

The Voice of Jesus:
August 31, 2025

[VIDEO - Parents] [1 Feet]

I love this video. I love the fact that...
Parents can identify children by their feet.

They know their kids so well...
That they don't need to see their faces...
They don't need to hear them speak.
They don't need very much information at all...
To understand... who they really are.

Same thing with our lesson today.

These words of Jesus...
In the gospel lesson today...
Sound like something Jesus would say.
This should not surprise us... at all.

This is what he sounds like.
And we should know him.
We should be able to identify him...
Just by his words. **[2 Sheep]**

Jesus said... my sheep hear my voice...
And I know them...
And they follow me.

So the words that we hear...
In the lesson today...
Are totally consistent...
With the way he lived his life...
But more than that.

It's his voice.

And the goal...
The ultimate goal...
Of our Christian life...
Here on earth...
Is to become so familiar...
With the voice of Jesus...
That it becomes a part of us...
That the Word is near us...
On our lips... and in our hearts.

And not just another part of us...
But the most important part...
The guiding principle of our lives.
The truth... by which we test...
Every single idea...

Everything that's happening around us...
What we are feeling...
How we are thinking...
How we are acting...
The choices we make.

Because quite frankly...
The bible teaches us...
That our thoughts and our ways...
Aren't something we should hold...
As eternal... or even important.

There is a very strong biblical implication...
That we see the world...
The way we want to see the world...
In order to meet our own wants...
Desires... and yes... sometimes... needs.

We bend the truth to fit us.

But Jesus is the Son of the Living God...
And since Jesus knows... is the only one...
Who knows the Father...
And since we claim Jesus...
As our ultimate authority...

Then maybe instead of trusting ourselves...
We should listen to him. **[3 Thoughts]**

Isaiah 55:8-9

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways my ways,
Declares the Lord.

As the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are my ways higher than your ways
And my thoughts than your thoughts.

Holding that... we can ask ourselves...
Is my life consistent...
With the teaching of Jesus... or not.

Ok. You all know this lesson isn't really about dinner parties...
Or guest lists...
It's not even about where you sit...
Whether you take the good or the bad seats...

Who cares... about seating charts?

If anyone wants to come and sit in the big chairs...
For the rest of the sermon...

Back behind the altar...
Go ahead. It's just a chair.
It's not a holy chair...
It's not a pastor chair...
It's not a chair of honor...
It's just a chair.

And this lesson is a parable...
It's not about where you should sit.
It's not about who you invite.

It's about our attitude...

Like this. **[4 Sabbath]**

Jesus was at an actual dinner party...
It was a sabbath dinner celebration...
At the home a leader of the Pharisees.

The purpose of a Sabbath meal is
To make time to rest,
Connect with family and community,
Honor faith traditions,
And celebrate the goodness of God.

Pretty simple... pretty clear.

But of course... before any of that could happen...
People were jockeying for positions...
That were closer to the head of the table.
They wanted to be important.
They wanted to be seen.
They wanted to make an impression.

Which is contrary to the purpose of the dinner.
The dinner is about the goodness of God.
They wanted the evening...
To be all about them.

Jesus noticed this basic negative human behavior...
By the way... just so we are on the same page...
Selfish self-centered behavior...
IS basic negative human behavior.

Jesus noticed... and was compelled to say something.

So... the dinner is just the vehicle...
Just the opportunity...
For Jesus to teach...
Something that transcends.

If it's a transcendent truth...
That means... It's not any different today.

We live in a world...
Where people so desperately...
Want to be special.

Everybody and their best friend's dog...
Has a podcast these days.

Everybody wants to post comments...
That make them feel clever or smart...

Everybody needs to have photos...
Of every life event.

[Take a selfie]

Everybody thinks... they could do everything... and anything...
Better than the people who are currently doing those things.

I recently heard... that's one description...
Of a narcissistic personality...
That they think...
They can do everything better...
Than everybody else.

And at the heart of all this behavior...
Everybody wants to be honored.

In direct opposition...
To this kind of behavior...
Jesus says... **[5 Humble]**

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

He said... It doesn't work...
The way y'all think it works.

The humbling and the exalting...
Come from the outside...
As a result of our attitude...

And we can assume that God...
Is the one who is acting.
If we humble ourselves... before God...
God will raise us up.

If we exalt ourselves... before God...
God will humble us.

That's the way it works.
You can't create your own honor.
Honor comes from the outside...
Honor isn't something that comes from in here...
It's something that people bestow on you.

You can't just push your way to the front of the line...
And say... I'm the most important person...
Like it's the truth.

It's not true.
If you have to push your way to the front of the line...
Often... you're just obnoxious. **[6 Billy Goat]**

You know... The Billy Goat Tavern in Chicago...
It was made famous on Saturday Night Live...
Back in the day...

Cheeseburger... Cheeseburger... Cheeseburger...
No coke... pepsi.

Anyway... whether you remember or not...
It's this hole in the wall... restaurant bar...
Underneath Michigan Avenue...
Downtown Chicago. **[7 Billy Goat 2]**

It's pretty humble.
And direct.
And honest.

