

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity
8 October, Anno Domini 2017
St. Luke 14:1-11
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

None of us is special. We are not unique. We all struggle with sin and we all need the same Christ. "There is one Body of Christ and one Spirit. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..." Neither your gifts nor your failures make you different than anyone else. The gifts and abilities you have been blessed with aren't about you. God didn't bestow them upon you for you. You aren't skilled so that you can make a better life for yourself. Your talents aren't given to you so that you can chase after the praises and adoration of others. You have gained absolutely nothing if people remember you, if people tell you how wonderful you are, if people think you're brilliant and love all your Facebook posts.

All that you have, the Lord God has given to you so that you would use for the benefit of others, so that you would enrich the lives of others and glorify the God who made you both. You aren't better or more Christian because you don't struggle with pornography or you don't have a fiery hot temper. Strengthen and encourage those who do and draw them to the Christ who bears with your own pride and vanity. Because you have more time and resources to devote to volunteering doesn't mean you love God more than your neighbor who is struggling to keep things at home from falling apart. Instead of guiltting them, offer to help them and don't demand of them things that God hasn't. We each have more than enough guilt to burden our conscience without adding fake guilt over things God never commanded.

In the same way, your sins make you just like everyone else because everyone else has them - nothing new under the sun, no temptation that is not common to all of us. You may feel that they are worse because you are the one wrestling with them. They probably weigh like an impossible weight around your neck, threatening at every step to drag you into the fires of eternal judgment. Everyone else's life seems so glossy and clean as you look out. But they aren't. They are trying just as desperately to keep their heads above water. We are all wearing masks, too afraid to let down the guard because we think the ugliness within is unlike anyone on

heaven or on earth has ever seen. And when someone's defenses do crack and their weaknesses are exposed, we smile, we puff out our chest a little, and we give thanks to God that we aren't like them.

Your sins are no worse. They are no more grievous or offensive. You aren't the one who finally devised a thought or action so disgusting or heinous that it simply couldn't be nailed to the cross with God's Son.

Repent. You are no different than anyone else sitting around you here today. You have talents. So do they. You work hard. So do they. Your life is a mess. So is theirs. You are a wretched sinner. So are we all. Every last one of us. If we don't see it, we are deceiving ourselves and calling God a liar. If that's the only thing we see, we are robbing the Lord Jesus Christ of the glory due Him for His atoning sacrifice. Either way, to idolize either your goodness or your wickedness, is to worship a false God and to refuse the invitation to the Lamb's wedding feast. God is as equally unimpressed with the soaring heights of your piety, your health, or your smarts as he is by the endless depths of your depravity, your struggles, or your hurts. All are alike before the highest. What are we when standing in the presence of God? We are but as the grass which is here today and gone tomorrow. The fate of your family, your community, and your country are in no way dependent upon you. The Lord cares no less for someone because you failed to pray for them than he care more for them because you do. He cares for them because He loves them, regardless of you.

And He loves you too. He loves you in and because of Christ. He loves you because He created you and wants you to be the recipient of His goodness. He invites you to His feast because He wants to make you something and give you something, not because you are something already. You are. You are dead. You are lost. You are hurting. You are broken. But no more and no less than anyone else. Only sinners like us could find a way to try to get the best seat in the Lord's kingdom. Jesus has already given to you, to everyone of us, when He baptized us and clothed us in the rich raiment of His own righteousness.

God doesn't need you to boast about anything. He doesn't need you to be smart or famous. He doesn't need you to win awards or cure cancer. He gave you what you have and made you who you are and He elected you to salvation in Christ before the foundations of the world were ever laid. He will accomplish His work for you and He will accomplish exactly what He

desires to accomplish through you. Perhaps the greatest freedom any of us can know is to realize that God doesn't want you to be special, to change the world, to accomplish great things. He wants to be your great thing, the deepest desire of your heart. He wants you to find your joy in Christ, who laid down His life for you, who cast all of your sin into the depth of the sea. There isn't anything you can do or be that Christ has not already done for you. And if He hasn't given it to you, rejoice because it wouldn't be good if He did. It is He who made you and you are His! You are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

The Lord doesn't need your works. You need His. Cast away your pride and the idol of your sin. Come and receive that which God takes the greatest pleasure in, Jesus Christ, given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins.