

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: August 22 – 28, 2016

Lectionary Readings: Proverbs 25:6–7, Psalm 112, Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16, Luke 14:1, 7–14

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.*

This week's references come from the following sources. The appropriate resource will be referenced at the end of an entry by using the letters preceding each resource listed here.

- BB: Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A reading of Luke's Gospel*
- BPS: Brian P. Stoffregen's commentary notes (Pr, Faith Luth, Yuma AZ) Crossmarks.com/brian
- DL: David Lose, *In the Meantime*, www.davidlose.net
- DT: David L. Tiede, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Luke*
- JS: John Shea, *The Relentless Widow (Luke)*
- L: Lectionary.com
- LSB: *Lutheran Study Bible*
- LTJ: Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke*
- NISB: *New Interpreter's Study Bible*"
- SB: *Serendipity Bible for Groups* (NIV version)
- SPMc: Stephen P. McCutchan, *Water from the Rock, Lectionary Devotional for Cycle C*
- WP: WorkingPreacher.org (Luther Seminary)
 - Jeannine K. Brown (2010), Prof. of NT, Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, MN
 - David Lose (2010 and 2013), Luther Seminary, *Dear Working Preacher*, now President of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia
 - Emerson Powery (2013), Prof. of Biblical Studies, Messiah College, Grantham, PA

Background information on this text:

- “The sharing of food is a barometer of social relations. With whom does one eat? Where do they sit so as to broadcast their status? These are questions in a high-stakes game marked by pervasive concerns with social status. That Jesus is in the home of a leading Pharisee (14:1) points to the appropriateness of Jesus' address in this setting.” (NISB, 1882)
- “This chapter appears to be presented as a series of encounters and discourses in the setting of a dinner or banquet. The meal setting is mentioned explicitly at 14:1 and repeatedly identified until 14:24 ... Surprisingly, no other setting is introduced for Jesus' further discourses until the journey begins again in 17:11.
 - ... the content of Jesus' teaching stands in remarkable contrast with the kind of conversation that is expected in such elite groups ... and the central question will be that of God's favor or election as reflected in the person with whom one shares meal fellowship ...
 - Jesus is beginning a discourse on the protocol of the kingdom of God, and the guest list of those 'beloved of God' is remarkable. The banquet setting probably extends through Chap. 14, and the revelation of the gracious extravagance and freedom of this reign extends at least until the end of the section (17:10). The Messiah is challenging accepted views of who is 'elect' of God, now, in the ongoing struggle of the dominion that is emerging, and in the resurrection of the just which is to come.” (DT, 260-261)
- “*Seating Charts and Guest Lists in the Kingdom* (14:7-14). ... this whole section may be viewed as a royal banquet discourse, but this discourse differs sharply from traditional banquet wisdom where it is the learned and virtuous who are to be invited because they are the 'beloved of God.' ... In these verses, the questions appear to be merely matters of banquet etiquette. But the larger context, with its reference to 'eating bread in the kingdom of God' (v.

15), and the concluding reference to the ‘resurrection of the just [righteous]’ indicate that these sayings are declarations of the protocol of the kingdom.

No great imagination is necessary to perceive the radical policies of the kingdom implicit in these declarations about meal practices. Seating assignments and guest lists are still very sensitive matters in state dinners as well as at weddings and recognition banquets, and the risks of embarrassment and insult run high. In some measure, Jesus was merely repeating the practical wisdom of every age which warns against overreaching one’s status...But Jesus’ counsel is also a prophetic declaration which he is bold to announce at someone else’s banquet and which drives to the heart of a traditional scriptural question of who is truly ‘invited’ or ‘elect’ to share the meal fellowship of the kingdom.” (DT, 263-264)

- “In an honor-and-shame culture, you see, counting is everything. Status, favors, debts, honor - it’s all about counting and reckoning and standing and the rest. Inviting persons to a banquet -- whether family, friends, or business associates -- put them in your debt and made a claim on them to return this favor to you. It’s an “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine” kind of world and meals are a great way to scratch someone’s back. Which is why Jesus’ “advice” probably sounded so ludicrous. Why on earth waste an opportunity for social commerce by inviting those who have nothing to give you, who can do nothing for you, and who typically mean nothing to you? It’s crazy.

True enough. But it’s also the kingdom of God. . .

