

Sunday 28th August 2022

St Johns Morning Worship 9am and Christ the King Morning Worship 10.30am.

Luke 14:1,7-14

The Gospel reading today from Luke kind of struck a chord with me, as I will go on to explain through my sermon.

I like giving parties, where I enjoy my family and friends around me. I like sharing food and enjoying a drink or two, even a family quiz or dancing the night away. I am always watching my guests making sure they get food or drinks and if it's friends that have not met my family before I make sure to introduce them to someone I know, who will have similar interests or are similar in ages.

But have you ever been to a party where you know no one, except the host?

Well, I did, and this is what happened to me

Knowing the host, I just dressed casually and took a bottle of something, but I looked around all the guests, they seemed to know each other, and I was left on the edges looking in.

Those arriving after me helped themselves to a drink, waved to the others and began chatting away to someone else nearby.

I noticed how they were with each other, the conversations get louder and the noise went up in the room.

Then I noticed him. He doesn't appear comfortable, on edge almost. He seems to have wandered in from somewhere, a bit dishevelled and looking around for someone.

The host spied him, gathers some food together, wraps it up in silver foil, pours a drink into his flask, as he had passed it to her, and goes over to where the man is waiting and gave it to him. She gives him a hug and he goes on his way. I see the other guests looking and watching but no-one asks her about the man, But what you do hear is the host say is, "Well it's Sunday and the shops closed early." Again no one says anything.

The host tells everyone to take a place at the table. I am just about to sit down when I am called to come and sit at the top by them. Here they introduced me to all their family and friends .

I asked her about the man and she told me he was called Barry. He was the son of their late neighbour who needs help now and again, as he was now living on his own, and has suffered from some kind of disability all his life.

“He does have carers that come in at least twice a week,” she said, “but he always knows he can come to us and we will help him in whatever way we can.” But she knew he wouldn’t stay as his nature makes him want to be alone as he doesn’t mix well with strangers.

She tells me that I am not the first person to ask about him, but I am the first without making some kind of nasty comment, as people feel he is taking advantage of her good nature.

I couldn’t believe people could be so sharp, but then I stopped to think about the times I have been down the Stratford Road and how many times I have passed someone asking for money or selling the Big Issue. I wonder what has brought them to this. Do I ask them? No, I shy away, even a little wary of what they might tell me. So was I any better than her guests?

So I hope now you see why this struck a chord with me.

I think Jesus asking them all should he heal the man or not, because it was the sabbath day. Not only did Jesus know they were seeing what he would and could do, as some kind of a test, it was as if they had invited the man just to see what Jesus would do. But then after Jesus had healed the man and sent him on his way, he asks them again what they would do if something happened to a family member or one of their animals. Would they not help them too, despite it being the Sabbath? Again, the people said nothing. I believe he had made them question their own actions, as I had mine.

I was really glad when the host asked me to sit with them at the table and introduced me to their family and friends, as I felt very conspicuous and was thinking this was a mistake to come.

I did get talking to the other guests then and it was a nice afternoon in the end for me.

When I was at work, we were told always to think and make sure that all the residents were included in everything, regardless of if they were suffering from Dementia or say from the ravages a stroke had caused them. Everyone has something to contribute, even if they require help and sometimes to be helped to understand what we were doing or allow them to do what they think it is all about.

Sometimes you are amazed at what they can do. Sometimes it can be a bit frustrating for you and them, but always, always, you must be inclusive.

I feel that was the message Jesus was trying to get across. It doesn’t matter where you sit. Why do you think of yourself more important than any of the other persons who were invited - we

are all human? And the fact he had healed someone there and then in front of them on the Sabbath and didn't reply to his questions, had stumped them all, as they know that they would have done the same thing if it was a family member or animal, but surely it should be at any time, in any place, anywhere.

Why do we only ever invite people we know to our parties? Is it because they invited us?

But this banquet Jesus is talking about is so much more than a party. It is making sure we don't leave anyone out when we tell people of our faith in him. Help them to understand about God and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit - the love they have for us - for it is for the entire human race. Or the characteristics that belong uniquely to human beings, such as kindness, mercy, and sympathy.

Yet we are choosy. We choose our friends. We choose what we like to eat. We choose our clothes, homes, schools and we do think we are the bees knees in our own way.

We do judge, even though we are told not to. We are selective in who we help - we will maybe buy a sandwich for a beggar or put some money in his cup, but do we make the time to talk to them, get to know their story? After all we all have one.

So what is humanity?

It means to always look for the good in people,

Very hard today when the media bombards us all every day with stories of stabbings, drug related fights, senseless murders, wars and other such atrocities against another human being.

But it does mean we should focus on people's potential. To treat everyone as equal. Choose to love everyone, show compassion and empathy, forgive people as you want to be forgiven, help in whatever way you can, to give back to your community. Even a smile to a stranger can brighten up their day and can even help you to feel better about yourself too. Learn to love yourself.

As long as we never give up on trying to be the full human being that God intended us to be, when we have every opportunity to do good to everyone. After all, God created us in his own image, so therefore all the choices we make should be for the love of God and that of his son Jesus.

Will I ever be able to say I am all those things, do all those things? I find I do shy away from things I fear, maybe from a lack of understanding, maybe a fear stuck in my head by something I have learned over the years from my experiences in life. I try to do the best I can. I try not to fear things. I try not to judge people.

I do lose my temper. I can get really angry and upset over injustices that are out in the world today. But then that's my human condition.

The only perfect human being is Jesus, but that doesn't mean we should stop trying to do our best. Stop using the line "after all I am only human " or "no one is perfect " to hide behind.

I am guilty of all of them and so much more, but I need God in my life. I need his forgiveness. I hope I can overcome my fears and prejudices; let go of my anger, frustrations and always see the bigger picture. Get more understanding and grow in my humanity.

After all I sit every Sunday at a banquet with Jesus and with all here on earth and in heaven in the eucharistic feast of which everyone is invited.

How wonderful Jesus isn't as selective as the prominent Pharisee, or I would not be invited, as I am a very flawed human being, trying my best to be inclusive of people but often fall very short. But I do keep on trying to be the best I can be.

I found this quote and think it sums up what I think about myself, it's by Gorden B. Hinkley.

Being Humble

means recognizing that we are not on earth,

to see how important we can become,

But to see how much difference,

we can make in the lives of others.

Amen.