

**Reverend Lotwina Farodoye**

**Homily: Humility, Hospitality and the Heart of God**

**Scripture Luke 14:1, 7 to 14 and Hebrews 13:1 to 8 and 15 to 16**

**8am Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion Service**

**31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 Christ Church West Wimbledon**

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**Homily on Luke 14:1, 7–14 and Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16**

Imagine today's Gospel scene. Jesus is at a dinner in the home of a leading Pharisee. Everyone's watching Him, but He's also watching them. And what does He notice? People rushing for the best seats, trying to be seen, to be honoured. You can almost picture the little scramble for position.

So Jesus tells them a story. *"Don't sit in the highest place,"* He says. *"Take the lowest seat. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

This isn't just table manners. Jesus is pointing to the way God's Kingdom works. The world tells us to climb higher, to push forward, to make ourselves look important. But Jesus says: "Step down. Be humble. Trust God to raise you up."

Then He goes even further: *"When you throw a banquet, don't invite your friends or rich neighbours who can pay you back. Invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame."*

That must have stunned His listeners. Because Jesus is saying: Don't give for what you'll get back. Give to those who can't repay you. That's real love. That's God's love.

And it makes me think of a story I once heard about a small church in a city that opened its hall every Sunday afternoon for a free meal. Most of the people who came were homeless, struggling, or lonely. One day, a woman came in who had had a rough life, she was nervous, unkempt, carrying everything she owned in a bag. She sat quietly in the corner, unsure if she belonged. But a family from the parish noticed her and went over, sat with her, and shared their meal with her. They didn't know her, didn't expect anything back. Weeks later, she said through tears:

*"That was the first time in years someone looked me in the eye and treated me like I mattered."*

That's exactly what Jesus is talking about. Humility that steps aside. Generosity that expects nothing in return. Hospitality that sees Christ in the stranger.

And the letter to the Hebrews ties it all together: *"Do not neglect hospitality, for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it."* Can you imagine? Every stranger who

crosses our path might be God's gift to us, an opportunity to love. And later it says: *"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."*

Our worship, then, isn't only about the songs we sing here or the prayers we pray. Worship is also in the way we live, welcoming, sharing, serving, humbling ourselves for the sake of others.

So, what about us? Maybe it's reaching out to someone who's lonely or inviting someone who can't repay us. Maybe it's showing kindness to the stranger we might otherwise overlook.

At CCWW we've been actively investigating helping the Homeless through Merton Winter Night Shelter by opening our hall to the homeless as part of their rota of churches that help in this way. Sadly they have informed us that not enough churches are able to make the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave happen, which we hoped to be a part of. Of course we will continue to look for ways to be salt and light in our community.

When we live this way, we reflect the heart of Jesus Himself, the one who took the lowest place, who washed His disciples' feet, who gave His life for us when we could never repay Him. And we begin to create here on earth a glimpse of that heavenly banquet where all are welcome, and Christ Himself is the host.

Friends, this week let's ask for the grace to live humbly, to love generously, and to offer our whole lives as a sacrifice of praise to God.

Amen.