There is no other defense for such counsel, really, except that this is the way God wants us to treat each other. Indeed, it’s the way God treats us -- creating us, giving us what we need to flourish, caring for us, forgiving us, redeeming us -- even though we can do nothing meaningful for God in return. In fact, about the only thing we can do in return, when you think about it, is to share what we’ve been given with others. This is the kingdom life, and it stands in stark contrast to the honor-and-shame world in which we live.” (Lose, *Dear WP* 2013)

- “THE SETTING: Verse 1 gives the setting for vv. 2-24. Jesus is going to the house of a Pharisee to eat bread on the sabbath. This presents three different contexts that we have seen before: Jesus and Pharisees; table-fellowship; and sabbath events ...

Besides the image of a meal, the three teaching events are also connected to each other by the word *kaleo* (= usually, ‘to invite’) which occurs 10 times in vv 7-24: v. 7 (‘guests’ in NRSV = lit. ‘those having been invited’), v. 8 (twice), v. 9, v. 10, v. 12 (the second ‘invite’ in NRSV = *phoneo*, ‘invite in return’ = *antikaleo*), v. 13, v. 16, v. 17, v. 24.” (BPS)

- “In Luke 14:1, 7-14, the social matrix of first-century life is on display, and we hear Jesus speak into this matrix both with communal wisdom and unexpected, even astonishing, advice. We hear the setting for the story in 14:1. It is the Sabbath, and Jesus is invited to a meal at the house of a leading Pharisee. After an interlude in which Luke narrates Jesus healing a man and defending that Sabbath healing, Luke focuses on the meal scene, a setting he strategically employs in his gospel (e.g., 5:29; 7:36; 11:37; see also 7:34; 15:1-2).” (Brown, WP)

Day 1

Luke 14:1, 7-14

14On 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.

⁷When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. ⁸“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; ⁹and 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. ¹⁰But 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. ¹¹For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” ¹²He 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. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Read through the entire Gospel lesson:

- We invite you to continue journaling as a part of your devotional/meditative time.
- Jot down any words or phrases that stand out to you.
- What do you think God might be saying in this story? Record this in your journal.

Day 2

Luke 14:1

14On 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.

Background:

- 14:1-6 “*Another Sabbath Text*: This is the fourth episode of conflict in Luke over Sabbath observance (see also 6:1-5; 6:6-11; 13:10-19).” (DT, 261)
- 14:1-6 “This episode begins with the tense pairing of hospitality and observation. Jesus is invited, but he is invited to be watched. The guests observe him **closely**. However, Jesus is not only watched, he is set-up. There is a man with dropsy at the dinner. (This part of the Lukan episode [Luke 14:2-6] is omitted from this Sunday’s reading.) Although the storyteller does not comment on how or why the man is there, he could have been ‘placed’ there to test Jesus’ response. This is what the people are observing. What will Jesus do when he finds a sick social outcast at the Sabbath dinner?” (JS, 245)
- 14:1 [This verse] marks shift of scene that will remain constant until v. 25 and which, then, helps to establish the unity of vv. 1-24. Along with other narrative units within the Lukan travel section (9:51-19:48), wherein scenes shift by location and audience but with no discernible movement along the route to Jerusalem, this one has an episodic feel. The appearance of episodes tumbling one after the other in the Lukan account should not deter us from reflecting on the importance of the order of these episodes and their interconnections, however, for beneath the surface lie important questions of narrative substance. Remembering the importance of resocialization into the community of God’s people for those whose allegiances and moral underpinnings have been transformed, this concatenation [series of interconnected things] of scenes and accompanying repetition of motifs have a pivotal role to play within the journey narrative. They remind characters within the narrative as well as persons who read it of those ingredients that are constitutive of Jesus’ message...however episodic the present narrative unit may seem, it is rooted deeply in the prior narrative...

