

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

**GOOD SEATS DON'T GIVE YOU GOOD STANDING,
BUT GOD'S STANDING GIVES YOU GOOD SEATS**

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Mark Marius

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. 7When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 8When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 9and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 10But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 11For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

12He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

DIAGNOSIS: You Are Where You Sit

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Wanting a Seat*

We all like to sit. We get tired of standing after too long so we are constantly looking for places to sit. And often times it's not just looking for a seat but looking for good seats. Better seats. The best place to sit. It often becomes competitive and many times at a cost for premium seating. And many times we are willing to pay for good seat because we value the rewards that go with them. Not only does it cost us, but it also costs those that can't sit where we are now sitting. It puts them at disadvantage. Maybe they couldn't afford these seats or maybe they arrived to the party too late, at any rate, in our world of musical chairs there are always people left out.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Wanting to be Seen*

Good seats often give one a better view. But being able to see is a two way street because it also allows you to be seen. And that motivates us just as much. We want to be seen to be counted. We know that sitting in key spots may give us an advantage. We may capitalize on being counted with the elite. We may gain unique opportunities. And so our hearts become covetous, envious, and selfish. Soon we no longer see who we are stepping on or climbing over just to secure our place at the table. We don't trust that we will be recognized if we allow ourselves to sit in the back of the room.

Step 3: Advanced Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Wanting Honor*

Being recognized is what honor is all about. Honor always comes from the outside. We seek it from others—our peers, our bosses, and our God. However, our attempt to receive honor is contrary to very laws God gives us. No longer are we loving God and

neighbor, but instead caught up where we sit based on our own accomplishments. Even if we are able to hold God's law in such high esteem we end up displacing the very God who bestows honor. That means that God will displace us from his very kingdom, which is the worst place to sit.

PROGNOSIS: Jesus Stands for You No Matter Where You Are

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Giving Honor*

The good news is that Jesus does throw a banquet and invites all of us who cannot repay him (v. 12). And he does it by giving us the seats of honor as he takes the seat of ultimate despising—the cross. Jesus trusted that God saw Jesus no matter where he was or roamed. In fact we hear God's voice (at Jesus's baptism, transfiguration) confirming that. And Jesus' resurrection confirms that God saw Jesus all the way through death, to hell, and honored him with new life. That new life is given to all of us regardless of where we were sitting. So now, we are in good standing. We are righteous (v. 14)

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Seeing Where We Stand*

Which is what God's love and grace does for us—it allows us to get back on our feet. We can't just sit there anymore. Through our baptism we stand in God's good graces. Receiving God's forgiveness allows us the repentance to turn and go in a new direction. Partaking of Holy Communion, we rise from kneeling refreshed and renewed. We are confident that God not only sees us where we are, but is working in us through the Holy Spirit to take us away from the table to places unknown.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Offering the Best Seats to Others*

So we are compelled to go and invite others to receive the same

honor God bestows on us. We go to the forgotten places where there are no seats that we may call destitute. And we go to the places that the world may call the best seats in the house—seats of power, and influence, and advantage in order to remind them that God has better seats for them. In God's kingdom there are seats of honor for everyone.