

Pentecost 12
Luke 14:1-14

8/28/22
17C

***“FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLLED,
AND HE WHO HUMBLLES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED.”***

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,
Eating his Christmas pie.
He put in his thumb and pulled out a plum
And said, "What a good boy am I!"

You know the nursery rhyme, but do you know the story behind it? It all goes back to when Henry VIII was king of England. Henry is the king known for having all the wives. Back when he was married to his first wife, he grew discontented with her and wanted a new wife. But, the pope would not grant him a divorce. So, Henry, being king, decided to break away from the Roman Catholic Church and make himself head of the Church of England. As head of the church, he confiscated all the land that the monasteries owned, and their silver and gold, as well.

The Abbey of Glastonbury was the largest and wealthiest monastery in England and the bishop wanted to keep that wealth, so he tried to bribe the king. He sent his steward with a gift of deeds to twelve estates. Allegedly, the deeds were hidden in a pie. But, his steward, forever known to the world as little Jack Horner, stole the deeds for himself and, in fact, his family continues to live on those estates to this very day.

Lookin' out for # 1. That's what Little Jack Horner was doing. Just as the Pharisees were doing in our lesson. In our lesson, Jesus teaches us of sinful, selfish pride and the downfall that it inevitably brings. In our lesson, Jesus teaches us that the God-pleasing attitude of the heart is **humility**, "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

It was common for the Jews to have elaborate feasts on the Sabbath after the synagogue services. In our lesson, when the Pharisees arrived at the home for the feast, notice what they were doing. The Evangelist tells us that they were choosing “the places of honor” for themselves. They all scrambled for the place of honor at the table. Each and everyone of them thought himself better than even his fellow Pharisees. They sought their own glory.

So, Jesus says,

"When you are invited by someone to a wedding fest, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to his person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place."

We hear those words and think, “You go, Jesus! You put those Pharisees in their place!” But, if Jesus came to your house, what would He find? Mouths that do not call upon Him in trouble and praise His holy name, but mouths filled with profanity, even words of anger and shouting aimed at members of your own family? Words that cruelly hurt one another? That you are too busy to pray with your family, but have plenty of time for TV, and games on the Playstation? Would He find pornography on your computer? A heart that loves money? A heart filled with jealousy and envy at your neighbor’s bigger house, or boat?

II. Our sinful, selfish pride causes us to look to self, but faith looks to Jesus Christ. Consider the humility of Jesus Christ. The Apostle St. Paul writes these words,

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. And being found in

human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Ph 2:5-8)."

Jesus is "very God of very God," yet He humbled Himself to be born of Virgin mother and become a man and dwell among us. He endured poverty, contempt, rejection; ultimately, great agony and death on the cross. Jesus did not humiliate Himself to improve His standing with the Father or His place in heaven. He did it for us, so that we would be forgiven and have a home eternal in the heavens.

Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father's will. And, we remember that God has demanded us to perfectly follow His will. But, when we look at how God wants us to live our lives and how we really do live our lives, we see that we have not obeyed the Father's will. When we examine our lives in the mirror of God's law, we see that we daily sin so much and deserve nothing but punishment from God.

In repentance and faith, we come to God as beggars. We have nothing to offer God. We cannot be proud, trying to claim the highest place in heaven because of what a great person I am or the great things I have done. No, we come in humility before God like the Prodigal Son trusting not in ourselves but in His mercy, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you (Lk 15:18)." Like the Syrophenician woman, we come begging for even the smallest of the crumbs of God's grace.

The GOOD NEWS of the Christian faith is this: God exalts us in Christ Jesus.

When we come in humility before God, claiming no place or honor for ourselves, He makes us a new creation in Christ (cf. 2 Co 5:17). In the waters of our Baptism, He drowns our sinful flesh with all of its pride and conceit and we rise to live a new life in Christ, with the clean heart of Christ

Himself.

III. We are new creations in Christ Jesus. We always remember that what we are and what we have is only because of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Daily living out the new life that we have in Christ Jesus, we put to death the will and ways our sinful flesh with all its silly, sinful pride, to live like Christ, obeying the Father's will, humbling serving our neighbor as Christ has served us.

In our Epistle reading from the book of Hebrews, we hear, "Let brotherly love continue" (v. 1). God began His good work in us in the new birth of our Baptism. And, He continues His work in us as we hear His Word and eat and drink His life-giving body and blood, feeding us with His grace, so that we may love one another as Christ loves us.

A few minutes ago, I asked you: if Jesus came to your house, what would He find? A father who understands as the priest of his household, the importance of being with his family in church. A mother, most likely tired herself, getting up in the middle of the night to sooth her crying infant. A family who prays together rather than trusting in lady luck. A wife who is honored by her husband and both husband and wife love each other. The words from parents' mouths build up and edify their children and the words from children's mouths are not argumentative. Living in Christ, Jesus would find joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness.

This is why, in our Collect this Sunday, we pray,

"Teach us by Your Holy Spirit to follow the example of Your Son in true humility, that we may withstand the temptations of the devil and pure hearts and minds avoid ungodly pride".