

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 28th, 2022



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294
www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

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Prayer: Almighty And everlasting God, always more ready to hear than we to pray and always ready to give more than we either desire or deserve, pour down on us the abundance of Your mercy, forgiving us the things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us the good things we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: Mark 9:33-37 Wednesday: Luke 7: 1-10 Friday: Gal. 1: 11-24
Tuesday: 1 Sam. 17: 40-51 Thursday: Acts 12: 18-25 Saturday: Eph. 2: 1-7

SCRIPTURE MEMORY MOMENTS: We know each of us should all be working to memorize God's Word! You are invited to listen to our Children's Messages: This week is: Luke 14: 11 <https://youtu.be/HIzVGns8kPg>
"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Musician: 10 a.m. – Mayumi Munoz
Reader: 10 a.m. – Howard Bogusat
Greeters: 10 a.m. – Ralph & Mary Muller

FLOWERS have been placed on the altar this morning to the Glory of God by Susan Honey on the occasion of her Birthday.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Georgia Hoeffs who turns 15 today. Mom and Dad can't believe where all the time went in growing up and are thankful to God for His constant care and protection.

<u>Last Sunday Attendance: August 21st, 2022</u>		<u>Attn: 10 a.m. – 80</u>			
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or – (--)</u>
Current:	283,291.00	5,554.73	1,511.00	132,976.00	(46,804.83)
LCC Missions	20,000.00	392.16	205.00	9,837.50	(2,854.81)
Property Improvement:			34.00	4,199.50	

Notice to Church Extension Fund Depositors: The Church Extension Fund (CEF) is winding down its operations and as of now all depositors with current addresses have received their deposited funds plus the interest owing. However, we have a number of unclaimed savings accounts and savings certificates as we do not have current contact information for these. If you or someone you know thinks they may have a CEF account which has not been redeemed, please contact Darryll Holland at: 800-465-8179 ext4 or dholland@lcceast.ca. Also if you are in possession of God Bank Savings Stamps or Tracky Stamps, these too can be redeemed by returning the books or stamps to: Lutheran East District, 275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3.

LMWL-C/MARY MARTHA:

This is such an exciting time to welcome back and extend an invitation to everyone for our new Fall/Winter program. Please mark your calendars so that you may be able to join us:

Saturday, September 17th – YARD SALE—Part 1: Bazaar (notes of explanation from Carole Pink)

BAZAAR NOTES: We are hoping to have a **regular Bazaar again this November** as in the past; however we plan to hold it in **2 parts – Saturday, September 17 & the last Saturday of the month, Saturday, November 26th.**



To keep more room for the lunch tables at the **Bazaar in November**, we want to sell as many of the items for the **“Nearly New Tables” in September as possible.** We have many boxes of things stored in the back room, plus you may bring in more if you have donations. Weather permitting we will hold the **YARD SALE** in the front of the church as we did with the fundraiser for Ukraine in June. The proceeds from this one though, will go towards our usual chosen Bazaar

Missions. Placing the Tables on the front lawn is more work but it catches people driving by or walking along the sidewalk. We hope to sell barbecued hot dogs and drinks (both hot & cold) too **and might anyone be interested in making some sweet treats to sell individually as well?**

WE NEED HELP FROM AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE! How can you help????

- 1. Volunteer** for one of the aforementioned things.
- 2.** Come to the church one of the days prior (Sept. 14-16) and help sort through, organize, and price the items.
- 3.** Come early on that Saturday morning to help carry things outside and set them on the tables. Especially men- we would sure appreciate your help carrying the tables and boxes.
- 4.** We will need many sellers - a couple at each table.
- 5.** Helpers to pack up and clean up afterwards
- 6. Very important right now** - mark your calendars, save the date. **HELP US ADVERTISE!!**
--- Tell your friends and neighbours, spread the word as much as you can, put a notice in your apartment building, post about it on your Facebook page, any other way you can think of.



Saturday, September 17th, 9 a.m. to start (earlier to set up)

*****Please let Carole or any of our Mary/Martha LWML ladies know what you might be willing to help with. carolepink121@gmail.com ***** Thank you in advance!!!

