

Bible Tuesday for Pentecost 12, 2019

Proverbs 25:6-7

Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence  
or stand in the place of the great;  
<sup>7</sup> for it is better to be told, 'Come up here',  
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

This portion of Proverbs was written for a young scribe or court attendant as instruction for how to act in the king's court. It goes against everything that has been taught me about job interviewing!

Psalm 112

Praise the Lord!

Happy are those who fear the Lord,  
who greatly delight in his commandments.  
<sup>2</sup> Their descendants will be mighty in the land;  
the generation of the upright will be blessed.  
<sup>3</sup> Wealth and riches are in their houses,  
and their righteousness endures forever.  
<sup>4</sup> They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;  
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.  
<sup>5</sup> It is well with those who deal generously and lend,  
who conduct their affairs with justice.  
<sup>6</sup> For the righteous will never be moved;  
they will be remembered for ever.  
<sup>7</sup> They are not afraid of evil tidings;  
their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord.  
<sup>8</sup> Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;  
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.  
<sup>9</sup> They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;  
their righteousness endures forever;  
their horn is exalted in honour.  
<sup>10</sup> The wicked see it and are angry;  
they gnash their teeth and melt away;  
the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

This is an acrostic psalm, having 22 lines in Hebrew corresponding with the 22 letters of the alphabet. It is a didactic psalm teaching the attributes of a righteous man.

"Fear" – This word in Hebrew means an appropriate combination of being afraid, being reverent, being awestruck, and being respectful. It does not suggest lack of intimacy but rather suggests a path to intimacy with God.

While God never says to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or any other partners in covenant that God will make them wealthy, nevertheless, the psalmist equates being in right relationship with God and being monetarily rich.

Verse 7 states a theme in Jesus teaching, right relationship with God allows one to be securely planted, even when bad things happen. The faithful will weather the worst of storms because they draw nourishment and strength through their roots in God.

Hebrews 13:1-9, 15-16

Let mutual love continue. <sup>2</sup>Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

A reference to Abraham and Sarah entertaining the three men who ended up being two angels and God.

<sup>3</sup>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.\*

“When I was hungry, you fed me, thirsty, you gave me something to drink, sick and imprisoned and you visited me.”

<sup>4</sup>Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

The writer of Hebrews affirms Jesus’ teachings on divorce and adultery.

<sup>5</sup>Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ <sup>6</sup>So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper;

I will not be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?’

The faithful are to trust God in all things. Money is seen as a safety net of one’s own creation which steals one’s focus away from God. As opposed to money which can be stolen, or credit and reputation which can be ruined, God is impenetrable.

<sup>7</sup>Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. <sup>9</sup>Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food,\* which have not benefited those who observe them.

The author writes to a Christian community struggling with the dietary laws of the Jews. Apparently this community struggled with the same issued as Corinth and others do followers of Jesus need to become Jews in order to become Christian? While Peter taught, “Yes, they do,” Paul taught, “No, they don’t.” With apostles being divided on this issue, no wonder the Church was also! If one became a Jew first, then one was under the dietary laws of the Jews, forbidding the eating of pigs, carrion birds and mammals, ocean mammals, crustaceans, insects, and more. The author argues that following such laws does not make one more righteous before God.

<sup>15</sup>Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. <sup>16</sup>Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

“Rend your hearts and not your clothing.” “A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

Luke 14:1-14

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.<sup>2</sup> Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy.<sup>3</sup> And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, ‘Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?’<sup>4</sup> But they were silent. So Jesus\* took him and healed him, and sent him away.<sup>5</sup> Then he said to them, ‘If one of you has a child\* or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?’<sup>6</sup> And they could not reply to this.

<sup>7</sup> When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable.<sup>8</sup> ‘When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; <sup>9</sup>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.<sup>10</sup> 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 honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you.<sup>11</sup> For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

<sup>12</sup> He 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 neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid.<sup>13</sup> But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.<sup>14</sup> And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’

It sounds so nice that Jesus is invited to dinner by a Pharisee, and a sabbath day dinner, akin to a Sunday afternoon dinner in the dining room with the good china and all the fixings. But then Luke pulls back the curtain a little with the phrase, “They were watching him closely.” The Greek clearly states the tension in the gathering between Jesus and his host and assembled guests.

While Jesus is described as the most compassionate in Luke’s gospel, in this story, Jesus is spoiling for a fight. He was just scolded for healing on the sabbath that morning in the synagogue, but grabs this opportunity to drive his point home. You can envision the pensive fascination with Jesus on the faces of some of the Pharisee’s guests. Others show revulsion and disgust as Jesus throws down the gauntlet on Sabbath behavior. One of the dinner guests has dropsy, a term referring to diseases causing fluid retention, whether cardiac or renal. “Is it lawful or not to cure on the sabbath day?!” No one would answer but they all wanted to see one of these “miracles” up close. In a moment, the man was healed and sent home to wonder in it.

Note: In Jesus’ question to the dinner party, “Which of you would not save his child or ox from drowning in a well on the sabbath,” child and ox are treated the same. In Jewish society at that time, children, like wives, like livestock, were property. Is Jesus merely

speaking in the cultural vernacular or is he elevated both to the same high level, that to be saved, thus keeping the spirit of the sabbath?

Luke uses the term “parable” in a curious way here since Jesus does not proceed to tell a teaching story but instead gives straight instruction. “Don’t shame yourself by presenting yourself as more than you are, jockeying for positions in social events. Instead, be humble. Don’t steal honor for yourself. Rather, live an honorable life. This is the life of those who are right with God. You all know what Proverbs says. Why do you not live it? When you give a feast, why invite those who already have enough food? Are you investing in a social calendar bank account? Instead, invite those who need what you have to give. While they cannot repay you, your reward is great with God.