

# REFLECTION OF GRACE

A Weekly Reflection on Stewardship from our Members



Sunday, August 28 | Gospel  
Luke 14:1, 7-14



On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

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 neighbors, 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."

## WHY THE WHY MATTERS

By Laura Warner Gilmer

In Luke's Gospel, we are admonished to give thought to our intentions when we do what we think of as "good works". Even though what we do might be of benefit to others, the fact of *why* we do what we do still carries weight.

Many of us are quick to ask ourselves, "Why did you do that?" when we regret an action or utterance that has resulted in unwelcome consequences or has caused grief in others. It's easy, in hindsight, to rue what has so obviously come from the sinful or selfish part of our natures. Being sorry for causing pain comes quickly when we, as loving followers of Jesus, recognize that we've done so.

However, how often do we look at the "Why did I do that?" when those who are subject to our actions leave the encounter with smiles and gratitude? Look, we've done a good thing, right? When everybody walks away happy, what reason is there to look deeper into our motivations?

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There is every reason, according to the Gospel of Luke and the teachings of Jesus Christ, for us to take a personal flashlight to the reasons behind our gestures, wherever they fall along the spectrum of good deeds, from giving of our own to the poor or inviting the neighbors over for a barbecue and Trivial Pursuit. If we are doing those things because the poor are in need and hospitality shows love to our neighbors, then we are walking on the path taught and demonstrated to us by Jesus. But if I am giving to the food pantry because I think it will put more “jewels in my crown” and “God will bless me likewise” or if I’m inviting the neighbors to my backyard because I’m angling for an invitation to their beach house...well...maybe it would be better if I cut the strings that are attached to what I offer others.

Let’s take a quote from St. Therese of Lisieux, “Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing.”, then let’s add a few of St. Paul’s words to the Corinthians, reminding them that “Love is not selfish.” Then let’s put our cart and horse into the correct order and realize that we are not meant to give in order to get but are given by God in order to be blessed to give. May our “why’s” always be bigger than our wants.

### A Wondering Related to Stewardship

As we examine our whys and wants, let's give thought to why we pledge to support the ministries of Ascension. As we give to the work of this parish, God gives to those within and touched by this family of the faithful. The heart and soul of Ascension is the continued love of its people and the true desire to enable Christ's work in this corner of the world. Let's continue to show this in every way that we can, giving of that with which God has gifted us...in time, talent, and pledges.

Laura has been attending Ascension since 1996 and is a familiar face in various ministries. You'll often see her on Sunday mornings lay reading, wrangling acolytes, and serving with a chalice. She works as the Parish Administrator at St. John's Episcopal Church and is an Iona School for Ministry student. Laura is also a Stephen Ministry Leader, Verger, member of the Vestry, and serves on the Pastoral Care committee. Her love and care for our parish family are priorities in her life.

