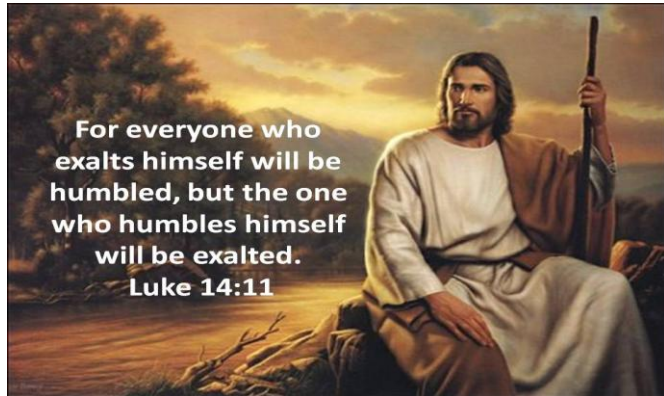


SUNDAY, AUGUST 31, 2025
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
LUKE 14:1, 7-14 “PLACES OF HONOR”



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(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431
Unless otherwise noted, all scripture texts
are from the **Common English Bible (CEB)**
*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in **bold** print

SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Jeremiah 2:4-13 A prophetic oracle taking Israel to task for its infidelity and ambivalent loyalty to Yahweh. The theme of Israel’s stubborn resistance is continued in the response of Psalm 81.

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16 The letter to the Hebrews ends with miscellaneous exhortations that spell out the obligations of responsible discipleship.

Luke 14:1, 7-14 The ways our attitudes about ourselves and others surface in the context of dining. Jesus teaches that humility is better than humiliation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: “Poeme” Esther Higgins

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Our Church’s Wider Mission

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP**

(Inspired by Psalm 81 and 112)

One: Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to God.

Many: Happy are those who revere the Holy One.
Generation to generation delight in God’s blessings.

One: Sing aloud to God our righteousness; shout for

peace to God.

Many: We rise from the depths in mercy, grace, and justice.

One: Sing aloud to God our hope; shout for love to God.

Many: Our hearts are steady and secure. Worship the Holy One!

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION:**

God of Glory, we acknowledge your presence among us as we gather. You have knit us together as a community. In your kingdom, the first will be last and the last will be first. We only exalt you, yet you come near to us. Dwell in the praises we voice, in the hope to which we cling, and the love that persists. Reveal yourself to us, Great One, and we will declare and spread your goodness in the land of the living. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 329 “Jesus, the Joy of Loving Hearts”**

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

Righteous God, forgive us for the positioning we do. We seek elevated places and too often fail to notice the absences at your table. Our tables are segregated by the ways we diminish the beautiful distinctiveness you celebrate among us. We live in complacency while the world around us weeps in pain, suffering, and despair.

Break our hearts, O God, so that we will seek your kingdom more than our own acquittal. As in the days of Jeremiah, we “have changed [our] glory for something that does not profit” and are appalled. Convict our spirits to propel us to reshape the world into your vision of beloved community—repaired, restored, and reconciled. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, the Holy One is righteous and just as well as compassionate and faithful to forgive the contrite heart. God will give you strength and courage to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly.

***GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator,
and the Christ and the Spirit so near.
As it was from the start so it shall be forever,
One God always here. (repeat twice)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSONS: From the Old Testament,
Jeremiah 2:4-13 Read from THE MESSAGE**

⁴⁻⁶ Hear God’s Message, House of Jacob!

Yes, you—House of Israel!

God’s Message: “What did your ancestors find fault with in me that they drifted so far from me,

Took up with Sir Windbag and turned into windbags themselves? It never occurred to them to say,
'Where's God, the God who got us out of Egypt,
Who took care of us through thick and thin, those rough-and-tumble wilderness years of parched deserts and death valleys, a land that no one who enters comes out of, a cruel, inhospitable land?'

⁷⁻⁸ "I brought you to a garden land where you could eat lush fruit. But you barged in and polluted my land, trashed and defiled my dear land.

The priests never thought to ask, 'Where's God?'

The religion experts knew nothing of me.

The rulers defied me.

The prophets preached god Baal

And chased empty god-dreams and silly god-schemes.

⁹⁻¹¹ "Because of all this, I'm bringing charges against you"—God's Decree—"charging you and your children and your grandchildren. Look around. Have you ever seen anything quite like this? Sail to the western islands and look. Travel to the Kedar wilderness and look.

Look closely. Has this ever happened before, that a nation has traded in its gods for gods that aren't even close to gods?

But my people have traded my Glory for empty god-dreams and silly god-schemes.

¹²⁻¹³ "Stand in shock, heavens, at what you see!

Throw up your hands in disbelief—this can't be!"

God's Decree.

"My people have committed a compound sin: they've walked out on me, the fountain of fresh flowing waters, and then dug cisterns— cisterns that leak, cisterns that are no better than sieves.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 81:1, 10-16 Page 673

EPISTLE LESSON: Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

The Words of Paul

Our acts of service and sacrifice

13 Keep loving each other like family. ² Don't neglect to open up your homes to guests, because by doing this some have been hosts to angels without knowing it. ³ Remember prisoners as if you were in prison with them, and people who are mistreated as if you were in their place. ⁴ Marriage must be honored in every respect, with no cheating on the relationship, because God will judge the sexually immoral person and the person who commits adultery. ⁵ Your way of life should be free from the love of money, and you should be content with what you have. After all, he has said, *I will never leave you or abandon you.* ⁶ This is why we can confidently say, *The Lord is my helper, and I won't be afraid. What can people do to me?*

⁷ Remember your leaders who spoke God's word to you. Imitate their faith as you consider the way their lives turned out. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

¹⁵ So let's continually offer up a sacrifice of praise through him, which is the fruit from our lips that confess his name. ¹⁶ Don't forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 14:1, 7-14**

Healing on the Sabbath

14 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to share a meal in the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees, they were watching him closely.

