

PENTECOST: SHARING NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 29, 2010

Proverbs 25:6-7 or Sirach 10:12-18

Psalm 112

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Sunday Dinner

In May 1997, I accepted my first “real job” in ministry. I became the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in New Augusta, Mississippi. New Augusta is a town of about 600 people located approximately half an hour from the Baptist college that I attended in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. It was rural – very rural. The people were warm and friendly and I have some of the best stories of my life and career from that singular year I was their pastor. I was actually, and more appropriately, called their little preacher boy.

One of the most revered people in the church was a woman in her late 80s affectionately known as Granny Irene. Granny Irene may be one of my all-time favorite persons! When she talked – and she often did – people listened and listened carefully. One Sunday before church she approached me and I could tell by the expression on her face that she was about to say something important. She looked me in my eyes and asked, “Brother Jason, will you come to my house for Sunday dinner after church?” Dinner in Mississippi means lunch. I could tell that this was an important invitation, so trying to match her gravitas, I said, “Yes, Ma’am, it would be my honor.”

When we arrived at Granny Irene’s her granddaughter-in-law and her two great granddaughters were with her. Granny Irene set the table and had tons of food! When everyone’s plate was full, Granny Irene looked at me with severity and said, “Brother Jason, I made these just for you.” It was a plate of barbecued ribs! The youngest great granddaughter, Candice, started to giggle and make fun of all the food I had on my plate. Granny Irene stopped Sunday dinner and told Candice, “Don’t mess with the man of God!” Everyone went silent. Then we resumed dinner.

This Sunday dinner is a million miles and a couple of thousand years removed from the Sabbath meal that Jesus shared with Pharisees and lawyers in Luke 14. But when I read the words of our Lord speaking to these religious leaders, I hear the sound of Granny Irene’s voice. Jesus’ words were so intense and carried such gravitas that the educated elite who surrounded him were muted. “For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 14:11 *NRSV*). Granny Irene put Candice in her place at Sunday dinner, but she also put me in mine! Her reverence for the office I held was absolutely humbling – even if I was just a little preacher boy. I think Jesus’ words at that Sabbath meal had the same humbling effect on his company. I hope and pray his words continue to have that same effect on each of us today. Amen.

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. K. Jason Coker, an ordained minister with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and pastor of Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Connecticut. Visit www.wiltonbaptist.org to learn more about the ministries of Wilton Baptist Church.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Egypt – with thanks to God for wonderful response to *Bible World*; and with prayers for an efficient central warehouse to provide Scripture to the growing Christian population, for creativity and means to encourage Bible engagement, and that many students will be strengthened in their faith as Christian religion teachers are empowered to help them engage with the Bible; **Lebanon** – with thanks to God for relative political stability, growing collaboration with the Church, the various Bible engagement programs that are reaching thousands of children annually, and for youth programs that continue to attract visitors to the *Book of Life* resource center; and with prayers for even greater impact from the weekly television program aimed at young people, and for Bible-based holistic services for various underprivileged groups; **Iraq** - with thanks to God for a new branch in Kurdistan and the publication of the first Kurdish Surani Family Bible, and for holistic work being done among the displaced and needy; and with prayers for Bible distribution throughout Iraq, safety for the staff as they risk their lives to provide the Scriptures in several languages, for the persecuted Church, and for peace to prevail.

Activity Corner: “True Hospitality”

Supplies needed: Bible; newsprint; markers; drawing paper and crayons or markers for younger children.

Read Luke 14:12-24 and discuss how Jesus defines hospitality (see verses 13 and 21). Who are the guests to be invited? What does this say about the Kingdom of God? If such a banquet were to be held at your church or in your community, who would be on the guest list? Invite young children to draw a picture of the banquet Jesus describes.

On newsprint, invite members of your household to look up and read aloud the following verses and write them on newsprint: Proverbs 3:27-28; Isaiah 58:10; Luke 3:11; Galatians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:16. Discuss what these verses teach about true hospitality and the Kingdom of God. In light of these teachings, list on newsprint what actions members of your household can take in your community and commit to following through on at least one of these actions during the coming week.

Conclude by reading together Psalm 112 as a closing prayer.