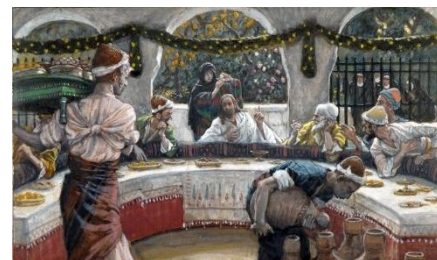


Sunday 28th August 2022

Prepared by Rev Jo Jacobs

'Exalted or Humbled'



The theme for this act of worship is social justice and the attitudes to ourselves in relation to others, in our own eyes, and in the eyes of God.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Everyone who exalts themselves will be humbled, and whoever humbles themselves will be exalted. Come, now, in humility, to worship.

HYMN STF 499 Great God, your love has called us here

1 Great God, your love has called us here,
as we, by love for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind
your call to hear, your love to find.

2 We come with self inflicted pains
of broken trust and chosen wrong,
half free, half bound by inner chains,
by social forces swept along,
by powers and systems close confined
yet seeking hope for human kind.

3 Great God, in Christ you call our name
and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right or claim,

but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.

4 Then take the towel, and break the bread,
and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

5 Great God, in Christ you set us free
your life to live, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do
while love is making all things new.

PRAYER

God of all, we come as guests to a party, at your invitation, bringing our gifts as tokens of our love.
God of all, we sit in your presence, at your invitation, respectful of your majesty.
God of all, we rest in your love, at your invitation, seeking to find our place in your purposes.
Welcome us, God of all, reassure us and renew us, for we come as we have been called. **Amen.**

READING Luke 14: 1, 7 – 14

REFLECTION 'Exalted or humbled'

We were invited to a 40th Wedding anniversary lunch, and found when we arrived that we had been seated with strangers. I was apprehensive and a little disappointed, but it turned out to be an interesting and unexpected pleasure. When we host a celebratory meal we usually invite our nearest and dearest, close friends and family – people with whom we want to share a special occasion.

Jesus is invited to a society meal, but are not told whether he is counted as a friend of the host, who incidentally is the leader of the Pharisees – hardly his nearest and dearest, especially when we are told that that 'they', presumably the leaders henchmen, were watching Jesus closely. So this invitation turns out to be an opportunity to trip him up or catch him out, but Jesus turns that opportunity on its head – in fact, he

turns out to be, some might say, a very rude guest, because he chastises those who have chosen the best seats, and instructs the host on whom to invite to his next meals. However, the wary Pharisees are stunned to silence.

Go to any dinner that has allocated places and you can tell at once the association or the relationship of the guests to the host, but at this meal, the guests choose their seat according to the guests' opinion of themselves and not by their hosts' decision. Jesus has something to say about that 'For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted' This saying is what literary critics call a polar reversal. It's not just that the exalted will be humbled – we know that from Job, nor is it that the humbled will be exalted, we know that from Joseph. This is a complete reversal of those who exalt or humble themselves. So when the north pole becomes the south pole and vice versa, the world is overturned, which of course, is just what Jesus is about – radical change of attitude.

This radical change continues though. When did we last invite a stranger to our table? If we are honest, we invite people to a meal at our house who we know, or love, or someone we owe a meal to and so are returning their kindness and hospitality.

Jesus suggests to his host, that next time he puts on a dinner, he should invite those who can't repay him, the poor, the disabled, the blind, in actual fact, by Jewish law, those that are unclean. As one writer puts it, 'Jesus urges a social system without reciprocity.' Marginalized people then become part of a group. They are no longer outside the social circle.

Jesus was a disturbing, even rude guest at this dinner party, but his presence and words open up the way for the Kingdom of God.

Makes you think, doesn't it?

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, we remember with shame, the times we have exalted ourselves above others and especially above you. The times we have counted our opinions or decisions more valid than those of others, and especially when we have not sought your guidance and direction in our decision making. We are sorry that we have carried with us a spirit of discouragement and disregard for others, and have forgotten our neighbour, through ignorance, weakness, or our own deliberate fault. We are sorry and repent of our sins.

We are thankful, Lord, that through your infinite mercy, we find forgiveness. Hear then the word of grace, 'Your sins are forgiven'. Amen.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN STF 362 Meekness and majesty

Meekness and majesty
Manhood and deity
In perfect harmony
The Man who is God

Lord of eternity
Dwells in humanity
Kneels in humility
And washes our feet

Oh what a mystery
Meekness and majesty
Bow down and worship
For this is your God
This is your God

Father's pure radiance
Perfect in innocence

Yet loves obedience
To death on a cross

Suffering to give us life
Conquering through sacrifice
And as they crucified,
pray's "Father forgive"

Oh what a mystery
Meekness and majesty
Bow down and worship
For this is your God
This is your God

Wisdom unsearchable
God the invisible
Love indestructible
In frailty appears

Lord of infinity
Stopping so tenderly
Lifts our humanity to
the heights of His throne

Oh what a mystery
Meekness and majesty
Bow down and worship
For this is your God
This is your God
This is your God

PRAYERS (based on Hebrews 13: 3, 16)

We remember those in prison, as if we were there with them:

Those imprisoned for their beliefs, those imprisoned unjustly, those imprisoned for the wrong they have done. May we never neglect to show kindness.

We remember those caught up in conflict, as if we were there with them: those fleeing persecution, and seeking shelter far from home, those living day to day in the midst of terror, those trapped in loveless relationships. May we never neglect to show kindness

We remember those in need as if we were there with them: those struggling to make ends meet, those who go to bed hungry every night, those deprived of clean water to drink and wash with. May we never neglect to show kindness. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN STF 35 The trumpets sound, the angels sing

The Trumpets Sound, The Angels Sing
The Feast Is Ready To Begin
The Gates Of Heaven Are Open Wide
And Jesus Welcomes You Inside

Tables Are Laden With Good Things
Oh Taste The Peace And Joy He Brings
He'll Fill You Up With Love Divine
He'll Turn Your Water Into Wine

Sing With Thankfulness
Songs Of Pure Delight
Come And Revel In Heaven's Love And Light
Take Your Place At The Table Of The King
The Feast Is Ready To Begin
The Feast Is Ready To Begin

The Hungry Heart He Satisfies
Offers The Poor His Paradise
Now Hear All Heav'n And Earth Applaud
The Amazing Goodness Of The Lord

Sing With Thankfulness
Songs Of Pure Delight
Come And Revel In Heaven's Love And Light
Take Your Place At The Table Of The King
The Feast Is Ready To Begin
The Feast Is Ready To Begin

Jesus, Jesus, We Thank You, We Thank You
For Your Love, For Your Love
For Your Joy, For Your Joy
Jesus, Jesus, We Thank You, We Thank You
For The Good Things, For The Good Things
You Give To Us, You Give To Us

Sing With Thankfulness
Songs Of Pure Delight
Come And Revel In Heaven's Love And Light
Take Your Place At The Table Of The King
The Feast Is Ready To Begin
The Feast Is Ready To Begin

BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may he make his face to shine upon you , be gracious unto you, and give you peace. Amen.