By threading together topics and patterned frames already established as important in the Third Gospel, this narrative unit brings the motif of conflict into the foreground while at the same time parading the possibility of appropriate response to the inbreaking of God’s rule.” (JG, 539-540)

- 14:1 “Jesus transgresses Jewish and Greco-Roman dining conventions and reverses wider Mediterranean concerns with honor and shame because he is operating with his own, quite different set of ‘rules.’ Their basis is not developed here, but presupposed from Luke’s previous presentation of Jesus’ message, including previous table scenes in the Third Gospel (cf. 5:27-39; 7:36-50; 11:37-54). Relative to his table companions in 14:1-24, Jesus has a distinctive view of the world shaped fundamentally by his experience of the Spirit, his

understanding of the merciful God, and his awareness of the presence of God's redemptive project, the kingdom of God, in his ministry. Within this immediate co-text, Jesus' version of dining etiquette, shaped fundamentally by these preunderstandings and dispositions, comes to expression as a warning and invitation to his companions at the table, Pharisees and scribes. Within its larger co-text in the Third Gospel, however, the reach of Jesus' message is more inclusive, calling for an embodiment of the kingdom of God in the social practices of Pharisees and legal experts, yes, but also in the behavior of his followers and the people as a whole." (JG,542-543)

- 14:1 "Such **Sabbath** meals were regularly prepared a day earlier, and noted guests and visiting teachers were invited. Even outside of this banquet chapter, Luke is fond of portraying Jesus at meals (see 7:36-50; 9:13-17; 10:38-42; 11:37-54; 22:14-38, 24:30-35). The meals with **Pharisees** are consistently scenes of conflict (7:36-50; 11:37-54), and the motif that the Pharisees were **watching him** is repeated in Luke's story (6:7; 11:53-54...)." (DT, 261)
 - "The setting of the meal has been used for conflict stories before (5:29; 7:36-50; 11:37-53), and the Sabbath has also been a cause of conflict with Pharisees (6:15, 6-11) and with the 'ruler of the synagogue' (13:10-17). If Jesus eats a meal with a Pharisee on the Sabbath, there surely will be conflict!

The verb *paratēreō* has the nuance of 'hostile observation,' which is clearly the case here. . ." (LTJ, p223)

- 14:1 "Jesus often has harsh words for Pharisees, so we wonder why a leader of the Pharisees would invite him to dinner. Jesus has a growing reputation as a prophet, and that might be the reason. Also, Luke tells us that 'they were watching him,' so it is clear that they hope that Jesus will make a mistake that they can exploit.

We might also ask why Jesus would accept such an invitation. While the pride of the Pharisees might block them from receiving God's grace, that grace is nevertheless available to them. It is not Jesus who withdraws from the sinner, but the sinner who withdraws from Jesus. (L)

- 14:1 "... the word **pharisee** can mean 'to separate.' The Pharisees were a group of people who separated themselves from the riffraff of society. They sought to live holy and pure lives, keeping all of the written and oral Jewish laws. Often in the gospels, Pharisees are pictured as being holier-than-thou types, the religious elite. They felt that they had earned the right to sit at the table with God. They criticize Jesus because he doesn't separate himself from the 'sinners and tax collectors.'" (BPS)

Reflection Question:

- Why do you think Jesus is being "watched carefully?"
- Are we because we are Christians ever watched? What might someone be hoping to catch us doing?
- What would people see if they watched you carefully? Would they see more world values or more "God's Kingdom" values? Explain.

Day 3

Luke 14:7-11

⁷When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. ⁸"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; ⁹and 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. ¹⁰But 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. ¹¹For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Background:

- Read also the in-between verses Luke 14:2-6.
“Verses 2-6 are not part of the lectionary reading, but involve a Sabbath controversy regarding the healing of a man with dropsy.” (L)

- 14:7-11 “Having established his status as an authoritative teacher (vv 1-6), Jesus is in a position to address his table companions directly. His message takes its point of departure from the meal setting established in v 1, with vv 7 and 12 serving specifically to recall the setting. Although two topics are treated under the heading of ‘recasting table etiquette,’ they are best read together. First, they are bound together by the language of invitation that permeates these two paragraphs. Second, they share a similar structure:

Verses 7-11

Jesus addresses his fellow guests

When you are invited to a meal ...

Do not ... lest ...

But when you are invited to a meal

Then you will ... because ...

Verses 12-14

Jesus addresses his host

When you host a meal with guests

Do not ... lest ...

But when you host a meal with guests

Then you will ... because ...

