



## Wednesday Prayer

12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Welcome to the Table

**“For all who exalt themselves will be humbled,  
and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”**

**Luke 14:11**

In this well-known lesson taught at the banquet table, Jesus reminds us not to sit at the head of the table, but at the foot, the lowest place of social stature in first-century Jerusalem. In addition, he teaches that we should “invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and blind” (Luke 14:13) when we host a banquet. In other words, sit with and invite the marginalized, those who typically occupy the lowest social status then and now. This was a strange lesson for a rabbi to teach, to literally and figuratively turn the table of social and religious rules upside down, to mingle with “the unclean”, those who didn’t have the means to follow the rules of Torah.

In his book *Whistling in the Dark; A Doubter’s Dictionary*, Frederick Buechner says “If we are to love our neighbors, before doing anything else we must see our neighbors. With our imagination as well as our eyes, that is to say like artists, we must see not just their faces but the life behind and within their faces. Here it is love that is the frame we see them in.” How can we see our neighbors in this way if we don’t make room for them “at our table”, in our church pews, our Sunday School classes and youth group outings, and most importantly, in our lives?

Children and youth who live in the margins of our society, who don’t have what they need to live safely in our communities – food, shelter, clothing, love – are easy targets for those who want to exploit them. Sex traffickers can spot them a mile away and lure them in by offering them false representations of those necessities. Jesus calls us to welcome them to our banquet tables, to look at the life behind their faces and offer not just the bare necessities they lack, but also to lavish them with the grace and unconditional love that comes only from God.

**God of justice and love, you call us to serve you by loving our brothers, sisters and all siblings. Open our hearts in compassion that we might welcome them to our banquet tables just as you have welcomed us to your banquet table overflowing with love and all that we need. Amen.**

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~Frederick Buechner, novelist, preacher, Christian apologist, lived a life inspiring many with his insight, dying at the age of 96 and just one day after this prayer was written.