

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 17
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Luke 14:1, 7-14

Even on a sultry summer day, the wind of the Spirit hovers — almost imperceptibly. Our lives rarely accommodate a slower pace for the summer. Yet, we are invited to notice, again, the priorities that drive us. We are invited to stop, however briefly, the manic activity and consider options Jesus offers us.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

What is true hospitality? Is it inviting to dinner all those you are in with, and who will then be obligated to invite you to dinner? What if true hospitality were inviting those who would really be blessed, those in no position to return the favor? And what might the well-to-do people at the dinner table with Jesus have thought of this radical etiquette?

Theme: The exalted humbled; the humble exalted

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture or enough copies of the Bible.

Beginning: Remind the group that we read these scripture passages with 20/20 hindsight. We know that Jesus accepted death on a cross and made possible the Resurrection, a whole new hope for living. As we read today's passage, aware of this new thing God is doing in our lives, let us try also to identify with those who were stunned hearing the story for the first time. Then we can look at what it says to us now.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for your gentleness and patience with us as we try to understand what it is you call us to do. Help us to humble ourselves and remember our place on this earth. Amen.

The Scripture: There really are two separate stories within this passage about New Testament etiquette. We will look at them separately

First story: Luke 14:1, 7-11 Invite someone to read the first part of the scripture for today.

Questions:

- Who is giving this party, which we can assume was an elegant affair? (a leader of the Pharisees.)
- I wonder how we would characterize the Pharisees? (At their best they helped people stay true to their religion, at their worst, they could get bogged down in nit picking.)
- What did Jesus "notice" as the guests assembled? (That there was obvious scrambling for the best seat in the house.)
- What did Jesus do? (He told them a "parable." A parable will have elements with which people are familiar. If we assume this group was well acquainted with scripture, they would have recognized what Jesus was telling them — a quote from Proverbs 25: 6-7)
- I wonder how you might paraphrase verse 11 in your own words?

Second story: Luke 14:12-14 Invite another person to read the second half of the story.

Questions:

- I wonder what stands out for you in this portion of the story?
- This story is told to one person only. Who is that person? (12a)
- I wonder if this story would be told differently today?
- I wonder what this story says to you?

Option: Speculation on the Story:

Invite the group to have a discussion (no one is right or wrong, but invite all to share their view points) around these questions.

Was Jesus implying that leaders should have higher standards or was he only addressing the person who had created the situation? Does what Jesus said apply to us as we plan parties? Does it only pertain to what we do as a church? (You might also see James 2: 2-4)

Who are the people in our community that do not get invited to banquets that we would include if we were to give a party such as Jesus suggests here? (Help the group to notice with you those who tend to be "invisible." Could be the homeless, those who stand on street corners holding cardboard signs, less visible people like single parents one pay check away from homelessness, those without jobs, people from a different part of town, etc.)

Do we think Jesus' intent was to make us feel guilty if we invite a few friends over for a backyard cookout? (Probably not. But what might be the implications for the times we gather as a community in Jesus' name?)

Getting Closure: Discuss how we can balance the massive needs in our community with our responsibilities to our own families. In a perfect world we would share more equitably. What can we do right here and now?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you invite us to stretch and grow in your love. Help us to remember to invite all of your children of God into our banquets. Amen.

Luke 14:1, 7-14

14 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. 7 When Jesus noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 8 ‘When 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; 9 and 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. 10 But 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. 11 For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

12 Jesus 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. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’

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