Because the sharing of food is a ‘delicate barometer’ of social relations, when Jesus subverts conventional mealtime practices related to seating arrangements and invitations, he is doing far more than offering sage counsel for his table companions. Rather, he is toppling the familiar world of the ancient Mediterranean, overturning its socially constructed reality and replacing it with what must have been regarded as a scandalous alternative.” (JG, 549-550)

- 14:7-11 “Oriental customs as to who reclined where at table were even more serious matters of honor than modern egalitarian seating charts, and they were frequently given religious connotations ... these verses in Luke are by themselves simply prudent counsel, like the wisdom of Proverbs... Only v. 11 indicates that this counsel has new meaning, especially with its future tenses in passive voice ... this homey wisdom is to be understood as a glimpse of the great reversal of accepted values which the kingdom brings (see also 1:51-53).” (DT, 264-265)
- 14:7-11 “They watched Jesus, but it is now Jesus’ turn to watch them ... These guests love honor and hate shame, and therefore their life project is to gain honor and avoid shame. However, the greedy quest for honor may push them to engage in a strategy that will bring shame ... the overall style of Jesus in the gospel is to challenge cultural assumptions. He seldom complies with them ... Instead of teaching them more deft maneuvers on how to be first, Jesus is challenging their jockeying for position. But he is doing it in an indirect, comic way. He is using language as ‘skillful means.’ He suggests a strategy that is sincere but outrageous...”

As the guests pondered the possibilities of this ridiculous plan of false humility, Jesus might have said, ‘Got ya!’ In other words, Jesus’ language is designed to catch them in their own thinking, to make visible to them their underlying driving forces ... Outrageous strategies are meant to have outrageous results. They may even become a path to inner change and new vitality.” (JS, 247)

- 17:7a “(see also 11:43; 20:46). The best seats are those nearest the host. It is so even today. Sitting in the best seats makes us feel superior, and trumpets our superior status to ordinary folk.” (L)
- 14:7b **parable**: “Jesus’ words may ... be regarded as ‘parabolic’ in the narrower sense of being surprising revelations of the kingdom.”
 - “Luke characterizes Jesus’ remarks as a **parable**, cueing us that Jesus is speaking of kingdom issues instead of offering advice about self-promotion.” (L)

- “Banquets were times for philosophers and teachers to impart their wisdom.” (BPS)
- 14:8 **“Wedding banquets** were elaborate celebrations for the entire community, lasting as long as a week.” (LSB, 1729)
- 14:8+10 “Jesus’ advice not to sit uninvited in the place of honor restates the counsel of Proverbs 25:6-7.” (L)
 - **“Proverbs 25:6-7** [the First Lesson in our readings for this week]
Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence
or stand in the place of the great;
for it is better to be told, ‘Come up here,’
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.”
- 14:9-10 “A related contrast in these verses is between being ‘shamed’ or ‘disgraced’ in v. 9 (*aischune*, its only instance in Luke). This happens when one is ‘humbled’ by the host. In contrast, the one who is exalted by the host is also ‘honored’ or ‘glorified’ in v. 10 (*doxa* -- frequently used of God) before all the other guests.” (BPS)
 - “In an honor and shame culture, avoiding shame is of the utmost importance. This is not simply embarrassment. Public shame may have tangible implications for the shamed. A family’s bartering practices or marriage proposals can be negatively affected by a public shaming, if the shame is significant enough.” (Powery, WP)
- 14:10 “Johnson (*Luke*) writes about v. 10: ‘To be greeted as ‘friend’ and invited higher suggests a special intimacy and, more than that, equality with the host.’ [p. 224].” (BPS)
- 14:11 **Exult:** “The basic meaning of the Greek word-group (*hypsoo*, et. al.) is ‘high’ -- such as a ‘high’ mountain or ‘high above’ the earth = sky, heaven. They also have the sense of ‘high position or rank,’ thus carrying the sense ‘very valuable or important.’ Sometimes there is a negative connotation of ‘proud or arrogant.’ The verb means to make something or someone ‘high’ (not in the drug sense <g>), but to raise them up, to give them a high status; to make them important, to exalt them.
...The Contemporary English Version translates this phrase: ‘If you put yourself above others’ ...A noun form of the verb is used as a name of God – ‘The Most High.’ Perhaps the problem occurs when we try to play god.
‘Being exalted’ isn’t necessarily bad. That’s what will happen to the humble. (The grammar would suggest that God exalts them.) ... the exaltation isn’t necessarily the problem, but where it comes from: from self? from others? from God? Another problem may be when it comes: is it sought in the present time? is it a gift to be received in the future?” (BPS)
 - “The passive of ‘will be exalted/humbled’ would suggest God is the actor -- it is God who will exalt and will humble.” (BPS)
- 14:11 **Humble:** “The basic meaning Greek word-group is ‘low’ in height or in status. This verb (*tapeino*) can mean ‘to make something or someone low.’ Thus ‘to make humble,’ but it also carries the meaning, ‘to humiliate’ or ‘to put to shame.’ Perhaps ‘Don’t take yourself too seriously’ may be a paraphrase of ‘humbling oneself.’
If exaltation is trying to be god-like, then humbling oneself may mean coming back to our human reality, being human, ‘down to earth.’” (BPS)
- “His exhortation is to pursue humility, a concept with significant status connotations. Humility was very rarely considered a virtue in Greco-Roman moral discourse. Yet, humility is to mark the followers of Jesus, according to so much of the New Testament witness (e.g., Luke 1:48, 52; 18:14; Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:12; James 3:13; 1 Peter 5:5).” (Brown, WP)
- 14:11 “Jesus makes it clear that his advice has to do, not with worldly self-promotion, but with life in the kingdom of God. This is a polar reversal, turning our familiar world upside down and raising up a world with very different rules (see also 1:51-53; 6:20-26; 13:30).
By alerting us to this impending reversal, Jesus helps to prepare us for life in God’s kingdom. Just as we would prepare for life in a foreign land by learning the language and

