

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost - Year C

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Proverbs 25:6-7

Psalm 112

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Luke 14:1, 7-14

09/01/2019

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke;

<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 Gospel of our Lord

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

### **Humble**

Good Morning! If you follow the “normal” seminary timeline, you start something called Clinical Pastoral Education, or CPE, during the summer after your first year of school. CPE is a nationwide program that trains chaplains for specific ministry. Most of this happens at places like a major hospital. To become a certified CPE chaplain you need a few years of training, but most mainline denominations require that their seminarians take at least one unit. So every summer, for about 6-8 weeks, we descend upon hospitals across the country. I got lucky and was assigned to the Lowman Home on the outskirts of Columbia, SC. This was a tiered retirement home that was distinctly Lutheran. Where some CPE residents were required to cater to all faiths, it was expected that chaplains at Lowman Home would not just be Christian, but Lutheran too. We had four services there on a Sunday that were divided between us, but every Wednesday afternoon there was on larger service in the main chapel. It was after this service in the first or second week that I met Mr. Crumley.

All the chaplains were chatting with the residents after service and several of us found ourselves with our supervisor and Mr. Crumley and his wife talking. After a few minutes the conversation turned towards our hopes for ministry. It was then that my supervisor asked the clarifying question: “You were a pastor, weren’t you?” Crumley answered with a nonchalant “I was a pastor, yes.” So it wasn’t Mr. Crumley, but Rev. Crumley. Now this wasn’t too uncommon, there were about 10 retired pastors at the LUTHERAN retirement home. My supervisor kept digging, “You were more than a pastor though, right?” again, Rev. Crumley answered with a simple “yes.” “You were a bishop, weren’t you?” my supervisor asked. “Yes, I was the bishop for a few churches.” So we went from Mr. to Rev. and now to Bishop Crumley. It was at this point that I interrupted and asked “Well, which churches?” After a moment pause, Bishop Crumley answered, with a twinkle in his eye, “All of them.” “What?,” several of us asked. “I was the Presiding Bishop of the LCA.” ... WELL color me a little surprised! In fact, Presiding Bishop James Crumley was the bishop of the Lutheran Church in America from 1980 until several Lutheran churches merged in 1987 to form the ELCA, our current denomination. He served as both the secretary and president for the LCA and was a major player on the panel that helped plan the merger that formed the ELCA. This guy served on the Lutheran World Federation and was a member of the central committee for the World Council of Churches<sup>1</sup>... and there he was standing right in front of me... casually referring to himself as the “pastor of a few churches.” Bishop Crumley was the type of humble and caring person any good pastor could hope to one day be like. It was

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7733>

the honesty in his humbleness that was the perfect example of what Jesus Christ is calling us to become in today's Gospel lesson.

We pick up our text for today with Jesus eating with church leaders who jockey and fight for the best seat in the house. Jesus scolds the room, reminding them of stories like our first lesson from Proverbs. He breaks the age old dinner rule by talking about politics and religion all in one go! Jesus calls on the whole community to model true humbleness, the type I saw in Bishop Crumley. It was more than just an act with the man, there was a happiness and joy that came from him that was rooted in his contentment with who he was, never trying to be more or less than God had called him to be. It takes a humble person to lead the church in a direction that puts them out of a job.

But it's more than just humbleness and contentment that Jesus calls us to in today's Gospel: *"<sup>2</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."*

It is here that the two of the most common themes and ideas in the Gospel of Luke come together: preferential care for the poor and eating. The whole book is full of stories that cover these two topics and in today's lesson they come together. As I mentioned last week, Jesus begins his ministry in the beginning of the Gospel by reading from the scroll of Isaiah and announcing a year of jubilee. Jesus eats so much in

the Gospel of Luke that we have more references to eating than in any of the other Gospels, and it seems that Jesus implies that some think he is a “glutton and drunkard.”<sup>2</sup>

It’s these two themes that keep me coming back to the Gospel of Luke, and it’s why this is my favorite of the four. Eating a meal together is this strangely common and yet sacred thing. Something that happens so frequently in our lives and yet it continues to be a place where many of us recall fond memories of friendship and community. I had the weekly meals with my grandparents every Monday evening, a tradition that continues with my family. For others it’s nights out with good friends. I doubt that I’m the only one who can remember time spent with those with whom we can be completely ourselves, letting our guard down and relaxing in the blessing that is friendship. The sun sets, the plates are put away, and yet the fellowship continues. It is in these simplest of moments that God makes God’s kingdom known to us. It is in those moments that true community exists.

And yet, how many will lay down tonight without the joy of that community? How many will go to sleep with empty stomachs? Our community is strong, but when we invite those with less to our table we make it even stronger! We live under this myth that we don’t have enough food to feed the world, but this is lie. We have all we need, we just don’t want to share. According to one study, the United States of America wasted 133 billion pounds of food in 2010 alone.<sup>3</sup> This doesn’t need to be the case.

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<sup>2</sup> Bartlett, David L., and Barbara B. Taylor. *Feasting on the Word*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/faqs.htm>

One of the tag lines the ELCA has been throwing around lately is “There is room for everyone at the table,” and the intent behind this is to call us all to realize that our table fellowship, both at the sacrament and at home, has the potential for extending a welcome to all who are poor, sick, lame, and blind. To borrow some more sacramental language, this isn’t our table, it’s Jesus’. So the next time we all sit down to enjoy our dinner, let us look around and ask ourselves, who is missing from this table? Amen.