

## **“Humble, Loved, Enough”**

Hebrews 13:1-6; Luke 14:1, 7-14 – Rev. Rebecca Littlejohn  
Vista La Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), La Mesa, California – August 31, 2025

*Holy God, bless the speaking and the hearing of these words, that we might know your love  
to the depths of our souls. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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Do people have dinner parties these days? I feel like it might be a dying art. People work so much and often not on similar schedules. With food restrictions, it can get complicated to design a menu that works for everyone. Getting the house ready for company is a chore too, so if you want to get together, it just seems easier to eat out. Those are pressures enough, but this story we heard from Luke makes it seem like dinner parties in Jesus' day were a whole other level of stressful. Is there a seating chart? Is it a secret? Would you know the guest list ahead of time? Would you know how you fit into that guest list? If certain people are supposed to sit in certain places, why don't they tell you that when you arrive? Why do I have to guess where I should go, and risk being humiliated if I get it wrong?

Society in Jesus' day was shaped by strict hierarchies, and the dinner party scenario he was describing was part of that. The patronage system dictated who invited whom and who repaid whom with a later invitation versus who was now on the hook for whatever favor your former host might need later. It was a highly status-conscious set-up, with people constantly vying for honor and privilege.

So you can imagine what happened when a chaos-agent like Jesus came to dinner! On the one hand, he was getting pretty famous, so you might want to give him the seat of honor. On the other hand, he didn't even have a home to invite you back to, so his status couldn't be that high. Plus, it turns out that if you invite him to dinner, he's going to critique your guest list, your seating arrangement, and your motives! This is getting more stressful by the minute!

But what if we're actually missing the point? What if Jesus isn't buying into the standards and rules of that status-based patronage system and pointing out how you're doing it all wrong? What if he's trying to draw a contrast between the stress-inducing ways of the world and the abundance-assuming relief of God's ways? Like the writer of Hebrews, our host needs to recall Psalm 118 – "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid." Because that's just it. So much of the world is built on structures that run on fear – fear of embarrassment, fear of running out, fear of not being enough. And that fear makes us a little crazy; it makes us obsessed with collecting more and more so that we will never have to depend on whether someone else thinks we're worthy or not. It pushes us to hoard more than we need, so that we never risk not having enough.

The party Jesus is inviting us to operates with an entirely different set of expectations. We're invited to enter humbly, because we're fully aware that all we have and all we are comes from God. We're invited to enter humbly because the social

hierarchies that dictate who is more worthy than whom don't exist here; we are all equal – precious, beloved children of God. We are invited to find our rest and our nourishment in the hospitality of God, where we can begin to believe and comprehend just how deeply we are loved. And we are invited to lay aside our fears, because here at this Table, we are reassured that not only do we have enough; we are enough. All of those voices out there telling you that you're lacking? They're liars. All of those voices out there telling you some people are more worthy than other people? Liars. Those voices claiming they have the way-more-than-they-need that they have solely because of the sheer power of their own accomplishment? Also liars. Those voices selling fear, spreading fear, using fear to manipulate people into terrible choices and positions and behaviors? The worst liars of all.

God is God. Be not afraid. The gospel sings this refrain over and over. You are beloved. You are enough. There is a seat at the Table for everyone. These places in scripture – whether in the gospels or in the epistles – where there are seemingly rigid lists of do's and don'ts are not about making our lives more stressful. They seem rigid because they're trying to cut through the falsehoods that have been built up over centuries telling us we're not enough, that we are in danger, and probably nobody will help us if we needed it. If Jesus is emphatic, it's because he wants to make sure we will hear him. If his stories seem exaggerated or extreme, it's because he's trying to help us see the absurdity of the unjust systems we're so embedded in they've become

invisible. Does it matter who sits where? Of course not! What matters is that everyone is fed! What matters is that no one is turned away. What matters is that everybody is relaxed enough to laugh at Jesus' jokes.

When Jesus is telling us to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind to our banquets, and then tells us we'll be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous, he's really telling us that when we share our abundance with those in need, it's like inviting God to sit down to dinner with us. And not in a scary way, but in a loaves-and-fishes, bottomless pot of your favorite soup way.

All of these "rules" that scripture lays out for us – about hospitality, solidarity, faithfulness, and gratitude – hinge on this contrast between fear and love. It's what we do because we're afraid that Jesus is trying to help us recognize and leave behind. It's the difference we can make when we live with a deep and humble awareness of our own belovedness that Jesus wants us to embrace.

You are beloved. You are enough. Not because of what you did. Not because of what you own. Not because of your titles or degrees. But because God made you you, and God loves you for who you are. God doesn't require that you strive and grind and hustle. God just wants you to be – humble, loved, and enough – so that you can help everyone else do the same. Hallelujah and Amen.