

youthESource Drama

Who Gets the First Pew?

by Rev. Dean Nadasdy

Based on the Gospel for Proper 17, the 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: Luke 14:1-14

Retelling parables is a little bit like retelling a good joke. You can't expect people to laugh as hard as they did the first time. Jesus' parables are masterpieces that stand for all time on their own. There is no competing with them. Still, one tries to grasp the depths of their meanings. These dramas represent such an endeavor. They are parable on top of parables. Some nugget of truth from Jesus' stories has been pulled and recast in contemporary terms. Hopefully, the recasting enhances rather than detracts from Jesus' first and best intentions.

These are Gospel dramas. By that I mean that they are meant to enhance the reading and preaching from the Gospel (Series C) for a particular Sunday. The dramas require little staging and rehearsal. Usually, one rehearsal is adequate for production. The Focus section might be included in the morning worship folder or read before the drama is presented. The best place for the drama in the service order is probably after the Gospel has been read.

Have fun with these dramas. Probe your characters and make the lines alive with feeling. True, you're piling parables atop parables, but you're working with stories that have stood the test of centuries of retelling. You can't top the one who first told them, but you can help ensure that people today hear His message, and maybe even laugh well—twice.

FOCUS: The exalted will be humbled and the humbled exalted...even in church.

CHARACTERS

Mavis - haughty and proud; seeking recognition

Willard - fair and impartial; open to truth

Harold - discerning

Janice - supporting Mavis all the way, yet open, too

Frank - bitter about the changes in the church; competitive

Harv - a joker

SETTING

The setting is a church council meeting. A table and chairs can be set up to create the scene.

Willard: This special meeting of the Grace Church Council will now come to order. We'll dispense with the reading of the minutes and get right down to business. Mavis, I understand you have a proposal to make.

Mavis: That's right, Mr. Chairman. I have a copy for everyone.

Janice: That's our Mavis. Always efficient! (Mavis distributes copies of her resolution.)

Willard: Proceed, Mavis.

Mavis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I actually read the resolution, I hope you all can appreciate the work that has gone into it, not to mention the fact that the Women 's Guild will have to get along without me tonight, at least as long as I'm with you.

Harv: Something tells me I'd rather be at the Women's Guild than here right now.

Mavis: And what is that supposed to mean, Harvey Schmaltz?

Harv: Nothing, Mavis, nothing at all.

Willard: Proceed, Mavis.

Mavis: WHEREAS, the Stalwart family is a charter family of Grace Church; and WHEREAS Stalwarts have held every church office in Grace Church over the last 132 years, never forsaking a call to humble Service...

Harv: Did she say humble? Isn't her last name Stalwart?

Mavis: And WHEREAS, we Stalwarts have bailed this church out of potential bankruptcy no less than four times since 1848; and WHEREAS, six of the twelve stained glass windows were donated by the Stalwarts; THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the front pew, left side as you face the altar, right side as the preacher faces the people, be designated as "THE STALWART PEW," and so marked with a fitting plaque, from henceforth to be occupied only by members of the Stalwart family; and BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution be irrevocable as long as Grace Church stands.

Willard: Is that all, Mavis?

Frank: Sounds like quite enough to me.

Mavis: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my presentation. I so move.

Willard: Do I heard a second?

Janice: Oh, yes, Willard, I'll second that. The Stalwarts have been pillars of this church. The least we can do is establish a Stalwart Pew.

Willard: It has been moved and seconded that a pew, front row center, be set aside...

Mavis: That's the front row on the left side as you face the altar...

Harv: And on the right side as the preacher faces the people! Oh, Boy, I don't believe this!

Willard: You all heard the motion. Any discussion?

Frank: That's just one more change that'll rock the boat around here at Grace Church. The preacher's already wearing that crazy looking robe. They've got little angels lighting the candles, and we're singing hymns. Now we're going to start putting plaques on pews?!

Mavis: Just one plaque on one pew, Frank Thurman!

Frank: Well, I just can't see it! Why do the Stalwarts get a pew when we Thurmans have been here just as long as they have?! You give them that pew, Willard, and I'll never set foot in that church again!

Mavis: Is that a promise, Frank?

Willard: Let's have some order here, and maybe a little Christian courtesy! Now, anyone else have anything to say?

Harold: Well, Willard, I was just wondering why Mavis wants that particular pew.

Frank: She knows right well that she'd be the first one to Communion every time. That's why she wants the pew. Tell 'em , Mavis, Isn't that true?

Mavis: It had crossed my mind.

Janice: And why shouldn't Mavis be the first one to commune? The Stalwarts donated the chalice, didn't they?

Harv: Oh, brother! (thinks about it a moment) Well, why not! Why not give 'em the front pew if they want it so bad? Nobody ever sits up front anyway!

Mavis: Thank you, Harvey.

Harv: Don't mention it.

Harold: Except Grandma Wilson.

Willard: What's that Harold?

Harold: I said, nobody sits up there except Grandma Wilson. Pretty near every Sunday at that.

Harv: That's right. I forgot a bout her. Nice old gal.

Harold: She's hard of hearing, I think. Must sit up there so she can hear the preacher.

Harv: She was my Sunday School teacher for three years running, you know. How she put up with me that long I'll never know. Learned my Bible from her, though, that's for sure .

Harold: I remember Mrs. Wilson coming over when my Mom was so sick years ago. She did the laundry, cleaned the house and cooked up a mighty fine meal.

Janice: She did that for our family once, too.

Frank: If you ask me, Grandma Wilson must hold the record for praying around here, too. Why, you can catch her here during the day quietly at prayer. And ask her some time for whom she's praying and she'll say, "For you. That's who."

Mavis: Well, there are other pews, you know. If she's so nice, I'm sure she won't mind moving.

Harold: No, sir, Willard. Let's keep Grandma Wilson right where she is . She's there not out of strength but out of weakness. She needs that pew.

Mavis: Willard. I'm warning you, you let me down on this one and I'm walking right out of here and not coming back.

Willard: Let's vote. All in favor? (Mavis raises her hand.) Opposed? (Others all raise their hands.)

Mavis: I've never been so insulted in my life. Some old poor grandmother taking my place in the first pew.

Harv: Mavis , it never was your place. That's the point.

Willard: Do I hear any other business?

Harv: Mavis here may want to try for the second pew.

Frank: I move we adjourn.

Willard: Still with us, Mavis?

Mavis: (gathers belongings and storms out) I've never been so humiliated in all my life!

Harv: Don't worry, Mavis, the humble will be exalted, although in your case it may take a while.

Willard: This meeting is adjourned.

(All exit discussing events.)

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