

Trinity 14 (2013)

Hebrews 13

New International Version (NIV)

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. ² Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

³ Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

⁴ Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. ⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”

⁶ So we say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?”

⁷ Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Luke 14

New International Version (NIV)

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honoured in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹² Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, 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. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Last September,
as Worlebury St Paul began its first year as a full primary school
The Bishop of Taunton was invited to mark the occasion.

All kinds of local dignitaries were invited
And seats were reserved for them all along the front row
I chose to sit with a couple of fellow governors near the back

The Bishop entered, in his full cope and mitre,
And was ushered to his seat – and left there
Whist the Head & her Deputy
rushed around to get the children organised

At this point I realised that someone had gaffed
You don't invite a VIP and leave him all alone
But Bishop Peter, being humility personified
Simply turned around and found someone to chat with

it wasn't long before he noticed me
and in a rather loud voice called
"Geoff – how lovely to see you – come and sit here!"

It was a genuinely warm and friendly invitation
But in such a tone that caused someone to comment behind me
"that sounds like an order to me Geoff!"

As I felt the cold sweat of embarrassment redden my cheeks
I thought of this morning's gospel reading
And just how special it will be
to hear Jesus offering a similar invitation

our holiday club theme this week
was based on Paul's words to the Philippians
that nothing gave him more joy
than that of knowing Christ's love for him

everything else he considered as rubbish - spent and worthless

and with the greatest respect to Bishop Peter Taunton
whom I'd be more than happy to sit alongside any day
to be called by my Lord, to a place of honour beside him
would be worth a thousand years of sitting
on the hard plastic chairs at the back of the hall

Paul encouraged the Philippians

To do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,
but to regard others as better than themselves

it was a tough lesson for the toffs
when Jesus told them they should invite the poor,
the crippled, the lame, the blind to their banquets

Anyone who obeys such instructions begrudgingly
Out of duty – as some kind of obligation
Has simply not understood the gospel of Jesus Christ

That compared to the sheer joy of knowing Him
And just how much we are loved by Him
We do these things because we can – not because we must