

August 28, 2016 15th Sunday after Pentecost
Rev. Jen Nagel, ULCH, and Service Retreat Youth
Oskar, Anna, Mateo, Ted, Alex)

Proverbs 25:6-7, Psalm 112,
Hebrews 13:1-8, Luke 14:1, 7-14

Grace and peace to you, beloved of Jesus Christ. Amen.

I like how today's gospel begins. Did you catch it?

"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.**"

And the truth is, Jesus was watching them closely...

...So closely that Jesus tells two little vignettes all about reversing the usual order and about humility.

The first vignette reminds me of the school lunch room about this time of year, a story about finding the right seat, or really, not sitting in the wrong seat, or someone else's seat of honor.

The other story is about a party and the focus is on who is invited to the party and why they are invited. Jesus says don't invite the usual crowd just so that next time they'll invite you.

Rather invite a cadre of those on the margins, those who may be left out of the parties all together. They were watching Jesus closely, AND, it turns out, Jesus is watching them closely.

Earlier this month, eight youth and two chaperones (Jim Vitale and Sarah Bordsen-Bailey) participated in a local service retreat.

I think about this like a mission trip, with a few big important caveats:

1st caveat: It was local. They didn't head off to another country or even another city or state.

It was a trip, quite intentionally, all the way to south Minneapolis, to Lake Street to be specific, and to be even more specific to a program and facility run by the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches.

2nd caveat: It was a service retreat, a mission opportunity but the idea wasn't so much that they just bring all their fabulous youth-ful energy and brawn to fix up south Minneapolis.

Actually the program expects people to bring their hearts and their minds and their bodies to serve, and in serving and then reflecting, to learn and ideally themselves be transformed by the experience.

This morning I'm grateful that a few from this local service retreat group are our preachers!

They can help us think about the scripture, about reversing the order, and finding a place.

So, I invite our youth to come up to the front and find a seat.

That's a bit of a trick question after a gospel all about watching and being watched, and then worrying about where we should sit!

We don't all know you. Would you each introduce yourselves? _____

Could a couple of you tell us about your days at the retreat, and what you did? _____

I think you heard that last bit of today's gospel where Jesus talks about the party, the banquet.

He says: "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

In your time together serving and learning and just hanging out, what was a favorite moment or interaction that sticks out for you? How did you do this inviting and how were you blessed? _____

Another reading for today from Hebrews says:

"Let mutual love continue.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,

for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them;

those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured."

Jim told me that on the Service Retreat, you talked about the differences between charity and justice.

That's a really, really important distinction.

Can you share with us a little more about this difference between charity and Justice? _____

Any wrap up comments or reflections? _____

Thank you!

In the Spirit of this Gospel and the other readings, thank you for participating in the retreat and sharing what you learned about yourselves, and about Jesus.

It says a lot about reversing the usual order, inviting, loving, welcoming,

because that's how we (and the world) are most often transformed. The Good News for today. Amen!