

9.27.2026 Trinity 17 (Luke 14:1-11)

Our sermon this morning begins with non-canonical account of where dogs and cats come from. One day Adam was walking in the garden and cried out, “God, here in the garden You have given me cattle and birds and beasts, but still there are times when I’m lonely here, and it’s difficult for me to remember how much You love me.” And God said to Adam, “I will create a companion for you that’ll be with you forever, and will be a reflection of My love for you. Regardless of how selfish or childish or unlovable you may be, this new companion will love you.” And God created a new animal to be a companion for Adam. And it was a good animal. And God was pleased. And the new animal was pleased to be with Adam and wagged his tail.

And Adam said, “Lord, I’ve already named all the animals in the garden and I can’t think of a name for this new one.” And God said, “Because I have created this new animal to love you even when you’re selfish, childish, and unlovable his name will be a reflection of My own name, and you will call him Dog.” And Dog lived with Adam and was a companion to him and loved him. And Adam was comforted. And God was pleased. And Dog was content and wagged his tail.

After a while, it came to pass that Adam’s guardian angel came to the Lord and said, “Lord, Adam has become filled with pride. He struts and preens like a peacock and believes he’s worthy of adoration. Dog has indeed taught him that he’s loved, but perhaps too well.” And the Lord said, “I will create for him a companion who will be with him forever and will see him as he is. This companion will remind him of his limitations, so he will know that he’s not worthy of such adoration.” And God created Cat to be a companion to Adam. And Cat would not obey Adam. And when Adam gazed into Cat’s eyes, he was reminded that he’s not the supreme being. And Adam learned humility. And God was pleased. And Adam was greatly improved. And Dog was happy and wagged his tail. And Cat didn’t care one way or the other.

Now, back to the canon of Holy Scripture... Our Gospel reading today is a parable Jesus told that’s often interpreted as nothing more than a simple lesson in humility, because Jesus told this parable to those who were pridefully choosing the best seats at the table. He said, *“When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more*

*honorably than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:7-11).*

This parable is often seen only as a simple lesson in humility, and perhaps prudence, which in the context of our sermon this morning might be stated this way: When you've been invited to a great banquet and you're ready to choose a seat at the table, look at yourself from your cat's perspective. See yourself as you are. Humble yourself. And while we recognize truth in those statements, we must not to limit our understanding of what Jesus intends to teach us in this story, because this parable is not just a bit of good advice about humility. Instead, what we find in this parable is that obeying our Lord's command to go lower positions us to receive His invitation, *Friend, go up higher*. In other words, when we go lower by walking the Way of the Cross with Jesus, when we go lower by denying ourselves, taking up our own Cross, and following Him in a self-sacrificial life marked by "*faith working through love*" (Galatians 5:6), we are invited to enter into the highest place, the abundant life God has provided for His people through the precious death and glorious resurrection of His only Son our Lord.

Through this parable God is inviting us to enter into His Risen life, and yet His words that tell us, "*when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place...*" don't sound at all to our flesh like an invitation to go higher. In our culture we're taught that the high life, the abundant life is found at the front of the line, or at the head table. We live in a world where we see people, often literally, fighting for the best seats, reaching out to grab what they think they deserve, and therefore this command to come in, and choose to *sit down in the lowest place*, not only sounds very unappealing, from a worldly perspective it doesn't seem to make sense.

At this point it's important to remember, once again, that this parable isn't a simple lesson in humility, and this command to go lower isn't just a bit of good advice. We need to be mindful of Who is speaking these words. They weren't spoken by a great human teacher. If they were, then we could form

our own opinion on whether or not this is the best course of action, but the fact is that our Savior Christ spoke these words, and He is not just a great human teacher, He is our Lord and God, and His command to “*go and sit down in the lowest place,*” which from a worldly perspective doesn’t sound appealing or make sense, is in fact an invitation, to come up to the highest place.

To help us better understand that truth, let’s consider another passage of Scripture in which we find people contending for the best seats at the table. No doubt you’ll remember James and his brother John, those “*sons of thunder*” (Mark 3:17), approaching Jesus with this request, saying, “*Grant that one of us may sit at Your right hand and the other at Your left in Your glory*” (Mark 10:37). In James and John we see an example of two men contending, not only for the best seats, but for the best seats at the head table, and do you remember what our Lord said to them? He gathered His disciples, who had all been arguing amongst themselves about which one of them was the greatest, to men who all thought they deserved the best seat, Jesus said, “*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:25-28).

“*Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave,*” or in other words, “*When you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place.*”

Christians “*go and sit down in the lowest place,*” to the end that our Savior Christ, our Lord and God who invited us, may say to those He calls friends, “*Friend, go up higher.*” The command given in this parable is an invitation from Almighty God to come up to the highest place - by entering through the lowest.

But all too often instead of entering through the lowest place by sacrificially laying down our lives to love and serve others, many people, even in the Church, have grown accustomed to being served at the head table. Jesus told us that would happen in the world, but remember, He said, “*it shall not be so among you.*” We are those who are commanded to “*sit down in the lowest*

*place,*” to take up our “*cross daily*” (Luke 9:23), those who are called not to be served, but to serve, to lay down our lives for God by laying down our lives for the world He died to save.

The greatest example of One who came and sat down in the lowest place is our Savior Christ, and as Christians we are called to follow in the footsteps of our Lord by placing our feet where His were, and while walking the lowest path will certainly lead to difficulty and even painful self-sacrifice, we find peace and rest in the knowledge that His footsteps will lead us to the kingdom of God. His path, the lowest path, leads to the highest place. Our Lord calls us to the Cross, that He may lead us to His throne.