

livingtheword

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Hearing and Living the Sunday Readings

Reading 1 Sir 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

My child, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God. What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not. The mind of a sage appreciates proverbs, and an attentive ear is the joy of the wise. Water quenches a flaming fire, and alms atone for sins.

Reading 2 Heb 12:18-19, 22-24a

Brothers and sisters:

You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them.

No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

Gospel Lk 14:1, 7-14

On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully.

He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of

Reflection Process / Questions

- **5 mins Reading** - underline a word or idea that strikes you
 - **5 mins Writing** - write what you have heard, write your response to a reflection question(s) that attracts your attention
 - **5 mins Sharing / Praying** - share with a friend or pray to God about livingtheword you have heard.
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- Sirach is a book of instructions on the day-to-day living of a good life. Top on the list of advice is to be 'humble'. Someone who is 'a giver of gifts' often expects something in return, whereas a humble person is not deceitful or cunning. A humble person does not try and pretend to be stronger or better than he / she is. A humble person has an 'attentive ear'. Why do you think Sirach considers Humility to be so important? What sort of world is created by its opposite?
 - Today is the last time we have the letter to the Hebrews read to us. The differences between the 'old law' with its blazing fires of Mt Sinai, its trumpet blasts and fearsome prophecy's of Daniel is contrasted with the 'new gospel' of God dwelling joyfully amongst us, 'firstborn' Christians belonging to the family of God, the joy of Jesus bringing the intimacy and forgiveness of God with the new covenant of the blood of the cross. In the Old Testament, the presence of God was a 'fearsome' thing. Has your image of God moved from the Old to the New? Reflect on the images used in the Hebrews scripture passage. What image(s) is meaningful for you?

honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place.

Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table.

For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Then he said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment.

Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

- Luke 14 - 15 has many examples of Jesus at meals. He uses these moments to teach about 'fellowship', critique structures in society, and teach the Church about how true eucharistic gatherings should function. It is helpful to see the warmth Jesus wants to extend to those who are excluded and his challenging words to social structures which exclude people. Some say Jesus was a disturbing guest who may not have received many second invitations! What would your impression be of Jesus if you were sitting at this meal 'observing him carefully'?
- In the time of Jesus, and generally with people who do not have 'wealth', status in the community was based on 'reputation'. To have your reputation held high was a growth in 'honour'. To have your reputation lowered was considered a source of great 'shame'. This system can create a game where you take a humble position but wait desperately to be 'honoured' and 'moved up'! Generosity is secretly only self centred reciprocity. Jesus shares a subversive challenge which would change the whole social structure. What is his challenge?
- Jesus reverses everything that was considered socially and religiously 'correct'. The poor, crippled, lame, blind were excluded from the priesthood and some claimed they were not eligible to participate in the heavenly banquet. The Kingdom of God revealed by Jesus is there is a great reversal about to take place. Notice the extreme nature of Jesus' challenge. He doesn't say give money to the poor, give some volunteer service hours to the poor, but 'invite them into your home, to sit at table and eat together'! To enter into a relationship that goes beyond 'charity'. Examine your life-style and 'time-style'. Who do you include? Exclude? Why? How could you bring about the 'great reversal' of the Kingdom of God in your family, workplace, church community?
- What is one action that you will do to 'livetheword' this week?