

Places of Honor

Twenty-second week of Ordinary Time – August 28, 2016-Luke 14: 1, 7-14

Whether we want to admit it or not...We all seek places of honor in this world. We like being recognized as being the best at something. I tend to seek accolades about my cooking. Others might hope to aspire to greatness in sports, academics or charity work. If we are really honest, there is some self-admiration going on in every aspect of our lives. Jesus challenges this in the gospel for this 22nd week of Ordinary Time.

“On the Sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully.” This selection for the lectionary leaves out five verses of scripture that describe the opening scene at this home. Jesus cures a man with dropsy on the Sabbath. This would have been a religious and cultural taboo to cure on the Sabbath. Once the cure is complete Jesus provides a teaching, a parable for the guests to “digest” as they sit at table.

“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet do not recline at table in the place of honor...Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, ‘My friend, move up to a higher position.’ Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table.”

This seems strangely confusing. Jesus seems to be saying to choose a lower position so you can then be drawn up to a higher one? Scripture scholars suggest that this is a means to an end. Jesus is really all about the last part of this parable which is a reference to his continual preference for the poor and the marginalized.

The entire teaching this week is on humility. Again, Jesus says that our life is not our own to advance for our own enjoyment, but rather, our life belongs to God in complete service to others, especially to those who have the least or cannot repay us.

What is promised to us by Jesus is not earthly reward but eternal life for those who live a life of humility and service. **“For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”** A true place of honor will not be found in this life. Rather a true place of honor will be found when we are seated at the table with Jesus.

Blessings!


Sue Schettler