Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“You will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:14).

Phil 2:1-4; *Luke 14:12-14*

In the short Gospel passage today, Jesus reveals one of the most basic attitudes that distinguished his vision from the logic of this world.

Worldly logic is built on the idea of *quid pro quo*. Everything we do should be an investment from which we expect to reap some return. Love for love, favors for favors, work for pay, effort for reward, virtue for benefit. With this foundation we build up an entire life, including our ego and sense of self. We make ourselves and extend ourselves into the world keeping score and feeling a kind of entitlement, even before God.

In offering his teaching about inviting the poor to dinner, Jesus tells his hosts that if they escape the *quid pro quo* logic of only investing where we will reap a return, they will move to higher realm of existence, where true righteousness is revealed beyond this world, where life is eternal. To understand this freedom and generosity here and now is to already live the resurrection. By paying it forward, we enter God's limitless economy of love and mercy, and we need never worry about reward or payment or return again.

To grasp this freedom, think about how much time and energy people devote to keeping track of their personal account books of *quid pro quo*, measuring everything by how we gain or lose, and by cutting off people or situations that do not meet our expectations. In contrast, a generous person simply gives himself away each day, lavishing his life and her gifts on anyone he or she meets without worrying about the return. Such a gracious life is filled with joy, and as life flows through us, it is replenished like a river of fresh water within that never stops. It is in touch with God, the limitless source of every good thing.

Jesus lived like this, giving himself away and in the end emptying himself on the cross as the example every disciple is to imitate. This secret is the joy of the Gospel.

Halloween, the annual national give away feast, is tonight. For all the hoopla and sugar we give out, it is a good way to observe the “pay it forward” principle with small children who venture out with parents to experience the neighborhood and the wonder of other children going from house to house for treats. The oohs and ahs at their costumes and the small gifts they receive can be a teachable moment about generous adults who are the givers. In a culture now anticipating tense and acrimonious elections, this experience of fun and unity is worth celebrating with our

children.