

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Fred Weimert "Just Happy to Be There"
August 29, 2010

I guess it's because

I was just at the wedding
of one of my nieces
last week end...

That today's gospel reading

took on a different meaning for me...
one I had not thought of before.

I had been asked

by my niece and her fiancée,
to officiate in their wedding celebration,
up in Rochester New York...

This wedding was the second family wedding
the second wedding of a niece...

I have conducted this summer,
and I already have two scheduled for next year.

I am not certain how much I like
my family minister role.

I am happiest when I know
that young people are actively involved in a Church family...

I think only one of these four wedding couples
is so affiliated...

But any way,

I went to the wedding and officiated,
And afterwards Judy and I went to the reception,
along with all our children.

We didn't have any trouble finding our seats,
because there was a table in the foyer
at the reception...

with little cards printed up
with everyone's name
and the table where they would be sitting.

So we all found our cards
and went to our table to sit down.

Now because Judy is the oldest of 7 children...

She and I were seated at a table
With her dad and his friend Rita...
and with Judy's next oldest sister and her husband,
and her oldest brother and his wife...

who happened to be the parents of the bride.
 And our children went to sit at a table with the cousins,
 which was fine with them.
 But you might say Judy and I had seats of honor...
 carefully assigned to us,
 by birth order...
 probably more than my role as "family minister."
 We were at a table
 right up front
 right next to the dance floor,
 and far away from the DJ's speakers...

But next to our table, right behind my chair
 there was a riser,
 and on top of it was a long table,
 with 12 chairs for members of the wedding party...
 and above that riser was another platform
 with a smaller table
 with seats for the Bride and Groom
 along with the Maid of Honor and Best Man.
 There were flowers and pillars
 up on top of this platform...
 It was obvious that this was the seat of honor.

Now I don't know what wedding customs were in Jesus' day
 I don't know if Jewish families,
 back then,
 hoisted the bride and groom's chairs up over head,
 and danced all over.
 but now a day,
 I don't think that I have ever been to any wedding
 where anyone
 in their right mind
 could have possibly made the mistake
 of sitting down in the seat of honor.
 Because at a wedding
 the seats of honor belong to the Bride and Groom
 and anyone foolish enough to attempt to sit there
 would probably be asked to leave the party...
 And I believe, just as certainly,
 no guest is going to be elevated
 to sit in those wedding seats of honor...
 because they are kind of assigned beforehand.

Luke is the only gospel writer to tell today's story,
 and he indicates that the story was told at a dinner party

in a Pharisees' house...

That's why we were assigned
the first verse of this chapter
to be read along with the parable.
so we would know
the venue for the parable.

Jesus was a guest for dinner

as he frequently was during his life time.

This time he was at a table in the home of a Pharisee...

which probably happened frequently.

People were watching him closely,
maybe it was because it was the Sabbath...
maybe they were concerned with hand washing
or other kosher issues...
or because he was famous...
or infamous...

who knows...

but Jesus was also watching his fellow guests:

looking to see how they went about choosing
where it was

that they would sit for dinner.

and in this reading

We are going to hear Jesus giving advice
to both guests and hosts...

about how to choose one's seat...

and how to decide on the guest list.

But I want you to especially notice

that the banquet the parable speaks of

is a wedding banquet...

in fact in the Greek text

the word banquet is not included...

it simply says:

*"When you are invited by someone
to a **wedding**."*

Luke 14: 1, 7 - 14

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.*

*When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor,
he told them a parable.*

*"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;
 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.*

*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.*

*For all who exalt themselves
 will be humbled,
 and those who humble themselves
 will be exalted."*

*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.*

*But when you give a banquet,
 invite the poor,
 the crippled,
 the lame,
 and the blind.
 And you will be blessed,
 because they cannot repay you,
 for you will be repaid
 at the resurrection of the righteous."*

Here ends the reading.

In the time
 at the end of the first century when Luke was writing this book...
 In that time
 probably after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem...
 when Jewish leaders
 who were looking for a scapegoat,
 for this ultimate desecration of the Holy of Holies,
 were now throwing Christians
 out of the synagogues...

