

“Who Do You See?”

Luke 14:1-11, Pentecost 15, Proper 17-C, August 28, 2016

I did title the message this morning: “Who Do You See” because the Gospel lesson makes it abundantly clear to us that there were a number of people there—in the home of this prominent Pharisee—that day—who were all keeping a very close watch on one another.

1. There’s first of all--JESUS who is watching all the invited guests arriving at this man’s home --- jockeying for the very best seats in the house; hoping to find a seat as close as possible to the head table—to the places of honor or respect.
2. Secondly, there are the eyes of all of the invited guests now doing their best to keep a close eye on Jesus. Now what in the world is Jesus going to do?
3. Thirdly the eyes of all in this room, at Jesus’ own request are directed to this man suffering from DROPSY—THE BODY’S RETENTION OF FLUIDS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DISPELLED BUT WEREN’T.

Today people who suffer from this same illness may take a medicine called Lasix, which helps them dispel of fluids—though those who take it say it keeps them running to the washroom.

ONE GOOD QUESTION TO ASK, WHY WAS JESUS EVEN INVITED TO THIS DINNER PARTY ANYWAY? There were some Pharisees, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who did take a real liking to Jesus... Invited because they admired Jesus, loved Jesus, or was it because they were hoping to set a trap for Jesus?

Chapter 13, a group of Pharisees came to Jesus, “*Get out of here for Herod wants to kill you!*” Were they genuinely concerned about Jesus, or simply looking for a way to railroad him out of town—because of his immense popularity? His immense popularity also meant that they could no longer ignore him completely.

WHY WAS THIS MAN WITH DROPSY INVITED THERE? Perhaps he was put there as a decoy---Jesus’ seeing this man would not be able to resist, what these other invited guests may have deemed as the opportunity to heal him.

Luke has already told us of 4 other instances where Jesus had healed people on the Sabbath? (Luke 4 – demon-possessed man); (4-Peter’s mother-in-law; chapter 6 – man with a withered hand which makes us wonder if he was suffering from Parkinson’s Disease; and chapter 13 – “A Bent-Over Woman, could not stand up straight—OSTEOPOROSIS.” To break the silence Jesus himself asked the question: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?”

One of the shortest explanations of a miracle of Jesus found anywhere in the New Testament Gospels. “*They remained silent, but Jesus healed him and sent him away*” (v. 4)!

Jesus provides his justification. Many times when people became so focused on the LETTER OF THE LAW that they become completely BLIND TO THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW.

Was justification for pulling on ox or a son out of a ditch!

Certainly there were explicit instructions in the Old Testament as to what was permissible and what was not. In Deuteronomy 22:4, we read: *“You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and ignore them. You shall help him to lift them up again!”* Besides this, Jesus is simply stating out loud what everyone knew to be the accepted standard of the day: *“Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out”* (Luke 4:5)?

When Jesus looked at other people so often when he looked at them he looked at them as people he loved; knowing full well that the Heavenly Father whom he came to reveal to us loved them too!

Rich Young Ruler, “Jesus looking at him loved him!”

Woman caught in the act of adultery? (John 8) Jesus loved her and knew his Heavenly Father loved her too.

Mary and Martha wept at the tomb of their brother Lazarus. Jesus loved them. Jesus wept too.

Even when Peter denies Jesus for the third time; precisely at that moment when Jesus was being escorted out of the palace of the High Priest and is crossing the courtyard on his way to Pilate. JESUS LOOKED AT PETER. WHAT KIND OF LOOK WAS IT?

Was it one of those: “IF LOOKS COULD KILL, I’D BE DEAD” KIND OF LOOKS.

God’s love given to the world through the gift of his Son causes us to see people different.

To see God differently. To see ourselves differently. Hopefully to see others differently too. JESUS HANGING ON THE CROSS – LOOKED AT ALL THE PEOPLE WHO PUT HIM THERE AND LOVED THEM—INCLUDING YOU AND YOU AND YOU AND ME. It was also our sins for which Jesus was nailed to a cross.

GOD WANTS TO CHANGE THE WAY WE LOOK AT OURSELVES: “If anyone be in Christ he is a new creation—old passed away new has come.”

GOD WANTS TO CHANGE THE WAY WE LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER.

He didn’t just say – love all the people who love you and who always treat you absolutely peachy keen! **Love your enemies and do good to them that persecute you!** What good is it if you only love other people who love you—or are in acting in loving ways towards you? Even Gentiles do the same!”

CHRIST CALLS FOR HUMILITY—A GIFT THAT ONLY CAN BE GIVEN TO US THROUGH GOD AND GOD’S SPIRIT TEACHING US TO CONFESS WITH THE PSALMIST: ‘IT IS HE (GOD) WHO MADE US AND NOW WE OURSELVES. We are but the sheep of his pasture and the people of his hand!’”

Don’t 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. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just!”

GREEK PRESENT TENSE IMPERATIVE...AN ACTION BEGUN IN THE PRESENT AND CONTINUED INDEFINITELY INTO THE FUTURE.

WHEN YOU INVITE PEOPLE LIKE THAT YOU ARE INVITING JESUS. YOU MIGHT EVEN BE INVITING AN ANGEL (Hebrews 13:1).

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER (Hebrews 13:8). GOD'S LOVE FOR PEOPLE IN JESUS CHRIST IS A CONSTANT, NEVER FLUCTUATING...HOT ONE DAY AND COLD THE NEXT.

WHO DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK AT OTHER PEOPLE? Not only your friends but those who've hurt you and caused some grief and pain; lots of times---not initially---but because we are all sinners. FIX YOUR EYES UPON JESUS LOOK FULL IN HIS WONDERFUL FACE. AND THE THINGS OF EARTH WILL GROW STRANGELY DIM IN THE LIGHT OF HIS GLORY AND GRACE.

While we may sometimes be tempted to seat ourselves, spiritually speaking, in God's presence based on our own human efforts, based on our kindness towards others and through our identification with a church, and our faithful attendance in the worship services at that church, through our faithful giving to that church, and serving on one of the church boards or committees, we still are number among those people identified in Romans 3:23, as *"those who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!"*

The truth is that we can do nothing but confess our sins before God!

But God through the gracious gift of his Son Jesus Christ is still willing and desiring to exalt us to his banquet table. Our God does not leave us in our despair. He clothed himself in human flesh so that he might defeat death and the devil and deliver us from their power (Hebrews 2:14-15)! Jesus Christ was made like us in every way so that he could satisfy God's wrath for our sins (Hebrews 2:17). Therefore, he is now able to sympathize with us, not only in our weaknesses, but maintaining the righteousness before God that we cannot (Hebrews 4:16).

As we cling to faith in Christ, God graciously continues to seat us in his kingdom. "Come up here!" to the font and be washed in the baptismal waters and be joined to Christ!

"Come up here!" to receive the forgiveness of sins and be reconciled to me and to one another!

"Come up here!" to hear my Word and allow my Holy Spirit to create within you a new heart!

"Come up here!" Eat and drink at my table and feast on the abundance of my house!

"Come up here!" Remain in my presence forever, never to be separated from me ever again! And "Rejoice in the unending life I have given to you!" Amen