(One extra noteIn this ever changing COVID climate that we've been in these last few years., if by any chance in November it is decided in conjunction with Pastor, Judy and council, that for health and safety reasons it is unwise to go back to the indoor portion of our Christmas Bazaar again as we are hoping to, we would make adjustments as necessary and continue with that in a similar manner to what we have done the last 2 years.)***

Tuesday, September 20th – 7 p.m.: Pastor John will share a short Bible Study and talk about his trip to Greece to visit our family. Carole will give a short presentation on the Ontario District LWML-C Convention held at Grace Lutheran Church in June

Sunday, October 2: LWML-C Sunday

Tuesday, October 18, 7 p.m.: Speaker from Salem Chapel - Rochelle Bush (*underground railroad*)

Tuesday, November 15, 7 p.m. Assembly of ***Warm Feet for the Streets*** sock blessings.

Saturday, November 26: BAZAAR

Tuesday, December 20, 5:30 p.m.: **Advent/Christmas Dinner**

We look forward to seeing familiar faces at our meetings and welcoming new faces! If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to call Lorraine at 905 964 5837!

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¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3: 14-16

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Post-Covid we want to blow our doors open
with activity.

We need YOUR input to provide “WHAT” activities.

Our goal is to:

1. Crack the door
2. Open a little wider
3. Blow the doors off!



We want YOU to brainstorm:

What activities do you feel would engage members, families and friends?

Consider activities for different ages:

- ✓ babies / toddlers / children
- ✓ tweens / youth / young adults
- ✓ singles / married
- ✓ mid-life / seniors

In-person “**POST IT**” brainstorming will be held:

Sunday, September 11th

Sunday, Sunday 18th

For more information contact:

Louise 905-329-8579 (parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca)
or Kathy (k.kuhl@gmx.com)

HOLY COMMUNION

Worship Supplement 1969 Lutheran Church Missouri Synod adapted

THE 12TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 28, 2022+ 10 AM Worship

FIRST HYMN: "As We Gather" [*"Son of God Eternal Saviour" tune*] www.hymnary.org

As we gather at your Table, as we listen to your Word,
help us know, O God, your presence; let our hearts and minds be stirred.
Nourish us with sacred story, till we claim it as our own;
teach us through this holy banquet how to make Your vict'ry known.

Gracious Spirit, help us summon other guests to share that feast
where triumphant Love will welcome those who had been last and least.
There no more will envy blind us nor will pride our peace destroy,
as we join with saints and angels to repeat the sounding joy.

Words: Carl P. Daw, Jr. © 1989 Hope Publishing Company, 380 S Main Pl, Carol Stream, IL 60188

INVOCATION, CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Almighty God, before Whose presence the angels veil their faces,

With worship and love we acknowledge Your glory, O holy Three in One;

Blessing and honour and glory and power

Be unto You, our God, forever and ever, Amen.

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

In every place incense is offered to Your name, O Father, a pure offering:

For Your name is great among all the nations. [*Brief prayerful silence*]

O most Merciful Father,

We have strayed and departed from Your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much of our own hearts' desires. We have offended against Your laws. We have left undone those things which we should have done, and we have done things that we should not have done, and there is nothing good in us. O Lord, have mercy on us. Spare us all as we confess our faults. Restore all of us who are sorry for our sins, according to Your promise to all humanity in Christ Jesus, our Saviour, and help us, for His sake, that we may live a godly, righteous and holy life, to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

God is merciful and gracious, giving forgiveness to all who confess their sins and turn to Him. As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I forgive you all of your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

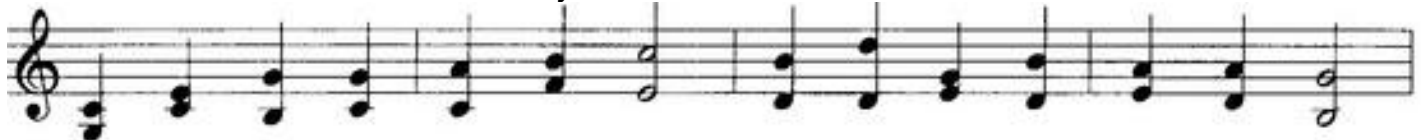
Amen.

