

WELCOME 4TH FEBRUARY 2024 – 5TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY '24 B

1 John 2:1-14 & Luke 14:1-14

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have **Growing Praise** inserts & **Bible Study Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.**

As we move into this week... **Vibrant:** Full of energy & life. Pulsating. Bright. Intense. Saturated with colour. That's God's desire for his Church... We are called to live & be a vibrant community of life & joy... to share deep relationships that pulse to the beat of Jesus' heart... to grow in vibrant discipleship; saturated in God's word & living with significant impact & life-changing hope. God chooses his church to bear his hope to the world... to carry the good news of Jesus to the people around us.

As a church we say it like **this:**

God has called Living Water Fellowship to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace and go in his power to show his love to the world.

Jesus once asked, **"If your son or your cow falls into a pit, don't you rush to get him out?"**

Well...yes. If you knew that **THIS** was where hope & life joy & love forgiveness & restoration could be shared in relationship with Jesus & his people... wouldn't you rush to invite people in?

We'll explore, experience, & live that together today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Living God, in your presence there is fullness of life and love. Draw us deeper into the life of your Son day by day that the fullness of his love may flow out of our lives to others. Use us as agents of your Kingdom of grace... We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ who gave his life for all. Amen.

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Is there a difference between showing love to a Christian brother/sister & showing love to a neighbour?
2. How do things like custom, tradition, busy-ness, or habit interfere with showing expansive generous hospitality?

5TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY '24 B – VIBRANT LIVING: VIBRANT RELATIONSHIPS

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, described the work of the church: “Making Heaven on Earth is our business.” You know...I’ve read volumes of books on the nature/mission of the church...journal articles that would fill this room...heard lectures by the score...preached more than a few sermons & I don’t think it could be said any better than that...I know I have not.... Making heaven on earth is our business. Others agree...Bishop NT Wright, “Jesus’s resurrection is the beginning of God’s new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven.”...to “colonize earth” - make heaven on earth through those claimed by the death/rez/rule of Jesus Christ.

Or as John the apostle said, “Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.” Or as Jesus said first, “If your son or your cow falls into a pit, don’t you rush to get him out?” Yes I’m serious...It is in fact just that...In the event described by Lk... Jesus is at a Sabbath dinner that for all the world looks like a trap...like he’s been set up by the religious folks who believe he’s a fake at best or worse, a blasphemer. It’s a Sabbath meal...Friday near sunset that for faithful Jews marks the start of the Shabbat/Sabbath. It’s a meal rich in meaning & religious importance/formality. At the meal, **GUESTS MATTER** as deep fellowship is expected. So for someone visibly unwell to be in the room seems out of place.

There was a man there whose arms & legs were swollen. Some translators say “dropsy” or serious “edema.” He has an illness that causes his body to retain fluid in his arms & legs & the swelling is obvious/notable. For him to have been invited among a table-full of healthy religiously scrupulous people doesn’t pass the pub test...Jesus smells a rat & it isn’t the sick man. So Jesus turns to the experts, “Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the Sabbath day, or not?” They’ve created a pop quiz & Jesus returns the favour. Now they all know the game’s afoot ‘cos the answer is Yes...the Law as understood for generations of rabbis & scholars was that saving life was not “work” in the sense of breaking the law...like painting a house or harvesting crops. You could “DO” good things on the Sabbath & still be ok w/ God. In fact there were rabbis who taught that if you DID NOT do good to save life you had BROKEN the Law/sinned by omission. You failed to do what you could to help your neighbour & that was bad.

When they refused to answer, Jesus touched the sick man & healed him & sent him away. You see...Jesus knows THEY KNOW the answer. THEY know THEY KNOW the answer. So Jesus does just what they hoped to fall into their trap except it’s now THEM who are trapped... Then Jesus turned to them & said, “Which of you doesn’t work on the Sabbath? If your son or your cow falls into a pit, don’t you rush to get him out?”

Again they could not answer. Jesus knows THEY KNOW...THEY know THEY KNOW. What they have failed to know/understand/address is their perpetual addiction to religious rightness & aversion to mercy. “If your son or your cow falls into a pit, don’t you rush to get him out?” Of course! Self-interest compels me to look after my own I have gone to the wall for each of my children on varied occasion. You too? Not just my kids...1st Dec our little doggy was attacked by a demon-dog around the block & off we went to the all-night puppy hospital & a fortnight’s pay later she was home & on the mend. Self-interest compels me to look after my own. Jesus says, “What you would do for yourself out of self-interest, do for someone else for the interests of Jesus” To view what is mine as expendable for someone else...so that through me they experience the mercy compassion love peace comfort rescue restoration of Jesus operating through me... you...