However...
There is a back room...
That has a sign hanging in the doorway...
It says... VIP seating.

Then when you get in the room...
On the backside of that same sign...
It says VIP... Very Insecure Person.

So if you have to identify yourself...
As a VIP... that sign...
Will gladly humble you. **[8 Trophy]**

Or if you have to buy yourself a trophy...
That says... World's Greatest Dad.

Well... if you bought it yourself...
Probably isn't all that true.

But if your kids buy you a trophy... or a mug... or a t-shirt...
That says... World's Greatest Dad...
It still may not be true....
But they believe it's true...
They love you...
And they want to honor you.

And that's cool.

What's not cool... is sitting in the best spot...
Because you think you deserve it.

This behavior reveals a serious lack of humility.
And a complete lack of knowledge...
Of who we really are...
Especially in relation to God.

Jesus is saying... humble yourself.
Be humble.
It is a value of Jesus.
It is what he wants us to do.
It is his voice... in this Word...
That he wants us... to internalize.

The second part of this lesson...
Has to do with repayment.

Doing something...
In order to get...
Something back.

This is how the world operates.

We don't give up any of our resources...
Without there being some kind of return...
An equal or greater value...
That comes back to us.

But that's not how the economy...
Of the kingdom of God works.

Again... Jesus says...
Don't invite people to your dinner party...
With the knowledge that they can...
Give you something good in return...

But invite people who can't pay you back.

And why?
Because you can.
You are free...
You have already received your reward.

You are a part of the Kingdom of God.
You have the promise of the resurrection.
You are made righteous in Christ.

You're ok.
You're better than ok.
You're blessed and loved by God.

But you're blessed... to be a blessing.

You're loved to love others.

We do not live for ourselves... we live...
For the love and the sake of others. **[9 Apple]**

I have become a little obsessed...
With the idea of what we do...
With the fruit... that comes from faith...
The fruit that God gives us...

The fruit of the Spirit...
The fruit of faith...
The outcome...
From our faith.

And the way I've heard it said is...
Apple trees don't eat apples.
Pear trees don't eat pears.
The fruit they produce...
Is not for their own benefit...
It's for others.

Same thing with us...
The fruit we produce...
Is not for our own sake.

God doesn't bless us...
In order for us to strut around...
Saying... look at me... I'm blessed...
I'm more special than you...

God blesses us...
In order to be a blessing...
In order to be a servant...
In order to give life...
To those who need to be blessed...
In God's name.

Our fruit doesn't belong to us.
It belongs to God...
For the sake of the world.

This is about giving our lives away.
Which is a basic teaching of Jesus.
He said it in so many ways.

Take up your cross.
Die to yourself.
Love your neighbor as yourself.

And now... Invite people who can't repay you...
You will be repaid...
At the resurrection of the righteous. **[10 Blessed]**

You know how we paid off this building.
This big... wonderful... impressive building.

And when I say... we paid it off...
What I really mean... is...

God gave us the individual resources...
Which we individually committed...
To this community of Joy Lutheran Church...
In order to pay off our mortgage...
So that we could continue to use this building...
And free up our resources...
For the Glory of God.

The reason I bring it up...
Is because we use this building...
Not only for ourselves... but also..
For the sake of reaching out...
To the rest of the community.

We host several AA groups...
Who call our church home.

We have a room...
Where the Douglas County Sheriff Officers...
Can stop anytime... day or night...
And use our restrooms...
Get a snack and drink...
Sit at table... take a break...
And just have somewhere...
On this side of town...
To call home.

On Saturday morning...
Step7 has their worship service...
In our fellowship hall.
It is packed.
With people...
Who are trying to move forward...
To live their lives...
Not focused on the past...
But moving forward...
As God's people.

And just this week...
I had a chance to talk to the new coordinator...
Of Community Bible Study...
It's a national program...
But we have a group that meets here...
On Monday nights.

His name is Kevin... and Kevin told me...
That Wendy walked him around the building...

And was showing him... all the space they could use...
But at some point... she took him down to the north classroom...

And suddenly it hit him...
That we were offering to let them use...
The whole building.
Not the sanctuary...
But the whole rest of the building.

And while he was telling me this... he had tears in his eyes.

They are projecting... 100 people...
From the Parker area...
Who will be in our space...
Studying God's Word...
To transform their lives.

You did that.
This is our space.
We know it's a gift from God.
But it's a gift for the sake of others.

It doesn't matter if they can or cannot pay.
We have been given this resource.
We are entrusted by God... to use it...
In a way... that is faithful and good...
In the name of God... and...
For the sake of others.

And we are.

Now... personally... individually...

Jesus says... you don't have to worry...
You will be repaid.
You will live the new life...
Of someone who has been made right...
Not by your own doing...
But by your faith in him... in Jesus.

So now... personally... individually...
We have nothing to lose.
Our life is forever with Christ.
Jesus... the Word of God... is forever...
On our lips... and in our heart.

We are free...
Free to give our life away...
Free to use our blessings...
To a blessing...
Free from fear... doubt... and death.

Thanks be to God.
Amen.