

Pentecost 12 Proper 17 (C) – 31 August 2025

[RCL]: Jeremiah 2:4-13; Psalm 81:1, 10-16; Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16; Luke 14:1, 7-14

In today's society, many people like to live out loud. Between Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, there are a plethora of places to share one's life. Generally, social media posts are positive and highlight only the greatest of accomplishments. People love to display pictures of wonderful, exclusive vacations, job promotions, and great social occasions. There are glimpses offered of their successful children at whatever age – and, of course, terrific pet tricks. All of these posts and tweets are designed to beef up their profile in the online community. One's status in this virtual world is measured by the number of followers one attracts and the number of likes one receives for their posts.

In the quest to exhibit our most exciting and best selves, quite often the missing component in those conversations is any sense of humility. While it is wonderful to share the most positive experiences of yourself, one must be careful not to appear boastful and give the appearance of lording what you have over others.

In today's gospel, Jesus continues his journey towards Jerusalem. He pauses his journey and accepts a dinner invitation to eat with the Pharisees. As we have seen over the past few weeks, the Pharisees were rigid in their thoughts and practices of Judaism. They tended to view Jesus with great suspicion because of his apparent willingness to break with rules and tradition as he went about doing his work—as we saw last week when Jesus healed a crippled woman on the sabbath.

Once inside, Jesus pays particular attention to the seating arrangements at the dinner. People are apparently jockeying for the best seating at the table. Jesus used this occasion as a teachable moment about humility. He tells us that we are not to immediately flock to the best seat in the house, but rather to move down to a lower seat and wait to be invited to a perceived place of honor. Many, however, find this advice difficult to follow and are unwilling to risk the perceived humiliation of not being invited to move up to a place of prominence.

As faithful people, there should be a recognition that in the eyes of Jesus, we are all equal. Therefore, where we sit is less important than who we offer a seat to. In our zeal to get ourselves situated, we can begin to look like we are playing a game of musical chairs with a complete emphasis on getting in the right chair on time—forgetting that at the table of the Lord, all seats are the right seats. We thus should not concern ourselves with where we are seated but simply give thanks for having been invited to the banquet

Of even greater importance, is to demonstrate a willingness to make space for others at the banquet table. In Hebrews, we are admonished to graciously give up our cherished seat and “show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Jesus’ banquet table can never be a place reserved exclusively for the elite.

Too often, however, our churches are filled with people just like us—they look like us, they think like us, they share a similar background and set of experiences as we do. And whether we admit it or not, we like it that way—we feel safe and comfortable and secure.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus challenges us to open our doors and invite everyone in to gather around the banquet table—the poor, the homeless, the widows, the orphans, the refugees, the marginalized, the persecuted, the rejected and the reviled, the lost and the lonely. Not only should we invite them, we should give up our seats and sit them in places of honour because at the table of our Lord there is a place for everyone—even those who make us feel uncomfortable; even those who do not conform to our social expectations and norms; even those who may think differently than we do on certain issues.

When we live in a spirit of humility, we focus less on ourselves and much more on how to ensure that we make space for everyone. We extend an invitation to others, expecting nothing in return.

Fear of others can create a tendency to refuse to provide space for a multiplicity of voices, and in that process, so many are excluded. The full richness of the Church can never be appreciated as long as this resistance continues. In today’s Gospel, Jesus models for us what a willingness to break bread with others looks like.

Jesus’ relationship with the Pharisees had been rocky. He addressed them on several occasions, sometimes even accusing them of focusing on unimportant matters and missing the major lessons that were being taught. Despite his disagreements with the Pharisees, Jesus accepts their invitation. And so it should be with us—we should not exclude those with whom we disagree or of whom we disapprove.

At Jesus’ table there is no special section earmarked solely for the privileged. There is no reserved seating for those who can purchase a special seat. As we humble ourselves before God, our goal should not be focused on attaining the best seat at the banquet. Instead, let us open the doors leading to the hall and invite everyone in. Let us allow our guests to select their seats first and then we will fill in. Let us give thanks to God for providing sustenance for all who are present. In so doing, we will fulfill the instructions provided through Hebrews and Luke.

In the Gospel, Jesus’ instruction is clear: “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.” Of course, we are all poor, crippled and blind in our own ways—something we need to remember—for at the table of our Lord, we all sit as equals who come in need of healing, in need of forgiveness, love, and compassion; we all come hungry and thirsty and needing to be fed with the spiritual food that God alone can provide. Amen.