

## 17th Sunday after Trinity, October 9, 2022

**Readings:** Proverbs 25: 6-14, Ephesians 4: 1-6, Luke 14: 1-11

### ***Whoever Humbles Himself Will Be Exalted***

*“Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence”* (Prov. 25:6–14). Rather, take the lowest position at the table. Humble yourself before Him. For your place is not for you to take but for Him to give. Conduct yourself with all lowliness and gentleness, bearing with one another in love (Eph. 4:1–6), that the King may give you glory in the presence of those at the table with you. *“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (Luke 14:1–11). Is this not the way of Christ? He is the one who took the lowest place, who humbled Himself even to the point of death for us. He is now exalted to the highest place at the right hand of the Father that penitent believers may be exalted together with Him in the resurrection. To the humble at His Supper He says, *“Friend, move up higher,”* giving you His very body and blood for your forgiveness that you may ascend to take part in the great wedding feast which has no end.

### **Sermon Transcript:**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The third verse of that hymn:

"By grace, God's Son, our only Savior, came down to earth to bear our sin.

Was it because of your own merit that Jesus died, your soul to win?"

And the answer to that question is "No." It was not because of your merit. There is nothing that we have that would bring God to come to us based upon who we are and what we've done. We don't like to admit it, but Scripture makes it very clear that all have sinned and fall short to the glory of God. And we have no merit within us that God would bother to come and send His Son. And yet we know that He did send His Son. So why in the world did He do it? Because God, in His nature, is love and He created us, and therefore in spite of the fact that we have rebelled against Him, that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, in spite of all that, He still loves us enough that He wants to bring us into His family. Only we are resisting left, right, and center. And so, He has to do all the work. So He sent His Son to die for us and then bring us into the family through the one faith, the one Lord, the one baptism, the one God and Father of all. God sent His Son to redeem the world and we are brought into the family, given the benefits of that death through our baptism. And it is only the result of God's action of adopting us, that we have the hope of eternal life, that we have the blessings that God loves us. And so, we are called in these passages that we've read today, in the Proverbs passage especially and in the Gospel, to be humble, to consider ourselves not worthy of the calling upon which we have been given, that we are not worthy to be called sons and daughters of God, and yet by His grace we are. And along with that humility is also an exhortation to watch your tongue. Because let's face it, how many times does this thing get us in trouble? How many times do we say something before we think? And once the words are out of our mouth, we realize I should not have said that, and now I can't take it back. So part of being humble is recognizing that our words are just as important as our actions. What we say is as important as what we do. And so, we are called to what? Guard our mouths. And to guard our actions so that what we do, and say, and speak are pleasing to God. But that starts out by recognizing that, let's face it, there's not a whole lot that we really need to say. I mean, what is the phrase? If you don't have anything good to say about anybody, don't

say anything at all. But here God even takes it even further. A word fitly spoken is like apples and gold. A wise approver to a listening ear values the reproof. The cold of snow, which we probably don't understand too much here in Florida, but the cold of snow is a blessing to the faithful messenger who sends it. It's a relief. Well, much like the cooler weather that we're moving into, it's a relief to those who receive it. In other words, we have the ability through the way that we speak to be a blessing to those that we speak to, or to cause problems, and heartache, and struggle. So we are called in our humility to recognize that God is the one that needs to speak through us, not us speaking for ourselves. In other words, as we humbly sit before God, recognizing that we have no merit or worthiness within us, that only those things which are pleasing to God ought to be spoken in this world, to guard our tongues so that when we go and serve, or do other things, people look at our actions and they see that our actions match our words, or that our words match our actions.

How many people do you know that are full of bluster? They got a lot of wonderful things. They say all sorts of amazing things, and yet they do nothing? Or they do the right things, but the way they speak is so awful that you don't want to even be around them? We want our actions and our words to match. And both of those come by recognizing that God is the one that works in us and through us to filter our brains and our words so that the words that come out are pleasing to Him and of benefit to our neighbor. How often do we get in trouble because we share something that we ought not to have shared? Or we say something, we pass judgment before we know all of the facts? The Scripture is filled with these ideas of consider others more valuable than yourself. Even when we're dealing with sin and confronting people, it says take the log out of your own eye before you take the splinter out of your brother's eye. In other words, dwell on your own sin and work on that. Let's face it, we all have a lot of material to work with. So dwell on our own sin and seek the righteousness of God in our own lives before we go seeking to tell other people how they should live and what they should do.

