



THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
TRINITY

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

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Collect of the Day:

Lord, we implore You, grant Your people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds to follow You, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Introit:

Psalm 119:1-2, 5-6 (antiphon: Psalm 119:137, 124)
— *Deal with Your servant according to Your steadfast love, and teach me Your statutes.*

Psalm:

Psalm 2 (antiphon: v. 11) — *The LORD said to Me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten You.”*

Old Testament Reading:

Proverbs 25:6-14 — *It is better to be told, “Come up here,” than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.”*

Gradual:

Psalm 33:12, 6 — *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD*

Epistle:

Ephesians 4:1-6 — *There is one body and one Spirit*

Verse:

Psalm 116:1 — *Alleluia. I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Alleluia.*

LUKE 14:1-11 ESV

Author and Date:

The Holy Spirit caused Luke the physician to write the words of this Gospel around AD 55-60. In the previous chapter, Jesus spoke parables and healed, including a healing on the Sabbath (13:10-17). He also spoke His lament over Jerusalem, which rejected the prophets and now Christ Himself (13:31-35). Immediately after this reading Jesus told another parable about a banquet, in which many reject the invitation to come and eat (14:12-24).

¹ **One Sabbath, when [Jesus] went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.**

- The Pharisees were known for their careful devotion to the Law, so a ruler of the Pharisees would have been one of the best of the best, sparing no attention to detail. One Law that was of great importance was the Law of the Sabbath. Because one was not permitted to do any work on that day, the Sabbath meals were often served cold, having been prepared the night before.
- The Pharisees were watching Jesus carefully, implying that the reason they invited Him to the meal was to judge Him. The word translated “watching carefully” is always used in a negative sense in the New Testament (Mark 3:2; Luke 6:7, 20:20; Acts 9:24; Galatians 4:10).

² **And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.**

- Dropsy, also called edema, is a swelling of the limbs due to excess water. One who suffered from dropsy was considered at that time to be especially unclean, both due to the disfigurement it caused and due to the assumption that dropsy was a result of immoral behavior.
- It is uncertain how this man came before Jesus. Certainly he would not have been permitted to enter the house of the ruler of the Pharisees. Perhaps this took place as Jesus was going to the ruler’s house, or perhaps Jesus saw him standing outside looking in.

³ **And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”**

- Jesus knew that the Pharisees were watching Him carefully, ready for Him to stumble in some way. Therefore He cuts right to the heart of the matter, responding to the question that is on their heart. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is asked the same question by those in the synagogue. There He answers, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” (Matthew 12:10-11)
- However, this matter had already been addressed in the previous chapter, in which a ruler of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus had healed a woman who suffered from a disabling spirit on the Sabbath. The ruler said to the people, “There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not the Sabbath day.” Jesus rebuked him, saying, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 13:10-16).

⁴ **But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.**

- Whether the Pharisees were aware of this previous healing is uncertain, although it seems that they know the right answer to Jesus’ question. In shame, they refuse to answer.
- The man is quickly healed and sent away, indicating that the focus of this reading is not the miracle itself, but rather the response to it. Note that Jesus “took him”, which would have been all the more offensive to the Pharisees.

⁵ **And he said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?”**

- Jesus is not equating the life of a child with the life of an animal. Rather he is moving from what is greater to what is lesser in order to demonstrate that, even when it comes to the life of an animal, compassion overrules human tradition. Or, as Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.” (Matthew 9:13, 12:7)

⁶ **And they could not reply to these things.**

- Like before, the Pharisees could not reply to Jesus’ words or deeds, because they knew the right answer and were ashamed to admit it.

⁷ **Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them,**

- While the Pharisees were watching Jesus carefully, seeing His mercy toward the lowly, He was at the same time watching

them, noticing how they chose the places of honor. This prompts Jesus to tell another parable.

⁸ **“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him,**

- The wedding feast is used throughout Scripture as an image of the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 22:1-15, 25:1-13; Revelation 19:9). Thus the invitation to the wedding feast is the preaching of the Gospel.
- In the kingdom of heaven, the more distinguished One is Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself by become obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross, and has been highly exalted by God, sitting down at the place of honor: the Father’s right hand. (Philippians 2:8-9)

⁹ **and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.**

- The One who invites (the Father) alone has the authority to exalt and to humble, to lift up and to bring low.

¹⁰ **But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.**

- Note here the address given to those invited to the feast: “Friend”. Thus at the Last Supper Jesus said to His disciples, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:13-15)
- Be honored – this is a passive verb, for honor is bestowed upon the Christian by God.

¹¹ **For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

- As with the previous verse, there is an important distinction here between active and passive verbs. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled by God, and he who humbles himself will be exalted by God.
- This sort of reversal is found throughout the New Testament (Matthew 23:12; Luke 1:52; 2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Peter 5:6; James 4:10). The Gospel lesson for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, Luke 18:9-14, also contains this statement. There we learn that to humble yourself is to repent of your sins, and to be exalted is to be justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

