

Wonderings

In small groups compare the experience of the guest in the poem with your experience of worshipping God and in particular participating in a service of Holy Communion.

What feelings and emotions connect you to the writer of the poem.

Imagine what sort of conversation you would have with Love at that feast, when you finally "sit and eat." What would you say to him, and He to you?

Going further if there is time ...
Invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

Have any members of the group been part of an organisation – religious or secular- that has reached out to help those who might be described as being on the margins of society? Such as volunteering at a Foodbank .. at a homeless shelter or a charity like MENCAP.
Share with the group what you learned from that experience.

Questions

Has any charity work that you have been involved in or seen in operation been an expression of a 'top down' approach to compassion?

It is better to seek a mutual nature to charity which is not about the solutions that giver can offer to solve another's problems but a quest for true companionship in which both donor and recipient can flourish.
I wonder what resonates with you about such a different transformed approach?

Final Prayer

Ever-loving God of compassion, justice and peace.
Inspire us to be committed to act justly, love mercy and together walk humbly with God.
We recognise the pain and anguish experienced by those who are struggling in poverty.
We pray for all those seeking to tackle suffering caused by social injustice and isolation.
Help us build inclusive, welcoming and caring communities where your love is known, experienced and shared.
Amen



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HeartBeat

There is such
a thing as a
free lunch

Sunday 24th of August

Lectionary Reading:
Luke 14 v1, 7-14

Jesus said to the host who had invited him, 'When you hold a banquet or dinner ... invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. And you will because they cannot repay you

Opening Prayer

God of love
You invite us to your banquet.
We do not deserve this welcome but your love is unconditional.
Grant us the humility to accept your gift.
Then fill us with this love to share the radical transforming power of the Gospel to draw others into your Kingdom. Amen

Ice breaker

In a sentence or two share a time when you have got something for nothing.

Wonderings

- I wonder what the phrase – all who exalt themselves will be humbled and all who humble themselves will be exalted – means to you

Reading Luke 14 v 1, 7 – 14

Invite someone to read slowly. Pause in silence.

Jesus says he is telling them a parable.

So this is not practical ethical advice on good behaviour from the latest Galilee Self-Help book but a story telling us something about God. So who is God in the story?

- The host with the power to change the seating pattern?
- The person who thinks they are the most important guest?
- The one whom no one notices who humbly sits at the back?

Are there pros and cons for each of these being the God – figure in the story?

Questions

Share in pairs which of these is the closest to your own personal experience and view of God.

How might your faith and life be different if God was like one of the other characters in this parable?

Reflection

In the second part of the reading v 12 -14 we see Jesus drawing a stark contrast between two views of how society might work – or two types of economy.

First there is the Market Economy which works on a quid pro quo basis. Paying a specified amount for a product or service rendered. It is the framework for our fundamental relationships and actions. This is the relationship between the people in the first half of this teaching of Jesus. The friends, relatives and rich neighbours who will invite you in return.

And this system seems perfectly reasonable to us because it is fair and makes sense.

The second one is the Gift Economy. In this system there is no equivalence between what we give and how much we get. These are the people invited to the dinner who cannot repay the host. We don't like this model because we feel we have earned our rights and we don't like people getting something for nothing.

Where do you see the Market Economy and Gift Economy operating?

BUT the problem is that God prefers the Gift Economy. Our experience of God's forgiveness reminds us that God's love is totally unconditional. We don't deserve anything. It's all gift.

Wonderings

- I wonder what it is that makes it difficult for us to receive God's free gift of unconditional love
- I wonder why we find it difficult to accept others receiving the free gift when we feel they do not deserve it.

Meditative Reflection

Love

by George Herbert

Ask someone to read the poem prayerfully

Love bade me welcome:
yet my soul drew back, guilty of
dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love,
observing me grow slack from my
first entrance in,
drew nearer to me, sweetly
questioning, if I lacked anything.

A guest, I answered,
worthy to be here: Love said,
You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful?
Ah, my dear, I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did
reply, Who made the eyes but I?
Truth, Lord, but I have marred
them: let my shame Go where it
doth deserve.

And know you not, says Love,
who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love,
and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.