

Thought for the Day for June 26th by Angela Birkin

Readings: Judges 6.25-40, Luke 14.12-24.

He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.' Luke 14.12-14.

In the ancient Middle East, meals were important social ceremonies. Deeply important issues like who one ate with and where one was asked to sit were clear indicators of where a person ranked in the social hierarchy.

In our reading from Luke Jesus has been invited to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, and he challenges the assumptions of the host and of the other guests. The guests are rebuked in Luke 14.7-11 for taking the places of honour and urged to hold back, if only to avoid the embarrassment of being asked to move to a lower place. The host is challenged in the verses quoted above to extend his highly selective invitation list to include those who will never be in a position to repay his hospitality.

Jesus challenges us with lessons in humility and generosity to look beyond our own self-interest. Our culture is still preoccupied with hierarchy and status - how many 'likes' will my facebook post or youtube video get? How many people follow me on Twitter? What's in it for me?

Jesus teaches the values of God's kingdom, where all are invited, regardless of social standing, gender, sexuality, race or creed.

Let us pray today for humility to put others before ourselves, for generous and welcoming hearts, and that we may serve without looking for personal reward.

The artwork is the sculpture 'Homeless Jesus Christ', designed by Canadian artist Timothy Schmalz, outside St Ann's Church in Manchester. Jesus' feet are pierced.



