

14th Sunday after Pentecost, 2010C
 907 "God Himself is Present"
 *620 "Jesus Comes Today With Healing"
 602 "The Gifts Christ Freely Gives"
 Comm: 622 "Lord Jesus Christ, You Have Prepared"

"Dining with Jesus"

¹One Sabbath, when [Jesus] went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. ²And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. ³And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" ⁴But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. ⁵And he said to them, "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?" ⁶And they could not reply to these things.

⁷Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸"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, ⁹and 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. ¹⁰But 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. ¹¹For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

¹²He 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. ¹³But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:1-14)

Moved by the Holy Spirit, the writer of Proverbs wrote, **The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; He who keeps his way preserves his soul. Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud. He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he** (Proverbs 16:17-20).

True humility is a rare bird. It is on the endangered species list in our day. Many people talk about it and admire it, but few actually practice it. Like that animal which is becoming extinct, so is true humility hard to find. It is hard to find because humility, true humility, is not of the world. It is of God. What is of the world is far different from what is of God. The way of the world is to get. The way of God is to freely give, with no expectation of getting back. The way of the world is to master. The way of God is to serve. The way of the world is pride and arrogance. The way of God is humility and humbleness.

The Lord knows how to humble. And He knows how to lift up. This happens all the time around us, if we'd only open our eyes to see it, that we not think too highly of

ourselves, as St. Paul writes, **I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think** (Romans 12:3). [i.e. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, Daniel 4:28-37; The Pharisee & the Tax Collector, Luke 18:9-14).]

It is a great danger—to think highly of yourself before others, esp. before God. With reference to our neighbor, our Lord says, **Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them** (Matthew 7:12).

In Galatians, He says, **If anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another** (Galatians 6:3-5).

Instead of comparing yourself to others, you ought to judge yourself according to what God says. Then you'll know the true state of affairs. Judging yourself by your own standards or even by the world's standards offers a little safety, but judging yourself according to God's Word and His ways shows how things really are. Then you won't be so proud, unless you even raise yourself against God, as the devil did, who was cast out of heaven, only to receive his due in the judgment for such pride and arrogance against the Giver and Creator of all good things

Before the Lord, you have nothing of which to boast or glory. You are the creature. God is the Creator. God is the Potter. You are the clay. (Isaiah 29:16; 64:8).

St. Paul writes, **Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall** (1 Corinthians 10:12). In other words, don't be self-confident. Don't even trust yourself or your faith. Trust in God. His Word is sure.

Self-confidence is of the flesh, but such is not the confidence of the Christian. The confidence of the Christian is none other than Christ. Self-confidence is a confidence that is on something other than God. It rests and has confidence on self. It is prideful to trust oneself.

True and genuine humility, in contrast, does not trust in oneself or in one's own abilities, but looks to another for help, even to God, the giver of all good things. The humble person knows that he is 'not all that.' He knows he needs help. And he seeks God's grace and mercy in Christ, knowing that the only merit and worthiness that profits him is Christ's and not his own.

This is the kind of God that you have: God who is mighty, yet who took on human weakness; God who cannot suffer, yet He who did; God who cannot be resisted in His power, yet God who was, and is still, rejected by men.

You have the God who became man, born of the virgin Mary, and who, **Being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.**

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-9).

Your God is not the God who remains in the shadows, or stands at distance, or stays away from His people because He's too good for you. Your God is the God who comes to you in order to save you.

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).

Others, however, instead of hearing this Word and believing Jesus for who He is, in their pride, refuse the salvation offered them. It is truly human pride that leads to condemnation, for in pride one rejects God's Word and rejects eternal life.

It is as St. John writes, **Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? (1 John 2:22)**

And again, **He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:10-12).**

The difference between true humility and human pride is this: true humility is that which accepts all that God says, both the parts that we agree with and the parts that we don't. True humility is also that which seeks to be servant to the text of Scripture, not master over it. True humility seeks the welfare of others and to do all that it can to help and serve their neighbor in their lack.

Human pride seeks to elevate itself above God and His Word, and to be served by others rather than freely give to those in need. Human pride wants to pick and choose what to believe from God's Word, as if one can consistently do this without nullifying the rest.

But picking and choosing what to take from or out of the Bible as in a buffet is placing oneself above God. In effect, it's saying, "God, you have your way and I have mine. And mine is right!"

You aren't in a position to do that. No one is! Only God makes truly known what is what. And He has, even revealing Himself in His Only Begotten Son, that you live and not die; that you confess your prideful and arrogant hearts and receive His forgiveness, His favor—that He say to you, **Friend, move up higher**—that He exalt you, you who are humbled by His Law, humbled by your sin—you who know of no good of yourselves to claim before Him but Christ, and Christ alone.

This is to be truly humble before the Lord—to acknowledge no goodness of oneself before God and to look to Christ for everything—to recognize in Christ the Savior.

Through Isaiah the prophet, our Lord says, **On this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word** (Isaiah 66:2).

On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, who trembles at God's Word, who knows his sin and is sorry for it—on this one the Lord looks—not for judgment, but for salvation. And on this one does the Lord delight. This is the humble one whom the Lord will lift up.

On him who believes himself rich and not in need of God and His Word, nor His Son—on Him the Lord will look, but not for good—for condemnation. This one the Lord will judge as unworthy, and He will humble him to all eternity because in his pride and arrogance he rejected God's salvation, deeming himself not to be in need of it.

Our Lord says, **Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.** Dining with Jesus leads to such humiliation or exaltation, for our Lord knows how to humble, and He knows how to exalt.

The humble, those who recognize themselves not worthy of our Lord because of their sin, and who seek His mercy in Christ—It is they whom God lifts up and showers with His grace. It is they who are worthy to receive the Lord's Supper and who receive the blessing of sins forgiven and life in Christ's Name. It is they whom the Lord invites and calls. It is they, too, whom we are to care for and help.

But those who exalt themselves, who come to the Lord believing themselves to be worthy ('know it all')—these most certainly are not worthy. These the Lord will humble, that they may know how unworthy they are, that they repentance. And the Lord knows how to do this, whether it be on this earth, or whether it be too late and one suffer for all eternity in hell.

Such is the way of our Lord—to humble and to exalt. And dining with Jesus, He won't give you what you want to hear. He'll give you what we need to hear—for your salvation, that you turn from your prideful hearts and seek His salvation.

And in Jesus, there it is. Only—don't deny Him—take Him at His Word. Your sins are forgiven you. Peace be with you. Amen.