

“Home for All: Radical Inclusion”
Luke 14:12-14, 16-23

I would like to begin with a story about the power of being invited and welcomed to the table of Christ.

Video from Bishop Michael Curry:

<https://youtu.be/USOMZpGheBc>

Here is the script:

“There was a woman who became an Episcopalian/ Anglican in the 1940’s. And she was dating a young guy who was licensed to preach in the Baptist tradition. She took him to her church.

Both of them were African American. The church where they went was all white. This was in the 1940’s in the segregated heart of America.

When she went to communion he sat in the pew because in those days if you were Baptist, you didn’t take communion in an Episcopal Church and vice versa. So he sat in the pew and she went up to communion as the only Black person in the congregation.

And he waited to see what would happen. Because, not only were they taking the bread, but he noticed that they were all drinking from the same cup.

And he had never seen Black folk and white folk drink out of the same cup or from the same water fountain.

So she went up to take communion. And the priest came, in those days only the priest gave out the bread. And the priest was giving out the bread, “The body of Christ the Bread of Heaven.”

Then the priest came along with the chalice, “The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given for thee preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.”

And he got to the Black woman, “The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given for thee...”

That man said, any church where black and white drink from the same cup has discovered something I want to be a part of and that the world needs to learn about.

That man and that woman were my parents.

This is the sacrament of unity that can overcome even the deepest estrangements between human beings.”

That act of welcome changed everything for Bishop Curry and his family. It changed the trajectory of his life and what he would end up doing. Think of the impact that Michael Curry has had on our world through his message of love which became a central piece of the royal wedding of Megan and Harry. The whole world got to hear this message and it all started with an act of intentional welcome.

As we work our way through the list from Dr. Erik Carter about belonging, especially as it relates to people with disabilities, we are going to focus on being present and being invited and welcomed.

Ten Dimensions of Belonging



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These two important dimensions of being invited and welcomed are essential for anyone to feel like they belong. Jesus highlighted these in his conversations with the religious leaders of his day. We will look at an episode from the Gospel of Luke when Jesus was having a meal at the house of a well-known religious leader. He noticed how people chose carefully where to sit so that their status would be elevated. Prestige and place of honor at the table have always been connected. The higher one's social status is, the more prominent their position is. For example, if you are Taylor Swift, and you go to a football game, you get the nicest seating. But that does not get at the heart of welcome and belonging which Jesus was teaching about.

Jesus wanted the people to learn the wisdom of belonging. On the surface, we may think that true belonging is about status and power. Sitting in the seats of honor or inviting people who are so-called "deserving" of honor are often presented as the way to elevate one's status. But Jesus offers us the wisdom of the heart which knows that belonging is about being connected to others instead of feeling superior to them or only including those who are considered important or worthy in our gatherings. This is contrary to a lot of cultural wisdom in Jesus' time and in our time.

Let's listen to Luke 14:12-14

¹²He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite those who are poor or have physical infirmities or are blind. ¹⁴And you will be

blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

Belonging is not about merit. It is about grace. We belong because we are connected to one another. When we invite and welcome others, especially those whom society neglects or excludes, we acknowledge the true wisdom of life that we all belong. Also, when we doubt the goodness of our own being, we need to remember that belonging is not about being loveable or earning our way, it is instead about being loved unconditionally by the creator of the universe.

Jesus wanted to make the point of his message crystal clear to the people he was with that day. He did not want to leave any doubt about the point he was making. He continued by telling a parable about a banquet where some people were invited but had the normal excuses for not attending. The attachments of life got in the way: Attachments to status, esteem, family, and security. When they were invited to the banquet, they didn't make the time. In response the host of the banquet ordered the servants to go out to the highways and byways to invite everyone, especially those who are deemed unworthy or unwelcome at a king's table. The host is genuinely concerned about those who don't get it.

Today we are invited to consider how to embody this spirit of radical hospitality and how we might allow God to extend that grace also to us. As you walked in, you received a little piece of paper. Some of you got the word "invite." Some of you got the word "welcome." And others got the word "receive." If you got "invite," I invite you to pray about inviting those who might be on the fringes to a church or another activity. If you got "welcome," I invite to pray about welcoming someone who has already been invited to show them the heart of Christ's love through your care. If you got "receive," I invite you to allow someone else to welcome you so that you may know the heart of God's welcome and that you belong at God's feast of life.

We will end with an artistic depiction of the parable of Jesus from Luke 14. This is presented by artist Hyatt Moore with a reading of the scripture as part of it. This was a mural that he created which hangs at a ministry center in California where people work to share the love and care of Christ with people with disabilities. I pray that it will resonate with your spirit as a reminder of God's radical inclusion:

<https://vimeo.com/120535615>. Amen.