KYRIE: **Lord, have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us.**

PRAISE HYMN

“Glory Be To God”

“Jesus’ Name” tune



1 Glo – ry be to God on high, God Whose glo-ry fills the skies;
2 Christ our Lord and God we own, Christ, the Fath-er’s on-ly Son



Peace on earth to us for-giv’n, We, the well be-loved of Heav’n.
Lamb of God for all is slain, Sav-iour of the world pro-claim.

Words: Charles Wesley, 1739 public domain

GOTT SEI DANK
Freylinghausen, *Geistreiches Gesang-Buch*, Halle, 1704, alt.

GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY:

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

We pray: O Father, You resist those who are proud and give grace to the humble through the work of Your dear Son. Give us the humility of Christ, that we may embody His generosity and share in His abundance; we ask this through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE SCRIPTURES

The Old Testament: *Proverbs 25: 2-10*

It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out. As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable. Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel; take away the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness. 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. What your eyes have seen do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame? Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another’s secret, lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Epistle: *Hebrews 13: 1-16* Let brotherly and sisterly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear, what can man do to me?” Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SUNG GOSPEL VERSE

1. To God be the glo - ry, great things he has done! So loved he the world that he gave us his Son, who yield - ed his life an a - tone - ment for sin, and o - pened the life - gate that we may go in. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the peo - ple re - joice! O come to the Fa - ther thro' Je - sus the Son, and give him the glo - ry, great things he has done!

Fanny J. Crosby, 1875; alt.
Mod.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY 11.11.11.11.
William H. Doane, 1875

Holy Gospel: *St. Luke 14: 1, 7-14*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Luke, the 14th chapter: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully... Then Jesus told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in 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 table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

This is the Gospel of the Lord: **Praise to You, O Christ!**

THE NICENE CREED: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, Whose kingdom will have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life + of the world to come. Amen.

SERMON HYMN: "Let Us Go Now To The Banquet"

Refrain / Estribillo



Let us go now to the ban - quet to the



Feast of the ran - somed world. The Ta - ble's set and a place is



wait - ing; come, ev - 'ry - one, with your gifts to share.



1. I will rise in the ear - ly morn - ing; the com -
 2. God in - vites all the poor and hung - ry to the
 3. May we build such a place a -- mong us where all



mu - ni - ty's wait - ing for me. With a spring in my step I'm
 Ban - quet of just - ice and good where the har - vest will not be
 Peo - ple are eq - ual in love. God has called us to work to -

Refrain / Estribillo



walk - ing with my friends and my fam - il - y.
 hoard - ed so that no one will lack for food.
 Geth - er and to share ev - 'ry - thing we have.

Text: Guillermo Cuéllar, b. 1955, *Misa popular salvadoreña*; tr. Bret Hesla, b. 1957, and William Dexheimer Pharris, b. 1956
 Music: VAMOS TODOS AL BANQUETE, Guillermo Cuéllar, b. 1955
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<https://www.lutheranchurchbrevardnc.com/october-11th-2020-service>

MESSAGE

THE OFFERINGS *are gathered.*

THE PRAYERS

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Gracious Father, Banquet Host, fill your church with a spirit of joyous hospitality. We pray for our Synod, for the shaping of our faith and mission, for teachers, deacons, church leaders, and all Your children regardless of age or ability as they invite others to your table of boundless grace.

Lord, hear our prayers, **as our concerns come to You –**

Gracious Father, Banquet Host, as creation waits with eager longing for redemption, bring healing to the earth scorched by fire and drenched by flood. Work through scientists and engineers, geologists, foresters and oceanographers as they seek to understand and advance our stewardship of creation.

