

IN NOMINE IESU

Beloved ones of the Lord, yes, Christ, your King,

Ah, it is good to be back with you once again. For 18 years I came out here to your lovely church nearly every Tuesday morning to study the Scriptures for the coming Sunday with your beloved shepherd under Christ, my dear friend and brother, Pastor Smith. Yes, and whether you are aware of it or not, your Pastor used things in my life as sermon illustrations from time to time in his sermons. I have used his life in my sermons as well. That just goes to show you that not only preachers' kids, but sometimes, our fellow pastors are living illustrations.

Ever and always, the picture painted in these illustrations has been to reflect our most humble servant and Savior, our Jesus, who emptied Himself out on that Cross... all so that we would be filled... with the bread of heaven, filled with the cup of our salvation, the very blood of the sinless Lamb of God. Heavenly Humility, this serving of others first and always, this is the heart of Jesus. It is a heaven-sent humility.

The opposite of Christ and His heaven-sent humility is prideful humility. This opposite of Christ is where I serve you... all so that you will notice just how humble I truly am... and by the way... seeing that you are not so humble as I am. Prideful humility, or shall we call it, human humility, is just one more rung on my good works ladder as I seek to self-justify. As the old Tommy Dell song made famous by Mack Davis put it, "Lord, its hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way!"

Ah, but that word, "humble" or "humility" when spoken by your Redeemer God is referring to His total emptying, His pouring Himself out, even as I heard your dear Pastor say of the Cup of Suffering, Jesus drank this cup "to its very dregs." I have borrowed that idiom, that turn of phrase from him many times. In the Greek, Jesus emptied Himself, He had *kenoo*. It is a good word and from it we get the doctrine of Christ's "Kenosis!" I like those 37 cent theological terms! Don't you!

So let's unpack this word, this "Kenosis" of our Redeeming God. We have a hint of this from the words in the Marriage Ceremony, "With all that I am, and with all that I have, I pledge thee my troth, my undying faithfulness!" Well, it was with all that He is and all that He has, our Jesus poured out everything, to His dying breath... all so that by what He gave... yes, the last full measure... you would, as the Catechism puts it, "Be His own and live under Him in everlasting

innocence, righteousness and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity.” Now say it with me: THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE!

This Christ humility is yours when you confess your sins. Baptismal waters rise to cleanse you, to bring you from the death of sin to the light and life of forgiveness, the reminder that you are indeed His own! It is this humility, this full emptying, to the very last drop and dreg that is served to you from the Table of the Lord.

Table fellowship, the Family gathering at the request and invitation of our Father where we have the fatted calf slaughtered in celebration that we who were lost have been found, we who were dead and have been restored to life, and not just life... eternal life.

To be welcomed to the family table **is to be welcomed as family**. When Judas dipped his sop in the same bowl with Jesus, that made the dagger of his betrayal all the more painful. When one is invited to the table in order to test, to scrutinize in hope of finding some fault or failure, some lapse, this is not a true invitation.

To invite someone into your home, to your very dinner table with the intent to so scrutinize them, this is the same thing as the false humility of which we spoke earlier. It says: “I am superior to you... and here are all the things about you I see that prove my point!” Wow, talk about logs and specs in the eye!

With this evil intent by his hosts Jesus was invited by a ruler of the Pharisees on a Sabbath, to a Sabbath meal. Listen to their hearts:

Surely one of the 613 Levitical Laws would be at least “bent” if not fully “broken” by our honored guest. We’ve got Him! Why just to be sure, we’ve got a ringer in the game! I am an important man. The lowly, the lame, they do not deserve to be at my table! Ah, but we’ve invited this poor soul with the hurtful swelling, that disfiguring edema -- that is dropsy! I wonder who sinned, this man or his parents?

Honestly, he shouldn’t be here, this sinner with the dropsy, but he’s part of the trap. What will Jesus say, what will He do? We know He likes to “show-off” with His healings... what will He do with this poor unfortunate soul?

Beloved, there is **No Direct Question Asked of Jesus!** Yet Jesus heard the question their evil hearts posed. In the Greek, we are told “Jesus **answered the lawyers and Pharisees!**” Let that sink in! He answered them with the question as

to whether it was lawful to heal, that is to do work, on a Sabbath? Crickets! Utter silence! These are the lawyers and Pharisees. They always had something to say about the Law – always!

