

Worship at Home – 31st August 2025 (22nd in Ordinary Time)
A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Andy Fitchet.

Introduction

Hello, my name is Andy Fitchet, and I am the Minister at Andover and Hungerford Methodist Churches. It is a grey and chilly morning here in the Manse study as I record this. Thankfully a cup of tea brings a moment of warmth and peace to me.

Today's reading invites us into reflection on humility, hospitality, and the values of God's kingdom. In Luke 14:1, 7–14, Jesus challenges social hierarchies and teaches us to live with graciousness and selflessness. May we open our hearts to receive and share God's inclusive love.

Call to worship

Gracious and welcoming God,
you show us that the last shall come first, and the greatest are those who serve.
Teach us true humility and empower us to extend your love without expectation.

Hymn – STF 673 – Will you come and follow me John L Bell (b 1949) & Graham Maule (1958-2019)

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| 1 Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown,
in you and you in me? | 2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me? |
| 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me? | 5 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me. |

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Loving Creator,
we give you thanks for the gift of community and the call to serve one another.
Thank you for the example of Jesus, who welcomes us regardless of status.
Help us embrace humility and generosity every day. **Amen**

Prayer of confession

Merciful God,
forgive us when pride guides our choices,
when we seek honour rather than serve,
and when we exclude rather than include.
Teach us to honour others with our words and actions,
following the path of Christ, our servant Master. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Hymn – STF 364 – O for a thousand tongues to sing Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

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| 1 | O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and king,
the triumphs of his grace! | 2 | My gracious master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of your name. |
| 3 | Jesus - the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace. | 4 | He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me. |
| 5 | He speaks; and, listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice;
the humble poor believe. | 6 | See all your sins on Jesus laid:
the lamb of God was slain;
his soul was once an offering made
that all may heaven gain. |
| 7 In Christ, our head, you then shall know,
shall feel, your sins forgiven,
anticipate your heaven below,
and own that love is heaven. | | | |

Bible reading – Luke 14:1, 7-14

Jesus Eats at a Pharisee's House

¹ One Sabbath day, Jesus went to eat in the house of a well-known Pharisee. While he was there, he was being carefully watched.

⁷ Jesus noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table. So, he told them a story. ⁸ He said, "Suppose someone invites you to a wedding feast. Do not take the place of honour. A person more important than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come to you. He will say, 'Give this person your seat.' Then you will be filled with shame. You will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place. Then your host will come over to you. He will say, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honoured in front of all the other guests. ¹¹ All those who lift themselves up will be made humble. And those who make themselves humble will be lifted up."

¹² Then Jesus spoke to his host. "Suppose you give a lunch or a dinner," he said. "Do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, or your relatives, or your rich neighbours. If you do, they may invite you to eat with them. So you will be paid back. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite those who are poor. Also invite those who can't see or walk. ¹⁴ Then you will be blessed. Your guests can't pay you back. But you will be paid back when those who are right with God rise from the dead."

Reflection on the reading

Luke paints a striking picture: Jesus is at a meal in the house of a leading Pharisee. Already, the atmosphere is charged — Jesus is being “carefully watched,” we read. Meals in the ancient world were never simply about eating; they were occasions of status, honour, and social display.

Where you sat at the table, and who you sat with, mattered. It revealed your place in the social order.

Into this setting, Jesus offers two teachings—one about humility, and one about hospitality.

First, he tells a parable about guests who rush to take the best seats at a banquet. He warns against grasping for honour, because the one who exalts themselves may end up humbled. Instead, he urges people to take the lower place. It’s a vivid reminder that God’s kingdom runs on different logic than human society. In God’s eyes, true greatness is not found in status, but in humility and service.

Humility here is not about self-hatred or false modesty. Jesus is not encouraging us to belittle ourselves. Rather, he calls us to see clearly who we are before God—beloved children, secure enough in God’s love that we don’t need to scramble for recognition or privilege. Humility is freedom: the freedom to stop competing, to stop anxiously proving ourselves, and instead to live out of God’s abundant grace.

The second teaching is even more radical. Jesus turns to the host and says: *“When you give a banquet, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours. If you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, those who can’t walk, those who can’t see, and you will be blessed.”*

This is a shocking reversal of the social customs of his day—and perhaps of ours too. Jesus challenges the system of reciprocity, where we give in order to get back, where hospitality is really just social networking. Instead, he describes God’s kind of hospitality: one that reaches out to those who cannot repay, those who are easily overlooked, those who are often left outside.

In the kingdom of God, the guest list looks very different. The people who are normally at the margins are brought to the centre. This echoes Mary’s song in Luke 1, where the proud are scattered, the mighty are brought low, and the lowly are lifted up. The God revealed in Jesus is turning the tables, quite literally.

What might this mean for us today?

- **In our personal lives**, it may mean practicing humility in our daily interactions—not insisting on our own way, not needing the spotlight, but choosing to listen, encourage, and honour others.
- **In our church life**, it challenges us to think about who feels welcome at our “tables.” Are our gatherings accessible, inclusive, and warm for people who might not otherwise feel at home in church? Do we risk inviting people who may never “repay” us—people whose lives are messy, complicated, or fragile?
- **In our wider world**, Jesus’ words push us to consider justice. Who is being left out of society’s feast today? Migrants and refugees? People struggling with disability or chronic illness? Those living in poverty? The kingdom vision Jesus describes calls us to extend dignity, compassion, and practical care.

It is striking that Jesus ties all this to the image of a banquet. The kingdom of God is not only about rules or duties—it is pictured as a feast, a joyful celebration, where all are welcome. Every time we share Holy Communion, we taste this reality. At Christ’s table, no one earns their place, and no one is excluded. All are invited by grace.

This passage, then, is not simply a lesson in good manners. It is a vision of God's upside-down kingdom, where humility and hospitality reveal God's character. When we embrace humility, we mirror Christ, who "did not consider equality with God something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:6–7). And when we practice hospitality to those who cannot repay, we mirror God, who welcomes us all in sheer generosity.

So, this week, perhaps we can ask ourselves:

- Where is God inviting me to take the lower place—not in a way that diminishes me, but in a way that frees me to serve?
- Who might God be asking me to invite to my "table"—literally or figuratively—who could never repay me?

When we live this way, Jesus says, "*you will be blessed.*" It may not be the kind of blessing the world recognises—no prestige, no return invitation, no social advantage. But it is the blessing of sharing in God's own joy, the blessing of glimpsing the kingdom where all are welcome, and the humble are lifted up.

Hymn – STF 364 – Meekness and majesty Graham Kendrick (born 1950)

1	Meekness and majesty, Manhood and Deity, In perfect harmony, The Man who is God. Lord of eternity Dwells in humanity, Kneels in humility And washes our feet. <i>O what a mystery, Meekness and majesty. Bow down and worship For this is your God, This is your God.</i>	2	Father's pure radiance, Perfect in innocence, Yet learns obedience To death on a cross. Suffering to give us life, Conquering through sacrifice, And as they crucify Prays: 'Father forgive.' <i>Refrain</i>
		3	Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible, Love indestructible In frailty appears. Lord of infinity, Stooping so tenderly, Lifts our humanity To the heights of His throne. <i>Refrain</i>

Blessing

And so, as we go into the rest of our day and our week, may the words of Jesus stay with you: "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Go in grace to love and serve the Lord. May the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you, now and always. **Amen**

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