customs, so we also need to prepare for the kingdom of God by learning and following Kingdom Rules now.” (L)

Reflection questions:

- Brian Stoffregen asks in his commentary: “How do we keep from using ‘humbling ourselves’ as a back-door way of ‘exalting ourselves’ in anticipation of God’s exalting us? That could lead to a new Christian game: Who can be the most humble?”
 - How would you answer this question?
- What in our societal structure needs to be turned around in order to reflect God’s Kingdom values?

Day 4

Luke 14:12-14

¹²He 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. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Background:

- 14:12-14 “Tannehill writes about this section (*Luke*): A formal dinner was a way in which an elite family (the kind of family who could afford such a dinner) proclaimed and maintained its elite status. The guest list was important, for the invitation indicated that one was accepted as a member of the elite. Family members and important people of the community needed to be honored in this way, and they would be expected to reciprocate. Jesus’ instructions in verses 12-14 conflict with this social function of dinners. It might be a source of honor for someone to give charity to the poor, but it is quite another thing to invite them to a social function in place of family and people of wealth, and eat with them. By doing this, the host is dishonoring family and rich neighbors and in their place is honoring the poor; or, in the eyes of the elite, the host is dishonoring himself by identifying with the poor. Therefore, verse 11 may apply to what follows as well as to what precedes. Those who invite family and people of status are exalting themselves by proclaiming their place in this group. Those who invite the poor and crippled are humbling themselves. [p. 230]” (BPS)
- 14:12-14 “This is more than proverbial wisdom. It is a reproof of the host, but it is also a prophetic revelation of God’s surprising way of ruling. ... the conclusion (v. 14) provides the rationale (**because**) which is the disclosure that God’s way of keeping the records of ‘who owes whom’ is both different from human custom and ultimate. Such a ‘kingdom policy’ was also stated explicitly in 6:27-36 where the promised reward for an exercise of economic generosity was grounded in God’s mercy. In Deut. 14:29 such an appeal to generous sharing of food with the ‘Levite and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow’ had already been linked with God’s blessing. But when the list goes beyond the poor to include **the maimed, the lame and the blind**, a new level of kingdom protocol is revealed.

Jesus’ words on who is to be **invited** are more than a criticism of his host’s etiquette. They are a revelation of the protocol and priorities of the kingdom of God. Those who desire their feasts to be in concord with God’s will or anticipations of God’s great feast are not counseled to practice religious exclusion, preserving themselves, God, and the feast from the pollutions of the diseased and disabled. Rather let the extravagant grace and generosity of God’s reign transform such self-serving religiosity into the inclusion of all those who have been

prevented. This is the protocol of the kingdom, and it will be revealed in the last judgment along with the vindicating **resurrection** of those who have been justified by such righteousness.” (DT, 265-266)

- 14:12-14 “Jesus turns his irony from the guests to the host, suggesting a wild way to get a really big payoff. First, Jesus makes a suggestion that directly contradicts what the host is about. Jesus does not want the host to invite certain people because they are likely to pay him back. But of course, this is precisely *why he would invite them*. There is always more at work than a simple dinner party. Social stratification is the backdrop and social climbing is the agenda. Who will be at the banquet is more important than what is served.

