

## 31 Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C 2007 Luke 19:1-10

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- 1) Back in 1985, while I was living and working in a small town in Western Pennsylvania
    - a) I went to see the film, *Ghostbusters*.
      - i) Of course the movie was great
  - 2) However, there was one moment of the movie that bugged me.
    - a) It was when the nerdy character played by Rick Moranis,
      - i) is chased by the evil hell hound into Central Park.
    - b) Rick runs up to the windows of *Tavern on the Green*,
      - i) And begins banging on them,
      - ii) Begging the people in the crowded restaurant to let him in!
      - iii) The people look up from their food and their conversations to see Rick,
      - iv) Dragged off screaming into the black night by the forces of hell –
        - (1) And then they go right back to their food and their conversations
          - (a) as if nothing had happened at all!
    - c) The people in theater roared with laughter
    - d) But I was angry!
      - i) “Hey”, I wanted to say, “people in New York are not that way!”
    - e) But then whom was I kidding?
      - i) We all know that that is exactly the way New Yorkers are.
        - (1) From the classic case of Mary Jo Kopeckne,
          - (a) Who was murdered within earshot of half a dozen neighbors
            - (i) who did nothing to help her,
          - (2) To the way in which hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers
            - (a) are being forced out of their homes and neighborhoods
              - (i) by the rising real estate market
            - (3) We New Yorkers so often care
              - (a) Only about the people and the things important to us,
              - (b) And ignore the needs of others.
                - (i) Some of whom are literally banging on the windows
                  1. trying to get in so they can have a place at our table.
- 3) But the truth is, not just new Yorkers are that way.
  - a) Everyone is;
    - i) And the people in the theater knew that too.
      - (1) they knew what would happen if people of color moved next door to them
      - (2) If poor people needed assistance that would cost them tax money
      - (3) If anyone who spoke a different language
      - (4) Or worshiped a different God
      - (5) Or just plain looked different showed up on the streets of their town.
    - ii) They would ignore them, shun them
    - iii) And finally reject them
    - iv) Making sure that they would never have a place at the community’s table.
- 4) Now of course, we don’t want to believe this about ourselves
  - a) And yet the next time you are on the subway;
  - b) The next time you are walking down the street,
  - c) The next time you are standing in a crowded bus;

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- d) Look around at the people you are with and imagine
  - i) Inviting them all into your life,
  - ii) Taking them into your home,
  - iii) Eating with them at your table
  - iv) And you get the picture.
- 5) So did the people of Israel in Jesus' day.
  - a) And if there was ever a group of people whom no one wanted at their table
  - b) it was that group of people known as tax collectors.
    - i) Due to the way they had to collect taxes and make a living,
      - (1) They were seen as extortionists
    - ii) As handlers of Roman money, with their idolatrous images of Emperors claiming to be gods
      - (1) They were seen as blasphemers
    - iii) As employees of the Roman Empire
      - (1) They were seen as traitors
    - iv) They were hardly the kind of people you would invite to your dinner table.
    - v) And thus the faithful members of the people of Israel were forbidden to.
  - c) Nevertheless when Jesus entered the town of Jericho
    - i) Not only did he go right past all the fine upstanding members of the community and speak with Zacchaeus,
      - (1) Not only did he suggest they eat together
      - (2) But he invited himself to eat at Zacchaeus' table!
  - d) It was at that table however, that we discover a strange thing.
    - i) That even though Zacchaeus was a tax collector
      - (1) **he did not extort money**
        - (a) and to prove it he was willing to pay back what he had taken
    - ii) Even though he handled Roman money
      - (1) **He was no blasphemer**
        - (a) and to prove it he would give generously to the poor
    - iii) Even though he worked for the Romans
      - (1) **He was no traitor**
        - (a) and if we needed any more proof
          - (i) well according to Jesus himself he was a child of Abraham too
          - (b) In essence saying that it was no sin eating at Zacchaeus' table;
            - (i) Because he already had a place at God's table.
- 6) It would be easy to understand this story as so many do; as a moral lesson. In brief, if we are willing to be generous like Zacchaeus, then we will have a place at God's table too.
  - a) But when we do that we forget that Jesus does choose him because of what he does
    - i) Rather it is what he does that reveals the kind of person he is God's kind of person.
    - ii) Jesus sees it – he saw it from the moment he walked into Jericho
    - iii) And Jesus demands that we see it too.
- 7) Why because at the heart of our life here in this place is what? This (Indicate the altar)
- 8) Oh yes, we call it an altar,

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- a) and we believe that every time we celebrate mass,
  - i) this place become the place where Jesus' one sacrifice on the cross becomes eternally present.
- b) But first and foremost what was it originally? A table; where Jesus gathered with twelve of his friends for a meal.
  - i) Tell who were these people? We all know; blue collar workers and fishermen, in one case a first century terrorist or zealot. And if that were not enough, we also know more
    - (1) We know that they would betray Jesus deny him and abandon him.
  - ii) Hardly the type of people you would want to associate with; let alone invite to your table.
    - (1) But Jesus did; just like he did with Zacchaeus
    - (2) Just like Jesus continues to do.
      - (a) Because even though our subways, our streets, our buses our cities our world
        - (i) More often are not are places where that satirized moment in Ghostbusters is a sad reality,
        - (ii) And we continue on with our lives while so many literally bang on the windows seeking recognition, seeking entry seeking basic human rights and a place at the table.
      - (b) Because this table is also an altar and this place is a church.
        - (i) That cannot be the case here.
  - (3) Because it is our duty as Catholics; no better put our honor as Christians,
    - (a) to spread the invitation and see to it that all people, alienated and rejected by others,
      - (i) know they will always have a place at this table,
        - 1. which becomes during the mass God's table.
        - 2. that place where they are welcomed and reconciled, fed and forgiven.
        - 3. And when that happens well then a strange thing happens;
          - a. They stop being strangers on the subway
          - b. But become members of this community
          - c. And we see them the way Jesus saw Zacchaeus
          - d. The way he sees us;
            - i. As members of his people
            - ii. Brothers and sisters in his family
            - iii. And welcome guests at his table.