

## The Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity Sunday Gospel Meditation

*The Holy Gospel According to St. Luke; Chap. 14 Vss. 1 – 11*  
( BCP – Pgs. 213 – 214)

*Jesus heals a man sick of the dropsy on the Sabbath day and rebukes the Pharisees for seeking always the first places at table.*

Today's Gospel account presents us with an interesting scenario in the life of our Lord. Jesus is invited to a meal held by one of the pharisees on the Sabbath-day. Was this done out of a sense of hospitality...hardly. St. Luke tells us that the pharisees were "watching" Jesus. There are, of course many ways to be "watching" someone. Some can watch with *indifference*; others can watch with *suspicion, envy, and hate*; and still others can watch with *love and longing*. The pharisees definitely do not fall in the latter category.

In the dining room there is a visibly sick man. He watches Christ too, *with hope and desire*. Perhaps the pharisees have invited this man for their own purposes. Jesus has healed on the Sabbath before...perhaps He might do it again...and that act would strengthen their case against Him, or so they think. Initially, it appears that our Lord has taken their "bait" and has walked into their trap when He asks: *"Is it lawful to cure on the Sabbath?"* They are silent. What answer could they give that wouldn't expose their hatred and envy? Jesus has a choice; He can relieve the sick man of his suffering or refrain and placate the hypocrites. There is no doubt of Christ's decision...He heals.

Then, our Lord gives His reasons...beginning with a "common sense" example: *"Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day?"* The pharisees should be able to figure out the implications to this question.

The Sabbath-day is for God's glory. But it is inconceivable that there be any conflict between God's glory and a sick man being made whole. Fact is, that the pharisees are not much interested in God...nor the Sabbath...nor beasts or men; but only in their gratification of their hatred of Jesus. Truly, what a terrible way for anyone to live!

Jesus, isn't done with them. He finds other evidence of their self-seeking: He notes particularly their preference for prominent places at table, and He reads them a lesson in courtesy that is simultaneously a solid directive for spiritual development.

He says to them; do not go putting themselves right away at the first places at table when going to a banquet. They might get themselves replaced by someone who is of a higher social rank, and then they will be embarrassed and shamed in the sight of everyone there. Rather, Jesus instructs: *"Go and sit down at the lowest place; that when, he that bade thee cometh, may say unto thee: Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee: for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbeleth himself shall be exalted."*

### Humility

How well our Blessed Lord knows mankind and all our petty weaknesses and ambitions! To be at the head of the table, ( or always be noticed by the public, or frequent mention of our accomplishments, etc.) ... what ambition and *selfishness*! It would appear that feeding one's vanity is more important than feeding the body ( although there are those who try to do both ! ) But that's the

way *we all are*, at one time or another ( it's not just about the pharisees!), in spite of Christ's Word and example and the truth of His Words which we so often learn by sad and hard experience.

The pharisees never seem to profit much from the corrections and admonitions of our Lord. We would do well not to be smug and scornful of them however, for twenty-one centuries later...we do no better than they. Our humanity has remained much the same even after so many centuries, making the lessons every bit as relevant. Perhaps we don't take Jesus seriously, either. He tells us that humility is a fundamental virtue for our happiness and our spiritual growth. He is humble. His Blessed Mother Mary is humble. St. Joseph was humble. All the Saints have been humble: *indeed...there is no holiness without humility.* WE MUST BE HUMBLE.

What is it that we can do about our lack of success in being what Christ is? There is the lovely story about St. Therese of Lisieux, who used to ask Our Lord to practice *Charity* in her since she was having so much trouble being charitable with her sisters. Blessed Jesus, if it is so with *charity*, why not also with *humility*? Let us ask Christ to *be humble in us*.

Christ is our life and our hope. Let Him also be our love and humility.

*“ Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I will call daily upon thee : for thou, O Lord, art good and gracious, and of great mercy unto all them that call upon thee. “ -Psalm 86 Vss 3-5.*

*“ Bow down thy ear O Lord and hear me : for I am poor and in misery” -ibid.*

***Prayer for the Day:***

**He who humbles himself shall be exalted.**



*St. Therese of Lisieux (center) doing the weekly laundry with her religious sisters. Her charity and humility was frequently tested by certain sisters who splashed her often during this chore. Even great saints had to bear up with their basic humanity!*

- Fr. k.l.l. +