In this context, Jesus once again suggests a strategy that on the surface looks like the wrong move, but that ultimately is the right move. Invite the people who cannot repay, because God ultimately repays kindnesses to them. Invite the ‘poor, crippled, lame, and blind.’ Remember the man with dropsy who no one would talk about. Invite a room full of those types. They cannot repay in this world but repayment will occur at the resurrection of the righteous...” (JS” 248)

- When we move to 14:12-14 ... we hear a more counter-cultural message--one that addresses the fabric of the honor and status structures of the ancient world. Jesus, without using a parable, speaks directly to his host--the one who holds a greater measure of control over the ‘rules of the game’ for this particular meal. His advice to this figure of power in the story works to undermine the very system that upholds status difference at meals. Jesus exhorts the host not to invite friends, family, or the rich to meals, since they are able to repay with a corresponding invitation. Such social reciprocity is the backbone of the patronage system endemic to the first-century world.

Jesus calls for inclusion of those who cannot return the invitation: ‘the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind’ (14:13). This group of persons resonates with the Isaiah-shaped mission of Jesus from Luke 4:18, with the poor and the blind mentioned explicitly there as recipients of Jesus’ ministry. For Luke, Jesus subverts expectations that social payment and repayment should govern life in God’s kingdom community. His promise is that God will repay such hospitality at the ‘resurrection of the righteous’ (14:14; also 14:11, since God is implied in the passive, ‘will be exulted’).” (Brown, WP)

- 14:12a “Jesus warns the host (and us) not to invite the four groups of people (friends, brothers, relatives, or rich neighbors) that we enjoy the most, and tells us to invite the four groups of people (the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind) that we enjoy the least.” (L)
- 14:12b “Jesus advises against inviting favored ... If we instead invite non-favored persons, ...
- 14:13 “Jesus does not encourage remote charity that sends only a check, but instead calls us to invite the poor and disenfranchised to sit at our table, one of the most intimate places in our home.

The lesson is clear. God calls us to kingdom values, and blesses us when we seek to please God rather than other people. We please God when we act humbly and unselfishly, and in particular when we help those who are vulnerable. (L)

- “The poor, . . . crippled, . . . lame, . . . and blind . . . will reappear in the parable that follows (14:21)” (LTJ, 225)
- 14:14 “This is a call to trust God to repay what the disenfranchised cannot — and it is a promise that God will repay us at the resurrection of the righteous.” (L)

Reflection Questions:

- What do Jesus’ words in this Gospel story have to say to us today? To our faith communities?

Reread the entire Scripture:

- Does anything significant or new stand out for you with this reading?
- After studying and meditating on this Scripture, what do you think God might be saying to you?

Reread the entire Scripture again.

- What prayer rises up in you (what would you like to say to God) after reflecting (listening to what God had to say to you) on this Scripture?

Reflection questions:

- What difference do these words of Jesus make in your life today?
- In what ways are we called to live counter culturally today in our society?
- Reading this text, how am I challenged “to take my faith seriously enough to act and live differently?” (Lose, *Dear Working Preacher*)
- In what way does our society today look like the “honor-and-shame_ world of Jesus day.
- “If you[/your faith community] throw a party for the ‘poor,’ ‘crippled,’ ‘lame,’ and ‘blind’ in your world, who would you invite?” (SB, 172)
- How does this text “relate to our table fellowship in Holy Communion?” (BPS)

From David Lose, *Dear Working Preacher* (2013)

“Jesus in this passage invites not just his first-century hearers but also his twenty-first century followers to live differently, to break the rules of ‘what have you done for me lately?’, and to value others not because of what they can do for you but because they are -- we each are! -- children of God.”

