



Sermon, August 31, 2025

Luke 14:1;7-14.

Humility and Generosity.

1. If we humble ourselves, we will be exalted.

2. Generosity without expectation:

In Tanzania, when a child is baptized or confirmed, it's common for family and community members to come together to celebrate. The child's parents typically invite friends, local leaders, and prominent individuals. At the event, seating is typically arranged in three sections: the VVIP area (Very Very Important Persons, also known as the high table), the VIP section (Very Important Persons), and a general area for all other invited and uninvited guests. When guests arrive, they don't sit by themselves. Instead, they wait for someone to guide them to their assigned section.

I remember one confirmation ceremony in a village where a local politician arrived and, without waiting, he went straight to the high table. The Master of Ceremonies (MC) noticed but he felt too intimidated to say anything, so he quietly informed the homeowner.

Everyone was seated and waiting for the pastor to begin with a prayer. Just as the pastor stood up, the homeowner interrupted to ask the politician to move to a different seat. Embarrassed and feeling disrespected, the politician stood up and left the event. "The high table had been reserved for specific distinguished guests, and he was not one of them."

Luke 14:8. Jesus says, "When attending a feast, don't seek the place of honor, or you may be embarrassed if you are asked to move for someone more distinguished than you."

Instead of seeking the highest place, choose a humble seat. Then, you may be honored when someone invites you to take on a more senior role. Jesus says those who exalt themselves will be humbled, but those who humble themselves will be exalted.

True humility isn't the same as humiliation; it's about putting others before ourselves. Jesus showed us this kind of humility when He left His heavenly throne to come to earth. He gave up His place in glory to live among us and ultimately died for all of humanity.

Ideas that can get us fired: Generosity without expectation.

Luke 14:12. Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid."

This sounds like something you'd pitch in a meeting under the "Ideas That Can Get You Fired" agenda item. Jesus is not afraid to say the things that can get you "fired" socially, religiously, or politically.

Jesus teaches that when you host a meal, don't limit your invitation to those who can repay you, like friends, relatives, or the wealthy. Instead, invite those who cannot return the favor: the poor, the disabled, and the marginalized. Many of them don't even have homes, let alone the means to host a feast.

To be clear, Jesus isn't saying you shouldn't invite your family or well-off friends, but rather, don't invite only those who can repay you. True generosity expects nothing in return.

- **Are there disabled persons in our city who face barriers to inclusion, mobility, or access to basic services? Do we recognize the presence of marginalized groups in our community, people who may feel unheard, unseen, or unwelcome due to their race, culture, income, language, mental health, or past circumstances?**

These questions are not merely rhetorical. They call us to open our eyes, soften our hearts, and examine the ways we might be called to respond. Because if we believe Christ is present in the 'least of these,' then we must also believe He is found in our neighbors who suffer in silence, in isolation, or in need.

- ❖ **The real challenge is not whether these individuals exist among us, but whether we are willing to see them truly, listen to them, and love them as Jesus would.**

At Grace Lutheran, your active faith shines through the many ministries you lead, from local efforts like Willing Workers and the Little Free Food Pantry to global outreach through the blanket ministry and the service of the Lydia/Martha Circle, Men's group, Hope Ministries—all reflecting your strong commitment to serving others.

You're also making a powerful impact globally through your support of Lutheran World Relief and Empower Tanzania, especially in the Musindo and Mararo Parishes. Through all these efforts, your actions beautifully reflect God's love, Grace, and Mercy."

Jesus teaches that even when others can't repay us, God will reward us in the resurrection. Just as Jesus humbled Himself out of love, we are also called to give and serve with love.

People of God: True humility is not the same as humiliation, and True generosity expects nothing in return.

Amina (Amen).

Vicar Lotegeluaki