

RULES OF THE GAME

June 6th, 2005

LEADER: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Invite persons present to pause for a few moments of silent recollection and to offer any special intentions.)

Life in our North American culture seems so political; every day we hear comments to that affect. When a fellow staff member receives that new appointment we were hoping for, we say in disgust, "Its all politics!" When our child isn't chosen for that elite sports team, we angrily vent "Making this team is so political! What chance does my kid have?"

On the flip side, when people find themselves on the receiving end of the political game, there's a tendency to lord it over those who have been passed over; to consider those on the outside as being somehow unworthy of advancement, as losers, as outcasts deserving of their plight because of their failings and faults.

This Sunday's gospel reveals how counter-cultural our Christian worldview is to be.

Narrator: As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him,

Jesus: Follow me.

Narrator: and he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples,

All: Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Narrator: But when Jesus heard this, he said,

Jesus: Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.

Narrator: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: In this gospel account, Jesus reveals himself as the great equalizer. He cuts through the usual politics by changing the rules of the game. In his eyes, who's in and who's out isn't based on a person's earthly status – on what a person has or doesn't have – but on what a person needs. Jesus' words and actions reveal that he showers his time, attention and loving presence on those who know their need of God's mercy. In God's kingdom, people are in because they recognize their need of God's limitless love and say "Yes" to this undeserved divine gift.

Jesus takes our human desire to play the political game and stands it on its head. In his kingdom, the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Do we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear? Do we have the courage to proclaim and live the same?