We have a great opportunity right now to share the blessings of Christ to those around us. There's the hurricane, and the flooding, and everything that happened has really devastated a lot of lives. And we, in our humility, we thank God that we had the grace that the hurricane did not hit us directly. But it didn't miss us because we are somehow holier than the people south of us. It could have been us just as much as them. But this is an opportunity for us to recognize that in our humility, it could be any one of us that faces any trial and any struggle in our lives, be it a hurricane or a flood, or a diagnosis of a terminal illness, or a loss of a job, or destruction of your finances, or whatever the case might be. The trials and tribulations of this world affect all of us. And in our humility, we recognize that there's nothing that we can do about it, but we walk in faith, trusting that God will give us all good things and that we are to share all of those good things with those around us.

Now, a lot of times, especially when hurricanes and natural disasters come, we think of all the good things. We think of the money, and the food, and the other things, the physical things to give them. And those are great and good, but what is more important is the love of God that comes with those gifts. The love of God, which declares we are giving out of the love that Christ has for us, knowing that it could be us. That all of us, them and us, we all deserve death. And the fact that we are alive is a gift of God.

And so in humility, we recognize that everything that we have, and everything that we own, and everything that we are is from God. And it is our duty to thank and praise Him for that, and then to serve and obey Him. You notice that Paul in many of his epistles and many of his writings reminds them that he's a prisoner for the

Lord. And yet he never wants anybody to have pity on him. But he rejoices in the fact that he gets to suffer for his Lord. Because in his humility, he realizes he doesn't deserve anything. Any gift that he gets is from God and is a blessing, including his imprisonment. It's a little bit of a stretch for me to think about, but he was able to share the Gospel to a variety of people that he never would've come in contact with had he not been put in prison. He was able to share and encourage people who were going through hard times by declaring he also had gone through very difficult times, and God was with him and God is with them as well.

See, in our humility, we realize that everything, the good and the bad, are gifts from God, if we understand it from the proper perspective. Because ultimately we know that this world is temporary. The things that we have are not going to last. They're going to rust. They're going to rot. They're going to be destroyed. I mean, the hurricane made that very clear. The things of this world are not everlasting, but you and I are. So let us focus on doing good to one another, to speaking good to one another, so that our words and our actions may match the love of Christ for us to each other. How do we love God? One of the primary ways is by loving our neighbor. We first receive His wonderful gifts in the Divine Service, and then from the riches of this blessing of the Divine Service, we then go seek to serve one another.

Inevitably in my catechism classes, I have a question come up one time or another. It says, do we have to go to church? And I usually answer no, which shocks them. Probably shocks you as well that I said that. No, you don't have to go to church. But church is the place where God is promised to be especially present. Where God is especially promised to give His gifts of the forgiveness of sins. When you confess them, the pastor declares your sins are forgiven, and they are forgiven by God. You come before the table and you receive the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. You're reminded of your baptism where He adopted you as your family. You get to fellowship with fellow believers who love you and care for you, who understand the love of God, and who are there to walk along with you in your trials and struggles, and to pray for you. So no, you don't have to, but why in the world would you not want to? These marvelous gifts are yours for the taking, and He gives them freely. But He also wants you to remember that these gifts that you have been given are meant to be shared, are meant to be given out to everyone, because God doesn't just love us. He loves all people. Everybody in this world is loved by God. And so, therefore, we are called to love everybody in this world.

So let us be encouraged by the great love of God and the gifts that He has given to us to serve our fellow man. Not just for the month or two after the hurricane when everybody remembers it, but all times. Maybe not as miraculously or as concentrated as all the relief effort that's going on now, but every day, in every way, in every interaction is an opportunity for us to love each other and to share that gift that He has given to us. Let us never cease or get tired of doing good to one another, because God certainly has never ceased in His desire to do good for you and me. He has given us all things, life everlasting, hope in the midst of trial and terror and tribulation, and confidence that even though we face death, we have received the greatest gift of all, life everlasting with Him. And therefore, we do not need to be afraid. Whether we be thrown in prison like Paul, whether we receive that illness, or whether we lose everything, does not matter. We have everything that we need, Christ, our Lord and Savior. Walk humbly in that faith, trusting Him to care for and provide for you so that you can share and care for those around you.

May His grace, mercy, and peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.