**Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity**

**Luke 14:1-11**

***True Humility***

Today we are instructed not necessarily on a major doctrinal point like last week when we spent time learning about Jesus’ power over all things, especially death. Today we are taught by Our Lord about our relationship with one another in the Body of Christ and with Our Lord Himself. Today Jesus teaches us about true humility, which is knowing ourselves for wo we truly are.

First, St. Luke paints a scene: Jesus is invited to dine with the upper crust of the Pharisees. And behold, something odd has presented itself: A man with dropsy is there among this elite group. Dropsy was an illness where one’s body was completely swollen and filled with fluids. It was unattractive and extremely painful. People with dropsy would have been treated as unwanted, disgusting, and sinners. It was seen as a rich man’s disease, the consequence of being a glutton, an alcoholic, and completely sedentary. So, this man was just as unwanted as a tax collector or a prostitute. He was, with out as doubt, one you could look at and say, “Thank God I’m not *him*!”

And then the Pharisees try their, “gotcha” question: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? There is no good answer. If Jesus says yes, then He is guilty of breaking the Third Commandment. If He says no, then He is unmerciful, because it is well known by this point that Jesus has the ability to do miraculous healings. Either way He answers, the Pharisees see Jesus as condemned. But then Jesus turns the question around: “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” Being masters of Scripture, they knew was Moses said in Deuteronomy: “You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift them up again (Dt 22.4). “Hide yourself from them” meant that, regardless of the circumstance, you were to help an ox or donkey. They knew they were trapped. It was not only God’s command, but long-settled rabbinic tradition that it was perfectly lawful to help an animal in need on the Sabbath. And if it is lawful to help an animal, is it not more lawful to help a human, created in the image of God?! The Pharisees tried to treat this man with dropsy as subhuman because of his perceived sin. They saw themselves as morally superior to him, and he as a mere pawn to be used in their game. Jesus condemned their way of viewing their fellowman.

And then Jesus continued to condemn them. The second part of Luke’s record has Jesus give what sounds like a mere etiquette lesson: don’t take the spot of the honored guest and be embarrassed when you get moved down. But then Jesus mocks their false humility. To jockey for the greatest seat, they feigned humility. They fought for the lowest position so they can be publicly exalted. We do the same thing today. If someone praises your skill you quickly poo-poo it and belittle yourself, not out of humility, but to force the person to laud you even more. This is nothing but thinly veiled ego and it’s not how we ought to act with one another.

But, Jesus is not here to teach us about manners. Rather, this second part of the Gospel is merely a continuation of the first. In our false humility and our belittling of ourselves, we are really seeing ourselves as better than we are. What’s worse is that this behavior isn’t limited to insignificant things like clothes or grades or wealth, but it comes into how we treat one another in the Body of Christ. We look at some, even in our own congregation, as less than—less pious than me, less knowledgeable than me, not running in the same elevated social circles like I am. In short, I’m so much better than you.

But remember what Jesus demonstrated with the man with dropsy, remember what St. Paul said in today’s Epistle: As Christians we are to bear with one another in love, be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought.

Look back at Christ’s example in today’s Gospel and put it next to Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2.5-8).Jesus is God, perfect in every way. If anyone could have condemned and belittled the man with dropsy, it was Him! But He did not. Jesus went to than man and touched him. He didn’t even keep His distance! He touched this lowly sinner and healed him. If the perfect God can touch a sinner, than we sinners certainly can bear with one another in our weakness. None of us are better or worse than another. Equal to one another in sin, we also have, “One hope that belongs to our call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.

So today, Jesus teaches us about true humility, which is knowing ourselves for wo we truly are. Each of us, whether in this congregation or outside of it, are sinners for whom Our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to die, people for whom He suffered beatings and mockery and cruel death to redeem, to buy back from the shackles on sin, death, and the devil. Knowing that common denominator, God sends us forth from this place to live in the world bearing witness to our forgiveness that we have received from Christ, extending forgiveness and compassion to one another, and inviting our neighbor to receive the same forgiveness and ete4rnal life and peace found only in the Holy Christian Church.