

## Gospel lesson

This week, Jesus teaches about proper behavior at a dinner party – lessons applicable to all of life.



picture from from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/parable-wedding/>;  
credit: Arabs for Christ /  
FreeBibleimages.org

**Luke 14:1, 7-14**

**(NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable.

<sup>8</sup> "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host;

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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 honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you.

<sup>11</sup> For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

<sup>12</sup>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 neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid.

<sup>13</sup>But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

<sup>14</sup>And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

*The Word of God for the people of God*

<Children's time>

<Hymn "In the Midst of New Dimensions" TFWS #2238>

## Message: Let Mutual Love Continue



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/dear-children-of-god-dear-beloved-children/twelfth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/twelfth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

God of holy living calling us to Christian community, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may be more focused on You in all we do and

share Your grace more fully through our lives. Amen.

We conclude the “Dear Children of God” series today with “Let Mutual Love Continue:”

“[Let us look with] honesty about what it means to be a community of mutual love.”



*picture from MMMS collection*

Do you have any hobbies or pastimes which are completely unproductive? <Let them respond>

Do you find it easy to break away from them when you have other things to get done? <Let them respond>

I developed a minor addiction to a bubble pop game on my phone while camping, as something to do in the van while Keven was driving. I wasted a lot of hours on it – even after getting back home. However, I also had work to complete.

What do you suppose I did not do, in order to play the game? What have you put off for your (unproductive) pastimes/hobbies? <Let them respond>

Mostly I gave up some sleep, which is not very healthy long-term. At least I had deadlines to get me to change my focus back to my responsibilities. What helps you to refocus on what you need to do?

<Let them respond>



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/hosea/>;  
credit: Arabs for Christ / FreeBibleimages.org

Jeremiah of the Old Testament is known as the “weeping prophet.” He told the Israelites about the impending doom of the kingdom because their focus (over the course of generations) had shifted away from God. Frankly, looking at our country in recent decades, I see many parallels of decline between ancient Israel and the US.

God called ancient Israel back to faithfulness by sending them into exile. I cannot say what will happen with our country, for God tends to do things in different ways for different times. I do think the Church is being called back to faithfulness, however.

There are religious leaders proclaiming the opposite of what Jesus taught and calling it Christian. That reflects God’s complaint through Jeremiah, that the people of God were not living as God called them to.

They “changed their glory for something that does not profit.” I think many people today prioritize money, fame, power, and other things over the healthy living in love and nurturing community that God calls us to.



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Jesus noticed people jockeying for positions of status at the banquet we read about. The text does

not say whether some of those guests were Jesus's disciples; I like to consider that Jesus was reining in His young protégés as well as chiding other community members to be mindful of other people.

And there, I think, we get to the crux of most issues. Which works better for building society: focusing on yourself and getting what you want/need without regard for others (or even for your own health/best interests), or paying attention to the needs of others and making sure everyone gets what they need (be it a seat at the banquet table to be fed or to be provided for in other ways)?

People tend to reciprocate the way they are treated. Society teaches us to be business-savvy and try to get money or status, at others' expense. Descriptors like "rat race" and "dog eat dog world" come to mind. Everyone out for themselves generates cruelty toward others. Jesus taught us a better way.

Humbling ourselves and taking care of others first generates goodwill; when reciprocated toward us, our lives get better too. Jesus did not check to see who was worthy of food in feeding the five thousand, He simply fed people because they were hungry. Jesus did not check the status of worshippers at the temple, He simply healed those before Him who were hurting.

God did not create the social pecking order, humans did. Jesus taught us to be mindful of everyone, and we hear that concern echoed in the letter to the Hebrews.



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- † “Let mutual love continue.” Do not consider yourself better than someone else, but offer help when it is needed and you can help.
- † “Show hospitality to strangers” – maybe we can learn something from those who are different from us, each benefitting from the sharing of our gifts.
- † “Remember those who are in prison” – even before the current ICE age, the legal system in this country was identified as racist and conditions in many prisons inhumanely cruel (e.g., no AC >100°F). How does anyone reform when abused, let alone those who were unjustly imprisoned in the first place?
- † “Let marriage be held in honor by all” – regardless of what marriage partner was chosen, [denigrating or harming] that partner or indulging in sexual promiscuity does not honor covenant relationships such as God calls us to. How can anyone believe that you live in Jesus if you betray the one you promised to share life with?
- † “Keep your lives free from the love of money” – idolatry of any kind distracts us from caring for one another, and especially love of money drives cruelty against those in need instead of kindness for them. How would you like to be treated? Is your heart an open channel for the Holy Spirit?

So let the mutual love continue and care for one another to multiply. Not just for those of us in this

room, not just for our extended families, not just for our communities, but for all of humanity and the world. God called us to love one another from creation, Jesus demonstrated for us humans what that looks like, and the Holy Spirit works through the willing to enable the love to flow to a needy world.