Lord, hear our prayers, **as our concerns come to You –**

Gracious Father, Banquet Host, as you set a table in the presence of enemies, so bless the efforts of diplomats, international peace workers, and world leaders who navigate all conflicts here and all over the world. May they proceed with dialogue and understanding, so that justice and peace prevails.

Lord, hear our prayers, **as our concerns come to You –**

Gracious Father, Banquet Host, let your gentleness be known among those who are weary or ill, especially [names added here...], **and those we name before you now silently.....**Strengthen doctors, medical care workers, and caretakers who see to their needs.

Lord, hear our prayers, **as our concerns come to You –**

Gracious Father, Banquet Host, when we are quick to judge outward appearance, remind us how you clothe all in your mercy. We pray for ministries that provide needed clothing and other personal care assistance in this community. Help us be interested in assisting any one we know or see to be in need.

Lord, hear our prayers, **as our concerns come to You –**

Gracious Father, Banquet Host, give us hope during these unsettled days and help us to share your hope with others. Bless the efforts of all who offer their time, talents and treasures with Your church that Your Kingdom can grow here and in every community who seeks resources. Bless those celebrating birthdays or special anniversaries, all those who travel and re-create. Send your Spirit of unity and fill us with compassion, that we may be your witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Lord, hear our prayers, **as our concerns come to You –**

Banquet Host, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

The Lord be with you:

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give Him thanks and praise!

It is truly good, right and joyful that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who on this day overcame death and the grave and by His glorious resurrection, opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with the Church on earth and all the company of Heaven, we praise Your name and join their un-ending hymn:

SANCTUS

[Tune: Holy, Holy, Holy]



Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho -- ly, Lord God Al - migh - ty,
Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout glo-ries of Your name.
Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho -- ly, sing -- ing Ho - san -- na!
Bles -- sed is He Who comes in our Lord's name.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER:

Saint Luke the Evangelist wrote of our Risen Lord that when He sat at Table with the Emmaus travellers, He took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. Their eyes were open, and they recognized Him. At our Lord's Table our dear Saviour invites those who trust in Him and believe He is in the Sacrament that we all share His great Feast. May we be faithful recipients and by grace remain in Your service, that, in the midst of the world, we may live our Your Gospel and be signs of peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Lord, let us pray, as You have taught us:

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, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

WORDS OF OUR LORD:

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat; This is My + Body which is given for you, this do, in remembrance of Me. In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying "Drink of it all of you, this cup is the New Testament in My + Blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Whenever we eat this Bread and drink this Cup;

We proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

May the Lord's peace always be with you;

And also with you. Amen.

LAMB OF GOD

"O Jesus Christ"

(Tune: "Just as I Am")



O Jes-us Chri-st, True Lamb of God; the sins of the world, You



Take a -- way. Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray;



And bless us with Your peace; A -- men.

HOLY COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

COMMUNION HYMN:

"The Feast Is Ready"

Tune: "When Love Is Found"



1 The trum-pets sound, the an-gels sing---



The Feast is rea --- dy-- to be -- gin,



The Heav' -nly gates are o -- pen wide,



and Jes -- us wel --- comes you in --- side.

2 He spreads His Table with good things, oh taste the peace and joy He brings,
He fills you up with Love divine, He turns your water into wine.

3 The hungry heart He satisfies, and gives the lowly Paradise,
Now hear all Heav'n and earth applaud, the wondrous goodness of the Lord!

4 Sing thankful songs of pure delight, come revel in God's Love and Light,
Dine at the Table of the King, the Feast is ready to begin!

SONG OF SIMEON:

"Free Now To Go"

[Tune: "This is the Day"]

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in a 4/4 time signature. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody is accompanied by chords indicated by letters above the staff: D, A7, D, G, D, A7, D. The lyrics are printed below the staff, aligned with the notes.

Free now to go; free now to go, in Your prom-ised, peace, in Your
Prom-ised, peace; my eyes have seen, my eyes have seen, Your
Sav-ing grace, Your sav - ing grace! Peo-ple can see from the
Light You shine, Is-rael's true glo-ry-- now is mine;
Free now to go , free now to go, in Your peace, O Lord.