In this time Luke
 may have taken a story of Jesus
 that related to great banquets...
 and turned it into a story about a wedding banquet...
 Just to help late first century people
 understand how absolutely preposterous it would be
 for any people to make the claim
 that they deserved the seat of honor
 at a wedding.

This may well echo the stories
 told by Matthew and Mark
 about John and James
 seeking to sit next to Jesus in his kingdom...
 But this story may well have been attacking Jewish claims
 of sole primacy...
 as God's beloved.

And in that light I would add
 that since the story was obviously teaching about humility...
 It might be good for us as Christians,
 who claim to be the bride of Christ...
 It might be good for us to be a little more humble.

It is also obvious that this story was once told
 not about a wedding banquet,
 but just a general banquet...
 where the seats of honor
 did not belong to a bride and groom...
 but were decided by the host.

The lessons being taught to both host and guest
 is not to do things
 which would show you to be a person
 concerned with personal aggrandizement...
 pride.
 The chair you chose
 the people you invited
 could show that your concern
 was prideful personal... self-promotional...

Our thoughts and service are to be to God:
 Isaiah wrote about this service
 and this humility
 in his 57th chapter
 "It shall be said,
 Buildup, build up, prepare the way,
 remove every obstruction from my people's way
 For thus says the high and lofty one

*who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
I dwell in the high and holy placed,
and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the humble,
and to revive the heart of the contrite.” Is. 57: 14-15*

Humility in service to God, mattered to Jesus!

Yesterday, most of you probably heard
about a march on Washington...

It was on the 47th anniversary
of Dr. King’s march on Washington.

Yesterday’s *“Restoring Honor”* march
was spearheaded by conservative talk show personality
Glenn Beck...

and it was well attended
probably more than 100,000 people.

Now, I don’t know how you feel about Glenn Beck.

I have my feelings about him
and what he stands for.

On one of the clips about the march

I heard him mention God
and God’s providence

in the day yesterdays event...

If Glenn Beck has become your spiritual leader

I would warn you that you are in danger.

On March 10th of this year,
on his radio program,

Mr. Beck made the following statement
about the Church:

*"I'm begging you,
your right to religion
and freedom to exercise religion
and read all of the passages of the Bible
as you want to read them
and as your church wants to preach them ...
are going to come under the ropes in the next year,"*

*"I beg you,
look for the words 'social justice'
or 'economic justice'
on your church Web site.
If you find it,
run as fast as you can.*

*Social justice and economic justice,
they are code words.*

Now, am I advising people to leave their church?

Yes!"

Let me tell you,
 That any church
 that is **not** talking about social justice
 or economic justice...
 The things that Dr. King lived and died for...
 that Jesus lived and died for...
 Any church that is not welcoming
 the poor,
 the crippled,
 the lame,
 and the blind.
 to their banquets...
 or responding with love
 to the needs of our neighbors...
 even and especially the last and the least.
 may well miss the resurrection of the righteous...
 or as Jesus put it in another place
 when he spoke of the coming
 of the Son of Man...
 People who show no love
 or no concern for human need...
 may well find themselves
 among the goats
 and not the sheep.

Humility does not necessitate our becoming
 powerless pawns
 of unscrupulous people.

Humility demands that we use
 the power and position that God has given to us
 to lighten the burdens of our brothers and sisters
 who bear the image of God
 just as we do...

We are to sit at table with them...
 in any open chair...
 just as Jesus did.

And we are to address the needs they have...
 physical,
 medical,
 economic,
 and spiritual...
 that keep them from the dreams of life
 and from discovering the gifts of God in them.

These are hard economic times...
 and they may well get harder.

And Jesus Christ will not be served by a people
whose only concern is
my own need
my self interests.
even simply my immediate families need...
Jesus is served by humble people
who live in harmony and steadfast love
for all people.
may we be such people...
even if that doesn't gain us wide
public adulation.
Amen.