



The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Our Savior

Sabbath Survival Kit



FOURTEENTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST, SEPTEMBER 2, 2007

Who is welcome in your community of faith? And how would they know that they are? Today's readings ask us to think about hospitality, especially as it is practiced at the table. The feast of God's radical grace calls us into this place and connects friends and strangers with one another. On this day in 1872, the great Danish bishop and theologian Nikolai Grundtvig died. He is remembered as a powerful intellect who insisted that ancient beliefs could find a home in modern culture.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you resist those who are proud and give grace to those who are humble. Give us the humility of your Son, that we may embody the generosity of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

FIRST LESSON - PROVERBS 25:6-7

Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great; for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

SECOND LESSON - HEBREWS 13:1-8, 15-16

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

HOLY GOSPEL - LUKE 14:1, 7-14

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at 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 the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." He 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. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

“I’m totally responsible. Now I have to pay the consequences for it.” Then he apologized to ‘all the young kids out there for my immature acts. I need to grow up,’ said 27-yr old disgraced NFL star quarterback Michael Vick, who pleaded guilty this past week in federal court to a dogfighting charge, and who afterward looked and sounded like a man filled with remorse. He also apologized to the NFL and to his Atlanta team as well as to the kids who idolized him.

Saying he was speaking ‘from the heart,’ Vick said he took full responsibility for his actions. So began a public act of contrition from Vick, saying his job now was “bettering Michael Vick the person, not the football player. I will redeem myself. I have to.”

“I’ve never seen someone who had so much ability and has fallen so far,” said Baseball Hall of Famer Hank Aaron. “It’s not what is going to happen as far as his football career is concerned. It’s just him as a man, as a human being, being able to get his life back.”

Outside the courthouse, a contingent of Vick supporters sang “This Little Light of Mine” and other hymns, while holding signs that said “We Love You.” They urged Vick to seek support in religion.

We know that talk is cheap. Many will be watching to see if Michael Vick is sincere and will follow through and truly turn his life around. In our 2nd Lesson today from the Book of Hebrews is this verse: “Through Jesus then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.” Praise can be much more than words. The verse following the one I just read says “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” At the beginning of our text the author says “Let mutual love continue.” And then he offers concrete suggestions on how we are to be consistent in our life of faith. ‘Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, remember those who are in prison (how to deal with others); let marriage be held in honor by all (importance of our personal relationships); keep your lives free from the love and money, and be content with what you have (how we handle our possessions).’ All these things reflect a generous way of life. When we think of praising and honoring God, we often think of it in the context of a worship service. Today we’re encouraged to think of it in a broader context. Praise arises out of the way we live our lives. If we let our faith lead us to reach out to others in love, then our lives become a gift that praises God. It is witness, compassion, help, and generosity that are key. Words and singing can’t do it alone. They are important, but not sufficient. Praise is works and deeds. Praise without action is easy and incomplete. Praise with action is wholehearted worship, whole-life stewardship, whole-committed discipleship.

It becomes clear that sometimes praise means we have to make a sacrifice. Sacrifice is not a popular word in our culture. In baseball a batter can make a sacrifice bunt or a sacrifice fly in order to advance a runner; we think of those serving overseas as giving up a great deal, potentially even their lives, as making a great sacrifice.

That is the call of Christ. Giving yourself for the sake of the Lord. Part of the Prayer of St. Francis: “Lord make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is sadness, joy. Where there is darkness, light.

For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life,”

Could Mother Teresa have blessed the world the way she did without sacrifice? She literally gave up everything she had and lived with the poorest of poor. She had no life but their life.

When you live a life of praise before God, it doesn’t seem like a sacrifice – it seems like a blessing. Think about your own relationship with you children and grandchildren. You make sacrifices for them, and you do it out of love. It is as though you were offering your life to God.

God gave his best gift to us, Jesus Christ, purely out of love. How are you going to respond to that? How will you offer a gift of praise?

Amen.

BLESSING

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. May you be rooted and grounded in his love. Amen.