



Sunday 31st August 2025

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity / Creationtide

Gospel Reading

Luke 14.1, 7-14

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.

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable. 'When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, "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 honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'

He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, 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 you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

Other Readings: Jeremiah 2.4-13 Psalm 81.1,10-16 Hebrews 13.1-8,15,16

Homily

'All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'

At one level, Our Lord's teaching in today's gospel is no more than good, practical advice. It's better to present yourself as unassuming, not to push yourself forward. 'Pride comes before a fall', as the old-fashioned saying goes. Those who put themselves on a pedestal are likely to be pushed off, while those who wait to be given honour and status by others find their reward is all the sweeter.

That kind of tactical humility, however, isn't really the point of Jesus' instruction. When we read on, we discover that he wants his followers to be generous without hope of reward. We are to be humble without expectation of celebrity, serving precisely those who cannot aspire to repay us. True humility is more than a strategy for social success – it is rooted in obedience to God's commandment to love our neighbour.

This teaching comes to us this year as we begin the Season of Creation, a month in which we reflect deeply on what we mean when we declare that we believe in God, ‘creator of heaven and earth’. In our own time and place, this specific article of faith cannot be detached from the growing realisation of the damage that human beings have done to the environment. For that reason, I wonder if it is helpful to ask ourselves whether our behaviour towards God’s creation has demonstrated a failure to observe the teaching of Jesus in today’s gospel reading.

It’s true that in Genesis we read that God commands the first humans to have ‘dominion’ over the rest of the created order. But what does that mean? Surely it doesn’t mean that we are to forget that it is God’s creation, God’s world. Surely this ‘dominion’ does not challenge the sovereignty of God, placing human beings in a position where they may use God’s good gifts in pursuit of our own selfish goals rather than in accordance with God’s will and purpose. The earth, as the Psalmist wrote, is the Lord’s and everything in it. We have authority and responsibility for it, but we are accountable to God for how we exercise it, as indeed we are for everything else.

Humility is a difficult idea. It’s easy to confuse it for low self-esteem, which is something else altogether. As human beings we are created and loved by God. The more fully we’re able to grasp that as the foundation of our identity the less possible it will be for us to suffer from poor self-esteem. At the same time, though, we need to recognise that we are (as Archbishop Michael Ramsay put it) *contingent*. Our existence, our identity, our value *depend* on God entirely and absolutely. That is what it means to be a creature. Whenever we forget these things, exalting ourselves above God, trying to take the place of God in our own lives, we run a terrible risk. Not because God wishes to humiliate us, but just because God is God and we are not, anything other than cheerful obedience to God’s will and purposes is likely to end badly.

True humility, the kind of humility that Jesus teaches about in this gospel passage, starts with acknowledging that only God can be God. This understanding must permeate every aspect of our lives as Christians. Our faith is not a tactic for self-advancement but a recognition of dependence.

During this Season of Creation, we have opportunity to reflect in a number of ways on what it means to acknowledge God as Creator. Today, we can make a start by recognising that we ourselves are creatures and that we are accountable to the Creator for the use, and misuse, that we make of the natural order.

‘All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

May God give us grace.

Conversation Questions

1. Do our daily lives demonstrate humility in the face of God's amazing creation?
2. What might need to change as a result of Jesus' teaching in this gospel passage?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you?
What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*O God, you declare your almighty power
most chiefly in showing mercy and pity:
mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace,
that we, running the way of your commandments,
may receive your gracious promises,
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*God of glory,
the end of our searching,
help us to lay aside
all that prevents us from seeking your kingdom,
and to give all that we have
to gain the pearl beyond all price,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

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