

Sermon for September 1, 2013

Fifteenth Sunday of Pentecost, Luke 14:1, 7-14

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

This morning I would like to begin my sermon with a reading from C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. Mr. Lewis writes, (quote) "Of course we never **wanted**, and never **asked**, to be made into the sort of creatures **He** (God) is going to make us into. But the question is not what **we** intended ourselves to be, but what **He** intended us to be when He made us. **He** is the inventor, we are **only** the machine. **He** is the painter, we are **only** the picture. How should **we** know what He means for us to be like? We may be **content** to remain what **we** call '*ordinary people*'; but **He** is determined to carry out a quite **different** plan. To **shrink** back from the plan is **not** humility; it is *laziness and cowardice*. To **submit** to His plan is **not** conceit: it is *obedience*." (end quote)

In **all** three of our readings for this morning there is a *common thread* which runs through each of them: in **Proverbs** and in the **gospel** lesson from Luke one is **called upon** to be humble and to **live** life with humility—do **not** place oneself forward or higher than you ought as it may result in to being put in a **lower** place which will lead to disgrace, but one is to **sit** at the lower position so one might be **honored** when one is asked to **sit up higher** in the presence of all. In the reading

from **Hebrews** and the **gospel** lesson we learned that we are **not** to neglect being in **service** to strangers or showing **hospitality** as well as **not** to neglect doing **good** for others. When you give a luncheon or dinner do **not** just invite those people who can **repay** you—invite the **outsiders**, the ones who are most likely looked **down** upon by society—the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. When we do **that**—**then** we will be blessed by God because **generally** the ones who are looked **down upon** have **nothing** that this world deems worthy to offer us—they will **not** be able to repay in like manner. Such is the kingdom of God.

The **rewards** for these actions: *being humble, having humility, being in loving service and hospitality* will be repaid at a **later** time to those who show these behaviors—Jesus says they will be **glorified** at the resurrection. That is when the **real** reward will be given—**not** in this world. How should we know what God means us to be like?

The words: *humble, humility, service, and hospitality*: in most cases, these are words are **not highly prized** and ones that we **rarely** hear in conversation as **great** virtues in our society today. Yet, **that** is the way we Christians are called to live. **He** is the inventor, we are **only** the machine.

But be advised, being **humble** and living your life in **humility** does **not** mean that we are acting as a **doormat** for others to step upon, it does **not** mean letting others **boss** us around, **nor** does it mean that we are to have a feeling

worthlessness about who we are as a child of God. It is very much the **opposite** of that. Its basis is thinking **rightly** about *who we are* in relation to God. It is about knowing our **real** strengths as well as knowing our **true** weaknesses, it is about knowing our **genuine** talents, and it is knowing your **God given** worth in **obedience** to God's plan for your life. To **submit** to His plan is **not** conceit: it is *obedience.*"

Being **humble** and living a **life** of humility is a **balancing act** between the opposing and extreme ends of life. It is a balance between being prideful and arrogant when we *compare or think ourselves better* off in some way or another than another person. The **other** side of the balance is when we are **modest and Unpretentious**, when our eyes are focused on God, when we have a **right** perspective about **who** we are in relationship with God, and when we **realize** that it is **not** about us anyway; but it is about **what** God has given us in our lives and **how** His grace is what **makes** us who and what we are. **He** is the painter, we are **only** the picture.

Being in **service and hospitality** toward others brings about **kindness and compassion** when we fix our focus **away** from ourselves onto others. It is **then** when we are **more** aware of the needs and ways we can turn to help meet the **requests** of others. If we wish to be loved we must **first learn** to love and if we

wish to be respected we must **first learn** to respect people. If we wish to be fulfilled in our lives we must **first learn** to share generously with others.

Through the gifts of *being humble, acting with humility, and being in service and hospitality toward others* we acknowledge that God created us for **His** purposes and **not** for our own **self** advancement. Through these gifts we acknowledge the **dignity** of all God's people. To **submit** to His plan is **not** conceit: it is *obedience*.”

Since I will be gone next Sunday and **Bishop Finck** will be here preaching on our anniversary Sunday, I wanted to talk a minute about **Eden** and our **125th** anniversary of service to *Christ and Community* like it says up here in our banner. I believe our readings for this morning are **perfectly timed** as I specifically wanted to point out that **I feel** the words: **humble, humility, service, and hospitality** fit this congregation wonderfully. During the course of Eden's existence **if** these 4 words were **not** at the foundation of who we are as a church I wonder if we would have **continued** to exist—as I am sure there are **many** churches in this area who have **come and gone** since Eden was first established in 1888.

Over the course of these last **125 years** we have had people which God has sent to be a part of this church. People who are **dedicated**. People who **love** this church. People who serve with a **quiet** humbleness. People who worked **tirelessly** to build this sanctuary logging in over **10,000** volunteer hours. There were the

workers as well as those who came to **feed** the volunteers. There are people who **still** volunteer week in and week out around here to keep this the **glorious** house of God and this **community of faith** all that it is. It is **no** mistake that each and every one of you are **here** right now as a part of this congregation. It is **no** mistake that each and every one of you are part of **God's plan** for this church. And it is **no** mistake that each and every one of you have the **God given** talents to **continue** this church for the generations to come. As C. S. Lewis wrote, "Of course we never **wanted**, and never **asked**, to be made into the sort of creatures **He** (God) is going to make us into. But the question is not what **we** intended ourselves to be, but what **He** intended us to be when He made us. **He** is the inventor, we are **only** the machine. **He** is the painter, we are **only** the picture." The picture that I see out here today, the picture that God has *painted for us* is beautiful. It is a **tapestry** of people made up of those willing to **humble** themselves, to act with **humility**, to **serve** the stranger as well as the neighbor among us, and those who are willing to extend the hand of **hospitality** when needed.

At Eden our **true** success comes through **appreciating** God's people, through developing **loving** relationships with those who come our way, and through working to **improve** God's world.

Through the gifts of being **humble**, acting with **humility**, and being in **service and hospitality** toward others we acknowledge that God **created us** for

His purposes and not for our **own** self advancement. Through these gifts we acknowledge the **dignity of all** God's people **not** only here at Eden but as we go **out** into the world as well. I pray these gifts continue for **generations** to come.

All **thanks** be to God. **AMEN**