To “colonize earth w/ the life of heaven.” To make heaven on earth real visible seen & tangibly experienced through the lives of us who have been claimed by the death/rez/rule of Jesus Christ calls us to just that: Mercy. He would say twice to Pharisees & religious experts what the prophet Hosea condemned in Israel: “I desire mercy not sacrifice, & for you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.” Hos 6:6, Mt 9:13, 12:7... They were skilled at spiritually self-satisfying good deeds, but awful at living lives responsive to the Father & loving & merciful to their neighbours. Luther knew: God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does. What you would do for yourself out of self-interest, do for someone else for the interests of Jesus. To “colonize earth w/ the life of heaven.” To make heaven on earth real visible seen & tangibly experienced through the lives of us who have been claimed by the death/rez/rule of Jesus Christ calls us to lives of mercy...in measure according to the mercy we have received...Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. – Lk 6:36

They may not have wanted to engage verbally w/ Jesus after that, but they weren’t afraid to jockey amongst themselves for the good seats at the table now that the sick guy was gone. When Jesus noticed that all who had come to the dinner were trying to sit in the seats of honour near the head of the table, he gave them this advice ... those who exalt themselves will be humbled, & those who humble themselves will be exalted. - you don’t get to eat if you sit in the middle of a long table - To “colonize earth w/ the life of heaven.” To make heaven on earth real visible seen & tangibly experienced through the lives of us who have been claimed by the death/rez/rule of Jesus Christ calls us to lives of Humility. One of the interesting side-notes to the guy w/ dropsy... In Jesus’ day physicians assumed since your body was retaining water you should stop drinking it to allow the swelling to go down. So folks w/ dropsy would often crave water. Philosophers took that craving for what the body already had in abundance &

turned it into a teaching against perils of desire. Desire was bad because it caused you to want more of what you already had. Look at the desire of the dinner guests. Sabbath meals were worship: psalms, hymns, Scripture retelling the goodness & promises of God...it commemorated their freedom from slavery, God's provision in his Creation, their place as those who "rest" in his presence & *THEIR DESIRE* is for "seats of honour." Their hearts are set on being noticed...like a teenager on social media "look at me look at me look at me!" It's been said 1000x: You become what you worship. When you gaze in awe, admiration, & wonder at something or someone, & offer that your devotion & affection, you begin to take on something of the character of the object of your worship. Followers of Jesus have a pattern/model...we know our lives are to reveal Mercy & Humility *After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus put on his robe again & sat down. He asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' & 'Lord,' & you are right, because that's what I am. Since I, your Lord & Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example...Do as I have done to you."* **Jn 13:12-15** What you would do for yourself out of self-interest, do for someone else for the interests of Jesus. To view what is mine as expendable for someone else...so that through me they experience the mercy humility compassion love peace comfort rescue restoration of Jesus operating through me...you...

Then Jesus turned to his host...Why would you ever invite Jesus to dinner? Then he turned to his host "When you put on a luncheon or a banquet," he said, "don't invite your friends, brothers, relatives, & rich neighbours. For they will invite you back, & that will be your only reward. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, & the blind. Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you." To "colonize earth w/ the life of heaven." To make heaven on earth real visible seen & tangibly experienced through the lives of us who have been claimed by the death/rez/rule of Jesus Christ calls us to lives of **Expansive generous hospitality**. To view what is mine as expendable for someone else...so that through me they experience the mercy compassion love peace comfort rescue restoration of Jesus operating through me...you...

"The point of the resurrection...is that...What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it...What you do in the present — painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself — will last into God's future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable until the day when we leave it behind altogether. They are part of what we may call building God's kingdom." - NT Wright

This life is not irrelevant simply because we'll leave it behind when we die...This life this body is important because it is the chief method by which I reveal my allegiance

to Jesus...my words my worship my time my attentiveness to the needs of others my capacity to honour you ahead of me my \$\$ my openness to those who have nothing w/ which to repay me...Luther **said** it...Now the Church is not wood & stone, but the company of believing people; one must hold to them, & see how they believe, live & teach. When folks look at the church...you...what do they see in how you believe live or teach...Vibrant relationships w/ Jesus & w/in the church reveal that it is always time for mercy, humility & expansive generous hospitality. What you would do for yourself out of self-interest, do for someone else for the interests of Jesus. To view what is mine as expendable for someone else...so that through me they experience the mercy compassion humility love peace comfort rescue restoration & expansive generous hospitality of Jesus operating through me...you..."*Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.*" If you knew that **THIS** was where hope & life joy & love forgiveness & restoration could be shared in vibrant relationship w/ Jesus & his people...wouldn't you rush to invite people in?

TAKE IT HOME

To whom will you demonstrate mercy, humility,
& expansive generous hospitality this week?

Who's going to get those from you this week?

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, you promised: "I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations." In your Son that promise is kept...so Lord Jesus take over. Take all of me. You alone are my hope, my future, my security, my peace & my joy. Use my life so that your love is known and your life pours through me for the sake of those around me. I ask Jesus in your name. Amen.