

St James' Church, Weybridge

Trinity 14 (Proper 17) - 31 August 2025

Introduction and Call to Worship

We come together as God's people, disciples together, in all our diversity, to learn from each other and with each other what it means to worship our God. Who we are and why we live come together as we accept the invitation to worship as followers of Jesus' way.

Today's Readings

First Reading Proverbs 25:6-7

Far better to be who you are than try to be whom you are not.

Gospel Luke 14:1. 7-14

Far better to know who you are before God than think yourself higher than others.

HOMILY

"For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 14:11)

I have a fridge magnet which reads, 'Save the world – it's the only planet with Chocolate!' Well, there are many more reasons besides why we need to take action to protect the creation that surrounds us. But fighting for the environment can mean challenging long-held convictions, changing our habits and making sacrifices today for a better future tomorrow.

But it is easier to recognize our own needs first, at home and in our own community and convenient to ignore others. We may feel we deserve what we have, after all we have earned it, in our eyes it belongs to us.' It is tempting to think that which surrounds us is ours and view others, who may want what we have, as a problem. It is easier to see what we have now, or need in our lifetime and be blind to the needs of others and even future generations.

In Today's Gospel passage the Jewish formalities at formal dinners form the basis for Jesus to teach and challenge and every time our Lord engages in table fellowship, he makes a point about humility, undermining social status, and today's account is no exception as the parable of the wedding feast highlights the Christian pattern of humility being a condition of discipleship. Jesus makes the point that to seek elevated positions at the table, or in general life is foolishness, for by putting oneself on a pedestal, it gives one further to fall. Then the parable gets even more interesting as our Lord also makes the converse point: taking the humbler place will lead to our being called to a higher, more "exalted" position.

If we place ourselves into this scene, where are we sat? What are our expectations at the feast? Have we taken the place of someone else, or do we view it as ours – and we can't or simply won't share? Jesus speaks into today's challenging times and 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."* (Luke 14. 13-14)

Our Lord turns upside down our way of prioritizing self over others, self over creation. This desire to keep what we have for ourselves, the foolishness Jesus critiques at the gathering in the Gospel, is the opposite of Christian discipleship. The Gospel is a call to humility, which is the way of the Cross which leads to salvation, looking for the need in others and exalting them, walking with them in love and faith. Discipleship is central to each of the Anglican Five Marks of Mission, which include a call to justice, “To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation,” and “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”.

Here in beautiful Surrey, it is easy to take for granted this wonderful place we call home; made by a creator God who we believe has given us dominion over it. The temptation is to exalt ourselves and think that everything belongs to us – our food, our towns, our NHS and so on. That is not how Jesus views creation, or community. We will start this term's worship at St James' Primary School reflecting upon Creation and God's love for and delight in all that is good! And in October we will spend time thinking more specifically about Eco Church and what it means to approach our decision making based on God's values.

Acknowledging the effects of our actions on others and the environment necessitates personal humility. The Holy Scriptures offer us a vision of salvation that is universal in its scope and inclusive of all, that all may live in harmony and flourish. At our Emmaus Nurture Course this Autumn, we will explore many of these themes of creation, Christian justice, inclusivity and humility and I hope you will be a part of that journey, perhaps even bringing someone else along with you. We will reflect upon God's creative nature, the Incarnation and how Jesus touches our lives with God's love, and how we can make a difference as disciples today.

Because, according to Jesus, what's really “in it” for each of us is God's blessing and being “repaid at the resurrection of the righteous – Heaven – the Kingdom to come”. This is true “exaltation” which comes through humility, not flying a flag, excluding people or using resources because we believe they are exclusively ours to exhaust. No, the Christian call is to humility, to share with compassion, as we follow the life-giving example of our Lord Jesus Christ. We take a lower place to be exalted higher. We invite in the excluded, the marginalized, the lost, the poor, lame, blind.

So, friends in faith, ‘Save the world – it's the only planet with Chocolate!’ Well, yes that may be true, but this world is also our home, that we share with several billion others. Jesus, who we follow, teaches us to love, tend and care for it and all its people with humility. We each have a part to play in helping to improve our environment and care for God's creation and environmental action reaches beyond the Christian Faith to all humanity abroad and yes at home too.

Including all in the goodness and life of our world, and here in this community of Weybridge, takes humility and courage. It is only with our sights and minds set on an inclusive world, as demonstrated by the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus our Lord, that we can work towards real change and those excluded now can begin to share with us in the blessings to come. Amen.