Words: Russell Schulz-Widmar, alt © 2006 Augsburg -- Music: Les Garrett, © 1967 www.wordpress.com

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PRAYER:

Holy Father, we ask You now, by the Blessed Food and Drink, Your Son's Precious Body and Blood, to deliver Your Church from every evil, to teach her to love You faithfully, and make her truly One, even as the bread was made from many grains to become one loaf holding the treasure of our Lord's Sacrament; for He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING:

Let us praise the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord upon you with favour, + and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN:

“Sent Forth By God’s Blessing”

[Ash Grove]

**Sent forth by God’s blessing, our true faith confessing,
The people of God from His dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended. Oh, now be extended
The fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of His teaching, receptive souls reaching,
Shall blossom in action for God and for all.
His grace did invite us, His love shall unite us
To work for God’s kingdom and answer His call.**

**With praise and thanksgiving to God ever living,
The tasks of our everyday life we will face.
Our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring,
Embracing His children of each tribe and race.
With Your feast You feed us, with Your light now lead us;
Unite us as one in this life that we share.
Then may all the living with praise and thanksgiving
Give honour to Christ and His name that we bear.**

Words: Omer Westendorf, © 1964 Augsburg Fortress

REV. TODD HOEFFS

PENTECOST 12 (SERIES C)

Scripture: St. Luke 14:1, 7-14

August 28, 2022 + 10 AM

“Down is up and up is down”

[Note – some of this message may be edited further before it is preached on Sunday.]

One of my university friends [Daemen College Amherst NY] in the early 90s got both of us snuck into a Rolling Stones Concert [in then Rich Stadium]. My friend knew a few security guards who let us pass into the stadium into the proverbial NOSE BLEED CHEAP SEATS. If we didn't draw attention to ourselves the guards promised to move us up closer to the stage. Every ½ hour we got ushered up closer and closer. By the end of the concert, we got as close as 5 rows away from the stage. Great spot...too bad I have a better memory of moving around the concert than actually remembering the Rolling Stones themselves!

Today we don't have the awareness of just how important mobility had once been at dinners & meals. Weddings today come close with assigned seating but no one changes table to get ahead socially. We're too used to restaurants and lunch counters and food courts where we eat around all kinds of people. Cheap seats at a concert, economy section of an airplane, those delineations we know according to class & financial ability & roles.

In Jesus' time, meal tables played a crucial role in family and social culture. When an Israelite provided a meal for a guest, even a stranger, it assured him not only of the host's hospitality, but of his protection and full inclusion into the community. It totally set a person on a great future path.

Ancient dinner parties could also be political affairs. Inviting the right people affected a person's standing and influence. Accepting an invitation to such a dinner carried with it the expectation that the one invited would return the favour. Obviously, in the unlikely event they'd get an invite, poor people usually wouldn't accept since they could never repay.

The dinner party recorded in Luke's Gospel involves Pharisees. They tended not to be particularly wealthy. But they had a lot of influential control over the religious climate which inadvertently controlled the popular social structure. They'd fight and bargain for high positions at great meals so that they'd end up in a seat of honour.

Hence, Jesus' advice in the form of a parable.

Humility, good manners, good conversations all helped one move from a poor seat to a better seat close to the host. ACT humble and obedient as a show and you'll go far. Don't sit in the best seat only to have the host move you down. What an insult that would be!

The highest embarrassment at an influential dinner at that time would be for a host to ask a guest to move down from his favoured chair to a lower seat. You'd feel like a problem person: someone who thought too much of him or herself, one who didn't know his/her place, and a drop in your prestige. So, act humble, act good, and all is well was the mantra of the day. How often we see this kind of insecure social maneuvering in our workplace, with our friends, even in our family units!?

Jesus is well aware of the false humility of those in His audience. Last week He called leaders of the synagogue hypocrites. This is why He cuts through the fake humility and tells any host who invites: ASK THOSE WHO CAN'T REPAY YOU!