Lessons on humility and generosity

⁷ When Jesus noticed how the guests sought out the best seats at the table, he told them a parable. ⁸ "When someone invites you to a wedding celebration, don't take your seat in the place of honor. Someone more highly regarded than you could have been invited by your host. ⁹ The host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give your seat to this other person.' Embarrassed, you will take your seat in the least important place. ¹⁰ Instead, when you receive an invitation, go and sit in the least important place. When your host approaches you, he will say, 'Friend, move up

here to a better seat.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. ¹¹ All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up."

¹² Then Jesus said to the person who had invited him, "When you host a lunch or dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. ¹³ Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed because they can't repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected."

MESSAGE: "Do We Need Place Cards?"

Verse 1 of our Gospel lesson provides the setting for Luke's material through verse 24. "Table talk" was a fairly common literary device for gathering into one place several independent units or people. It reminds me of a Agatha Christy mystery. She puts together a group of unrelated strangers in an enclosed area like a abandoned castle in the middle of a rainstorm and figure out "who done it."

In verses 1-24 there are four stories that do not depend on one another for their meaning. We have only two of those stories today. Even if the author of this Gospel is here using literary device for joining pieces of

tradition, this is not to say the setting of a meal was an unimportant detail for him. On the contrary, meals were of profound theological significance for Luke.

For example in Chapter 16:19-31 Luke writes that bread was important, but where some eat and some do not eat, the kingdom is not present. In Acts 11:1-3 we may read that breaking bread was important; in fact, the real test of whether the church included persons who were different was not at the point of baptizing them, but of eating with them. Let's not think that Luke's locating many of Jesus' teachings "at table" was only "a nice little touch."

Both stories that we have today concern self-seeking, in the one case as guest, in the other as host. Upon observing the scramble for places of honor, Jesus advised choosing the lowest place, far removed from the head table. In so doing, one avoids public embarrassment and may, on occasion, be called up to a higher place providing one a moment in the spotlight of public admiration.

In and of itself, this is of no religious significance but rather is sound practical advice on social behavior. Jesus wasn't in the practice of teaching proper etiquette, but of course there IS another lesson within this lesson. What Jesus has in mind is kingdom behavior and I think you can figure out what that is.

In his closing statement he says, "For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Here is another example of Jesus trying to turn upside down the culture and customs of the times.

For all those who follow him, Jesus is trying to change their way of thinking. In the time of Jesus there were very many poor people, or those on the edge of being broke and homeless. And then there were the few families who were rich, or at least not worried about how to pay for their groceries. Who ruled over the poor people? The rich people. What did the poor people strive for? To be rich.

I was thinking about this the other day. If someone handed out a million dollars to one of Jesus' disciples, what do you think they would do with that money? Get a better house for their family? Hire more people to take care of his family such as housekeepers, cooks, drivers, seamstresses, nannies, tutors, etc. I don't think he would have time to wander around the country with 11 other men and for what? What does he get by following Jesus? Not much. What does he get by being rich? Everything he ever wanted and everything his family needs. He wouldn't have to be humble to anyone. Why would he choose to be poor? All his troubles in life would be over.

Does money have the same power as Jesus? What do you think? Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: "More Love to Thee, O Christ"
piano duet by Janie Bloomer and Nancy Eisenhower

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Here we are, gracious God. We are here to learn about your Son Jesus and to learn how to be ready to enter the kingdom. We have much work to do. We need to pay attention to the needs of other people and not just ourselves. We need to concentrate on how we can make the lives of our neighbors better instead of buying more toys for ourselves. Toys lose their glamour, break down and collect dust. Someone you are able to help will never forget what you did for them. Good deeds never lose their sparkle, break down, or collect dust. We are here to learn the difference.

Loving God, please continue to remind us that we are the hands and feet of your presence in the world. We are the ones to help the sick, feed the hungry, and comfort the mourners. We pray you open our eyes and hearts to find ways we can humbly help others. May our entire world do the same.

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 773 "Remember Me"

**Remember me, remember me,
O Jesus, remember me.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

The resourcing of our shared ministry depends upon the gifts that we bring. As image bearers of the divine, we receive the privilege of generosity. Through our gifts, we demonstrate trust in the Sovereign One and hope in our collective future. Let us give with an abundance of love and faith.

OFFERTORY: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"
Stewart Landon

***DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION**
Holy, Holy, Holy God, be glorified in our giving. Receive and magnify these gifts so that needs will be met, communities transformed, and lives renewed. We dedicate them in your precious name. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 28 "For the Beauty of the Earth"**

***BENEDICTION:**

As you go, Take your place. Exalt the Holy One.

Comfort the lowly. Abide with the oppressed.

Center the marginalized. Give glory and honor to God.

Be good news in the world.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE:

“Let There Be Peace on Earth”

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: “Ye Servants of God” Roger C. Wilson