From David Lose, *Dear Working Preacher* (2010)

“It’s a new humanity Jesus is establishing, a new humanity that has no place for our insecurities and craving for order, which is why it’s frightening and why those invested in the pecking order -- which, of course, includes all of us -- will put him to death. But this is Jesus, God’s Son, and he will come back, lifting his scarred hands in eternal blessing and benediction, inviting us to a new vision and way of being where there is no first or last, no honor or shame, only each other, bound to one other in God’s abundant love and grace.”

From Brian Stoffregen

“Do we prefer to identify with the wealthy elite or the outcasts? We have a word of hope and promise for the outcasts -- the humbled will be exalted. What word do we have for the wealthy? Earlier the poor had been blessed and woes pronounced on the rich (6:20-25).

Now the Lukan audience learns that there is a way for the rich to be blessed, but it requires them to humble themselves by identifying with the poor. This is likely to offend family, friends, and rich neighbors, with the resulting risk of losing one’s elite status and perhaps one’s share of the family wealth. [Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 230].”

And

“I think that there is a sense in Luke/Acts that no individual can live the ‘blessed’ life as long as there are some people who are suffering and poor and hungry and sick. The ideal situation presented

in Acts 4:34 is that there will be no needy among us. That can only happen when the wealthy are willing to share with the needy.

It is another statement against self-serving. How many people do good things for the rewards they may receive in return: praise from others, a good feeling inside, promise of heaven. In contrast, Luther stated somewhere, 'We need to do good works because our neighbor needs them.' (The good works don't win us 'brownie points' with God, but they do help the neighbor.)"

And

"We might picture God as the host of the meal and all of us as the defective people who are the invited guests, who are unable to repay God. (As I noted above, the word for 'invite' is also the word used for God 'calling' us into his family.) The good news is that we don't have to repay God! However, this can be hard for some people to grasp. I've heard many state that 'It's our turn to have so-and-so over, since we had been invited their house.' They don't want to be beholdin' to anyone."

From Stephen P. McCutchan,
Water from the Rock, Lectionary Devotional for Cycle C

"Jesus' admonition highlights the problem of pride and self-interest that continues to plague the church in every age. Jesus talked about the position of honor at a banquet. Apparently there was a quite honored pecking order among guests within the society ...

... The essence of the parable was expressed by Paul in Romans 12:10: '... love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.' The real challenge to our pride comes in Jesus' advice to his host. 'But 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...'

Since this was part of Luke's advice to the church, what would the result of a church taking this advice be. Apparently the early church took this advice quite seriously. They had a reputation of going out into the streets and not only caring for but also inviting the sick and the lame to come into their community. The effect was that the church openly welcomed those that the society rejected, and the power of their witness began to spread across the Roman empire...

Unfortunately, as the church began to acquire more resources, the members also began to become concerned about protecting those resources. The mystery of our attachment to possessions and the way that they separate us from our trust in God still expresses itself. How do we learn to love others without expecting anything in return?

- *Ponder this reading and respond to the last question in your journal*

A Quote of Brendan Byrne from *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*

"As in all parables, Jesus taps into the everyday life of his audience that he knows so well, playing upon the feelings of honor and shame that run so deep. At a formal public meal—a wedding banquet, for example—to have to move down and take the lowest place before the eyes of all would be a horrible experience, the loss of face immense and long-lasting.

The sense of horror involved gives bite to the situation the parable actually refers to: the great reversal that is to come (v. 11). If everything is going to be reversed when the kingdom of God is established. . . those who choose now to sit with the poor and lowly are destined for promotion, while those who sit now with the rich and powerful will find themselves ordered down to the lowest places. The challenge is clear: if in the case of banquets like this present one you would experience such shame at finding yourself demoted before the eyes of all, just think how much more painful it will be to experience that at the end of the age, when all is decided and set forever! Once again, an episode

from ordinary life (of no moral content at all) provides a springboard, not to a moral maxim but to a profound understanding of the implications of the gospel.

. . . [and] being hospitable to [the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind] now stores up for you the welcome that truly matters: the welcome into the hospitality of God that lasts forever (see 16:9).” (page 138-139)

Psalm 112

- ¹Praise the LORD! Happy are those who fear the LORD, who greatly delight in his commandments.
- ²Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.
- ³Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever.
- ⁴They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.
- ⁵It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice.
- ⁶For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered forever.
- ⁷They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.
- ⁸Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.
- ⁹They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honor.
- ¹⁰The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.