Before Jesus they were mute, silent, without word! He was not. Jesus took hold of the man with the edema, with the dropsy, and we are told, Jesus “released him,” that is, let the swelling utterly disappear, vanish. This man was released from his swelling that very instant. He was whole! Naturally, medically, this is impossible. Oh, with some Tylenol, some rest with the affected area raised, with some massage, oh, and most definitely, with time, that is assuming the underlying cause was first addressed... only then would the painful and disfiguring swelling slowly abate. Not with Jesus. Jesus took hold of him and released him. Voila! No swelling, no pain, no disfigurement... wholeness!

In humble service, the Lord of Reconciliation, the Savior from sin and death and the devil, He humbly served this man with the severe edema. Christ, who can do all things, and who does them all well, He builds on what He taught earlier when his disciples ate the grain in the grainfield on the Sabbath (Luke 6), how the Sabbath rest was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. **He now teaches that He is that Sabbath rest.** Indeed, Jesus is that Sabbath rest offered through the Cross and those 3 days in that borrowed tomb!

Looking at His host and that host’s co-conspirators, Jesus clarifies how the Sabbath was made for man by asking whether any man among them, if his own son, yes, or if even just an ox, seeing him having fallen into a well would not immediately get to work with rope and tackle, with any energy necessary to pull that son, yes, or even that ox out of that dark, damp hole, even on a Sabbath?

As Jesus makes the payment for our restoration, as He pours Himself out fully, to the very dregs on that Cross, He restores *rest* between God and His fallen creation! The Sabbath rest of Jesus is your full restoration as a Son or Daughter, a Prince or Princess of the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords.

This is what He gives at the Table before you here in this lovely house today. He celebrates His love for His bride with a “Wedding Banquet.” Now here is where human humility is compared to the full emptying full giving of the Groom for His beloved Bride. How may we approach this table?

- With arrogance? “I deserve to be here! Ha! And more than that! I deserve a seat at the head table!” Or?
- ***Not with my own emptiness, but with His emptiness! Now hear this: Your emptiness means nothing... remember, it is empty! Ah, but the Emptiness of Christ as He died for you and for all on the Cross, this is***

full love in full action, the sinless for the sinner, God for man. It is the emptying out, not into nowhere of nothing with nothing! It is the pouring out of Himself all of His righteousness to fill the void of your emptiness. He speaks to your darkness, even as He did at the first creation when His Spirit brooded over the face of the deep and He spoke: Let there be Light!

Yes, to your darkness, to your emptiness, He filled and continues to fill you, through this meal of forgiveness, with His Light and His Life! He speaks to you as His beloved Son, His most cherished daughter and not only invites, He even compels you to come and sit higher, indeed, not merely as a guest. You are to sit in the seat of the Bride at the Wedding Feast! Oh, and that disfiguring swelling, that dropsy of your heart, it is healed. You are clean! You are His bride!

You, dear Christ the King Congregation, you are bedecked in the white gown, made pure white by His blood! This Feast is not just prepared for you like other feasts. All other wedding banquets have bulls and calves slaughtered. They have grain that some man planted in the ground, some grape that someone planted, then harvested and crushed, poured into a skin to ferment over time.

You, dear Bride of Christ the King, you eat a Meal not only prepared by your Host. This meal upon which you feast is His very Body, broken, His very Blood, outpoured! What a feast! What a humbling, to not only serve the Best to you, but to have you receive the Best which is all that He is and all that He has, yes, as we said earlier, all so that you would be His own!

Now if that was all there was here it would be ENOUGH! Ah, but with our Savior enough is never enough! Remember the man with dropsy and how the lawyers and Pharisees should not have invited him. His disease was no doubt proof of some unanswered sin! This is proof of his uncleanness! Or so they thought!

Look around you in these pews. You know one another far better than I do. In our prayers this morning, you will hear names that are familiar for they are family. You have been praying for real needs, horrible hurts. You and those around you are indeed the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind! Ah, and now, here, at the Family Table, your Father declares you free, He releases you from your poverty, your incapacity and blindness caused by sin.

Your only response is humble thanks. His Heavenly humility, His outpouring of all that He is and has causes you to respond with a humble heart. Yes, from His humility, His self-emptying, you are filled, from without, and therefore you are thankful, grateful, humbled.

He is your Sabbath Rest and in that you are refreshed, restored, and fed. You are fed to refresh, to restore, and to feed the world, not with your goods, but with His Rest, His forgiveness, and His peace. Oh, what a privilege to be the bride of Christ, the King. Amen and SOLI DEO GLORIA.