

8/31/25
12th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from August 24th – August 30th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God, you resist those who are proud and give grace to those who are humble. Give us the humility of your Son, that we may embody the generosity of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 13:10-17) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 14:1, 7-14

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Who is present at the dinner Jesus attends? What does Luke tell us about them?
2. What do you notice about the way people chose their seats?
3. What behaviors is Jesus confronting in the host in v. 12-14?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When have you been in a situation when you wanted recognition or honor? How did you handle it?
2. Have you ever had a meal with someone that changed you? What did that look like?
3. When have you experienced radical hospitality?

Memorize this verse: "For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 14:11) Who is or has been a model of humility in your life?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 112. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

I think it's rather difficult for most of us to imagine the reaction Jesus' words would have elicited. To us, this seems like rather humdrum polite advice. But to Jesus' first-century hearers, living in an honor-shame culture that was intensely sensitive to issues of status and recognition, it would have seemed rather remarkable, and ultimately offensive. I say "ultimately" because the problem Jesus names was critical. There were few things that would be more humiliating than to have a host ask you to move to a lower position at a social gathering. You would feel like you'd been named an upstart, someone who thought too much of him or herself, one who didn't know their place, and the physical act of moving lower would mirror the drop in your prestige and social capital. So, at first blush anyway, his advice makes sense and repeats similar counsel found elsewhere. But Jesus doesn't stop with merely offering advice on social etiquette. He continues by admonishing his listeners not to take into account the social payoff or reward of their invitations and hospitality. Jesus says they should not invite to dinner those who already respect them or who are in a position to reward their hospitality or who would invite them back in return, but rather to invite the outcast. And I think he means it! Jesus' whole life is centered on inviting into the presence of God those who neither expect nor deserve such an invitation. And he expects us to do the same. He expects us to stop counting the costs, benefits, and rewards of our actions and live from a sense of abundance and blessing.

Counting. It's so omnipresent in our lives that we almost forget it exists even as it exacts a tremendous toll on us. Whether we are counting the amount in our bank accounts or the opinions of our neighbors on what we wear or do, we are continually counting. Why? Because we live with the sure conviction that there is not enough. Not enough money, time, prestige, resources, recognition...you name it. And that conviction seems sure, even unquestionable, because so much in our culture tell us there isn't. But what is there was? What if there was enough and more than enough to go around? What difference would that make in our own peace of mind and the way we treated others? What if we saw others not as competitors for scarce resources but as partners, even siblings, commissioned by God to distribute the riches of God's goodness and grace? In our family growing up, on Christmas at my grandparents, my uncle would often name one of the grandkids "Santa's helper" and that child got to distribute all of the presents to the rest of the family. Honestly, I think he chose the one who had consumed the most sugar in order to focus that child's energy. And while this never seemed like an enviable role to play when we were very young as we grew older it became perhaps the most enjoyable part of my family's Christmas celebration. Because there is something simply joyful about giving to others out of a sense of abundance.

And that's what Jesus is inviting here. To stop counting and start giving and blessing. To stop calculating our social prestige and stop worrying about what others think and simply be kind to everyone around us, particularly those who are not often the recipients of kindness. What would it look for us to look out for those who seem off to the margin and to invite them into the center by inviting them into our lives? While I realize that grammatically Jesus' words are phrased as commands, I think Jesus means them to be an invitation to a life freed from the unnecessarily constraints and burdensome worries of what everyone else thinks, an invitation to experience the joy of playing "God's helper" in handing out the abundant gifts of dignity and worth and value with which we have been blessed.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen