

### Call to Worship

Come to the banquet of the Lord; sit down and eat of the spiritual food of Christ that your soul may be refreshed, your spirit enlivened, your faith increased.

**Come humbly, for here there is none preferred; come thankfully, for here there is none excluded.**

### Prayer of Invocation

**Gracious, Inviting God, we are amazed that you not only offer us a place at your table, but treat us as honored guests. It is humbling to know ourselves so loved, so accepted as we are, so welcomed. We come to praise and worship you, we give thanks for the privilege of such hospitality, and we pray that having been fed with the spiritual food that satisfies, we may in turn share with others in the name of Jesus, the Host. Amen.**

### The Word Luke 14:1, 7-11

"One Sabbath, when Jesus went to share a meal in the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees, they were watching him closely. **When Jesus noticed how the guests sought out the best seats at the table, he told them a parable.**"

When someone invites you to a wedding celebration, don't take your seat in the place of honor. Someone more highly regarded than you could have been invited by your host. **The host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give your seat to this other person.' Embarrassed, you will take your seat in the least important place.**

Instead, when you receive an invitation, go and sit in the least important place. When your host approaches you, he will say, 'Friend, move up here to a better seat.' **Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up."**

### Living the Word "Places of Honor"

Let me begin with two scenes - the first scene I have entitled: Moving from the 'Children's Table' to the 'Big People's' Table: Growing up in a big extended family that filled the house for holidays, we had to set two tables to seat everyone. The dining room table was set with the good dishes, the silverware from the wood chest kept in the cupboard above the refrigerator and glass-glasses that all matched. This table was for the adults.

The overflow sat at card tables in the kitchen, with the everyday flatware, plastic glasses and the Melmac dishes for the children. As the oldest child present, I was awaiting the day when I could move up to the 'big peoples table.' Every occasion, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter or Sunday dinners when company was coming, I was asking as I set the table, - 'is this the time?'"

Then, when it finally happened, I was so disappointed by the lack of space, the dull conversations and the formality of this table. I yearned for the giggles and food spills and sneaking of food off of my neighbors plate. I realized 'to be important wasn't so important.'

In Matthew 23 Jesus addresses the disciples and the crowd about the ways of the legal experts and the Pharisees. Verse 12 - *"All who lift themselves up will be brought low. But all who make themselves low will be lifted up."*

The second scene: There is usually a banquet at the United Methodist Annual Conference. Several years ago we came early to get a 'good' table. Still we ended up way to the side of center, and embarrassed because no one was filling the empty seats around us at the table. Then as the meal began the Bishop and her husband arrived and took the empty seats at our table. I felt honored to share our table. It was better than I could have planned...it was nothing that I made happen, but in allowing myself to become unimportant, I was given the honor.

You may also have had these kind of moments...

In 1980, Mac Davis, said this at one of his performances: "Back a few months ago, I was headlinin' a great big nightclub and they put me up a couple days early. They put me up in what they call the "Star Suite." Now here I am, headlinin' in one of the biggest nightclubs in the country and I wake up at eight o'clock in the morning in this "Star Suite" all by myself."

The crowd said: "Awww"

That's what I said "awww"

"But I did what I've always done, to cheer myself up. I picked up my guitar, I sat down and I wrote me a little song. Now this is how it feels to be alone at the top of the hill tryin' to figure out why"

[https://youtu.be/RCyYuLQ7\\_Ws](https://youtu.be/RCyYuLQ7_Ws)

We are not the center of the Universe. In the book "Don't Know Much About Geography" Kenneth Davis tells of a time in history when it was believed that the Sun and the solar system evolved around the earth. How easy it is to be wrong when you can't see beyond yourself...

Given a choice between pie or bread – most would pick pie. Given sweet or plain, most of us would choose sweet. Though often what looks the best – like those frosted rolls at the grocery – aren't as good in reality. In fact, the reason that most homeless people are overweight is because they eat what they find in the dumpsters, which includes the sweets and fats that have been discarded.

Famine or feast? pie or bread? Reaching for the best for ones-self, some have been surprised at what the good looking pie contains...In 2005 as a part of my final seminary credits, I took a trip to see John Wesley's England. When I travel, I read about everything ahead until I become 'quite the know it all.'

One evening we were at a Pub trying British foods. I ordered Cider and Steak & Kidney Pie. I was first surprised to find the cider to be hard cider. The pie was very tasty as the first few bites included just steak. I oowed and awed over how wonderful it was until I took a bite and felt the texture of the kidney.

At that point I had a hard time taking the next bite and tried to save face by fishing for the steak. Eventually I gave up and announced that I was too full to finish. My pride ruled and this pie had become 'humble pie.'

For you word people: The expression 'humble pie' derives from 'umble pie' which was a pie filled with liver, heart and other internal organs of an animal, usually beef or venison. These parts were known as umbles, and since they were considered inferior food, in medieval times the pie was often served to lower-class people.

Although 'umbles' and the modern word 'humble' are unrelated, since the sound for 'h' is often dropped in many dialects, and 'umble' was a humble meal anyway, the phrase was re-bracketed as 'humble pie.'

Another dish likely to be served with 'humble pie is rook pie - a rook being closely related to crows. This may be another clue as to how 'humble pie became 'to eat crow.' This is an English idiom which means to be humiliated by being proven wrong after having taken a strong position.

Rudyard Kipling uses this expression 'to eat crow' in his short story "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes." Morrowbie falls into a place from which he cannot escape. Another man trapped there catches wild crows and eats them. But Morrowbie in his pride declares, "I shall never eat crow!" After days of nothing to eat, his hunger and desperation finally forces him to do what he swore he would never do – literally eat crow.

Never say never...In today's scripture, Jesus is asking us if we want to 'eat crow' and 'humble pie' or follow his example? Will we wait to be publically moved to the lower table, eating humble pie or will we sit where we have been invited – to the Lord's table to eat humble bread?

From the scripture today, we don't know which chair Christ sat in. We do know that he took time to be observant of what was happening around him. It says *"When Jesus noticed how the guests sought out the best seats at the table, he told them a parable..."* Jesus observed and reflected.

From The Message version of the Bible, verses 10&11 says it this way: *"When you're invited to dinner, go and sit at the last place. Then when the host comes he may very well say, 'Friend, come up to the front.' That will give the dinner guests something to talk about! What I'm saying is, If you walk around with your nose in the air, you're going to end up flat on your face. But if you're content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself."*

Jesus was not stepping forward to claim a seat, but waited for God's agenda as to how things might go. Christ is the humble bread that we can feed from.

As we come to the table today, how will you receive what God offers? Remember there is none excluded. Is it about your place and your power? Your way and your agenda? Or can you come ready to receive whatever Christ has to offer you?

Today we will serve Communion by Intinction, where the bread is torn and dipped in the cup. I have heard it also referred to as 'rip and dip.' Honestly this bothers me some, but what bothers me more is not how we serve the communion elements, but instead how we receive them. I am more bothered that we could call this 'gobble and run' – more deserving of the title pie as in a pie eating contest...

Are our hearts so focused on 'how,' that we miss the why? Christ re-presents himself in this 'humble bread' for you. Savor and appreciate the gift of it. Like the parable that we have been given today, if we put our pride away and wait a moment, God may have an even greater surprise waiting for us.