller Seminary in California.

He said that when things become this way,

when everyone has a seat at the table,

it's like there is a world operating inside a world.

And that little world in a world Dr. Clark

calls the kingdom of God.

The rule and the realm of God that Jesus

gives everything for is the one where everyone gets

a place at the table.

And it is a place where everyone is

enfolded with God's loving embrace.

Amen.