Serve those who need food and drink but don't need the social posturing. Don't invite to dinner those who are already respected or who are in a position to reward their hospitality or who

would invite them back in return. Invite the outcast – the poor, the sick, the socially undesirable, and in contrast, the lowly and humble.

This would be shocking to Jesus' listeners! It just didn't happen. If being around people didn't help you in one way or another to get ahead, you didn't bother.

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, that is, to stop counting the costs, benefits, and rewards of our actions and live from a sense of abundance and blessing.

We tend to count the cost. With groceries & car purchases it's wise. But not so with people. We tend to 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 – and particularly the advertisements & images we're relentlessly subjected to – ALL tell us there isn't.

What if there's 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 fellow brothers and sisters, blessed and loved by God Who lives sharing His goodness and grace with all people!?

There is something simply joyful – and truly freeing – about giving to others out of a sense of abundance. From the great supply of daily bread with which we've been given!

And that's the point of Jesus' invitation. Don't count costs and rather share with others and be a blessing to all you meet. Humbly know your place and realize you're a forgiven creature in Christ just like everyone else. And the Spirit will open your heart and life to people who can do nothing for you.

This is Jesus' Way, a Way which cuts against the grain of life's advancing. A Way which slaps those in the face who try to work it any other way. We can't escape it; we see it in our communities, our jobs, in nursing homes, even in churches. Think of those people who only talk to you when they want something...maybe you and I have done that ourselves, too? That's when self-promoting sin gives way to a humbled heart secure in our Lord Who lifts up those who're down and brings down those who posture themselves upward.

This *is who Jesus is*, the Great Reverser of our priorities, our wants and our values. Because there's no end to the game of who's "in" and who's "out," and our Lord in his wisdom knows our anxious scramble for greatness will lead to nothing but more anxiety, more wants, more loneliness, more distress, and more devastation. Because Jesus' kingdom is not a kingdom of scarcity; it's one of abundance. Where all are already welcome, already loved, already cherished, already forgiven, arms swift to embrace. Because the currency of that kingdom is humility, not arrogance; generosity, not stinginess; hospitality, not fear.

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." The way up is down. To try to "work up" is to risk being "put down." The honoured are indeed humbled by God in the work of Christ on the cross for us. We who are humbled trust not in our self or our own ways, but in God's way.

Which is Jesus' Way. Taking the place in the cheap seats, far from the host, near the neglected. Jesus humbled Himself. Sitting among the lost, the poor, resting His head on the shoulders of the forgotten, and with those who could never pay back the treasures of His compassion.

And after the most wonderful of meals He left His table of welcome and traveled down the road to Calvary. He humbled Himself further, this time taking the seat of suffering between 2 sinners on a cross. In the nails and thorns Jesus embraced the shameful sins of every person. He embraced it all in a liberating sacrifice. And because of Jesus' sacrifice, He's lifted way up and seated at the right hand of God. And Jesus now calls us, with arms stretched in a warm and wide invitation, bidding us to take our seat next to Him at the heavenly banquet and beside those blessed humbled patrons He welcomed long ago.

Imagine living in the freedom of no longer worrying about what others think and simply be kind and helpful to everyone around us, particularly those who are not often the recipients of kindness. What would it look like at work, at school, and at the places we volunteer or play sports or socialize, to look out for those who seem off to the margin and to invite them into the center by inviting them into our lives?

Our lives as the baptized followers of Christ, who've been invited into His intimate dinner by grace, means we live as invitations for others to see and receive. An invitation to a life freed from the unnecessary and burdensome worries of what everyone else thinks, an invitation to experience the joy of being Christ to the people in handing out the abundant gifts of life and peace and value with which we've been blessed.

When we gather at Jesus' table, we leave behind the insistence of upward mobility and kneel elbow to elbow with different people made into one family, the body of Christ in the world, eating and drinking His Feast. Dining on Jesus' meal, taking Him into our bodies, not only is humbling but strengthens our confidence in Christ's power to transform us, renew us, hold us and lead us to the Great Heavenly Feast with countless seats and room for all.

Amen.