

Trinity 17
Luke 14:1-11 (ESV)

A blessed 17th Sunday after Trinity to all of you, dear ones. So good to see all of you once again here in the house of God and to receive His gifts with one another.

Our Gospel text for today, I have to say, is one of the classic showdowns Jesus has with the Pharisees. And for my part, I think it's one of the most hostile and tense settings in which our Lord engages them prior to His trial and crucifixion. And what I want to focus on in my homily to you as we walk through this text today is the great futility of pride.

I. This was a very high profile event. Anyone who was someone among the Pharisees and the principal men of the people was at this festive dinner.

II. Jesus was invited. This was late in His ministry and by this point, the word was out among the Pharisees about Him--that He was, in a sense, teaching and engaging in lawlessness. This is because over and over again in the Gospels we find Jesus performing miracles on the Sabbath, which is supposed to be a day of rest, a day when no work is to be done. By and large, the Pharisees didn't like this because it clashed with what they believed to be right observance of the Sabbath and the Torah in general. And so, what's going on beneath the surface with this dinner at the house of a ruler among the Pharisees is a plot to trap Jesus.

III. Our text tells us that there was a man at the dinner with a condition called dropsy. We know it today as Edema--it's a swelling or build-up of fluid in the body's tissues, typically in the feet, ankles, and legs, and this would have made the man ritually unclean according to the Law of Moses. He would have to be healed of this condition before He could worship with the rest of God's people at the Temple. So you see how things have been set up. The Pharisees and principal men of the people all clamored for the seats of honor at this festive meal, and down the line, in a place of far less importance and prestige is the man with dropsy. This was all very deliberate, carefully orchestrated and planned. They knew that if Jesus presumed to try and take a seat of honor, they would all be able to scoff and shame him in front of everyone in this high profile event. Jesus would need to take his seat at the low end, the place where there's the least amount of honor at the table, the place where this man with dropsy was. Even more, though--and this is key--they wanted to set things up so that Jesus would heal this man on the Sabbath, so that all the principal men of the people could see Him for what He is--a teacher who does not keep Torah, who should not have any honor among the people. But they didn't see that they were pitting themselves against the Lord of the Sabbath. Going against Him is always a losing proposition, no matter what temporary gains someone thinks they have.

IV. Is it lawful...

Either way, they stand condemned. They could not reply to these things. With just two questions, Jesus had them completely undone. What is the proper response? Humility, but this is unacceptable for them. They would have to concede that they are inferior to Him, they'd have to lose their standing as highly respected men in the community, things which were going to happen eventually, but in the unrighteousness of their pride, they suppressed the truth. Reveals a

condition far more serious than dropsy--Jesus reveals to them that they are swollen with pride, a condition that ultimately will profit them nothing.

V. It's easy for us to just shake our heads at these Pharisees and lawyers for not humbling themselves before the Lord Jesus, but it's not as easy as it seems. Learning humility is not so easy for those in our own society today who are swollen with pride, who imagine themselves more learned and knowledgeable about what is good and right and who set themselves against God and His holy Word but still think they have the moral high ground. In their pride, they suppress the truth. How will they answer our Lord in the judgment "Is it lawful to dismember a child in the womb? Is it lawful to mutilate a child with so-called gender affirming care? Is it lawful to demonize white people as the epitome and source of all evil?" No, dear ones. But this is something that people who've set themselves in opposition to God in their pride cannot accept. They'd have to rethink their whole understanding of what is good and right. They'd have to acknowledge that they were wrong and that the Lord knows better than they do. And for those who are swollen with pride, this is a losing proposition. But how will they answer when they are met face to face with our Lord in judgment? What will they say? Flee pride, dear ones, like the deadly plague it is. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled. There's no escaping this; there's no escaping the futility of pride. But whoever humbles himself will be exalted. This is because the place of humility is where Jesus is.

VI. Turn then in humility to Him. Turn away from pride to embrace our humble Lord Jesus. He counted even equality with God not a thing to be grasped but humbled Himself on the cross for our redemption. And He will lift you up in glory in the end.

To Christ be all the glory forever and ever. Amen.