

Pentecost 15 – September 1, 2013
Text: Proverbs 25:2-10
Theme: "May I See Your Ticket?"

As my wife can attest, I am not one to pay for expensive tickets. If I am at the same event as you, and my tickets cost \$25 while your tickets cost \$225, I figure I win! I don't mind a little altitude for \$200 in my pocket and you get what I like to call a full view of the stage! Besides, during the first act, you look down and spot seats not occupied and just move down during intermission, right?

Page | 1

However, there is always that potential most awkward moment of public embarrassment when the usher says, excuse me, may I see your ticket please? Then there is the walk of shame back to the upper balcony where dregs like me sit. However, for Noah's birthday a couple years ago, I took him to New York to see the Lion King on Broadway and I was determined to get great seats. I paid \$250 a ticket but we were 6 rows back from the stage and dead center. It was an amazing experience. But one of the things I noticed was how nice it was to be waved forward by the usher and to know that your tickets say that you are supposed to be down front and center for the show.

In his Proverbs, Solomon notices the difference between God and earthly rulers. Solomon was wise and he understood that he was King not by human right or might but by the will of God alone.

So while he had all the earthly privileges of a king, he reminded himself regularly that he was only God's servant in the role in which God had placed him and that is all any of us are. We are all only God's servants and some of us serve on the main floor of life while others of us serve in the second balcony but we are placed where we are placed by God and should the time come for us to change roles, God will wave us forward.

Pope Francis is an example of one God waved forward. One of the more moving moments of Pope Francis' first moments as Pope was his request for the people to pray for Pope Benedict and for him. He is a humble man and chooses the lower seat, and apparently refuses to move even when offered a higher seat by worldly people. It is reported that he lived in a small room in Buenos Aires instead of the Cardinal's Palace and that he rode the bus to work.

While we serve on this earth, we serve wherever the Lord needs us and life is not about trying to sneak into a better seat. Rather we, like St. Paul, learn to be content with whatever seat we are given and strive to serve God from that seat. If you are a mother or father, your first line of service is to rear your children in the Church knowing Christ as their Lord and Savior. If you are a husband or a wife, your first line of service is to strive to see that your marriage mirrors the love Christ has for the Church and so

reflect his love to all who see your relationship. If you have workers under you, your first line of service is to treat them as Christ has treated you and strive to be Christ-like to them so that they may be drawn to him through you. The point is that whether you are on the front row or in the second balcony, you have a job to do and your primary concern is not to figure out how to get closer to the stage but how to glorify God and help others glorify him as well.

To some, this is a steep order. They are so busy worrying about worldly matters that they don't even hear Jesus' voice.

"...everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

We are given a ticket to the front row of the kingdom and that ticket cannot be earned. Great knowledge and power will do us no good. Position in this world will do us no good. Only faith in Christ will move us to not just the front row but also the stage itself – God's Holy Kingdom. None of it was not our doing, but only God's. Until he waves us forward to the banquet, we serve where he has placed us. If he wants our earthly situation to change he will change it, and in a lifetime we may find ourselves serving him anywhere from the owner's box to the concession stand but on the last day, he will wave us forward to take our rightful places.

Satan will pervert this truth and try to tempt us with greed and pride and works righteousness. He will point out to us how much we are worth and how we are so much better than someone else, how we should have better seats or that we deserve the seats we have because we have earned them. So knowing that, Jesus tells us ahead of time, it is always best to assume the lowest seat on this earth. If God wants us someplace different, he will call us forward. Our calling, as his children, is service, service to God and service to one another. Our future is secured by the work of Christ. His death on the cross paid for our sins and secured eternal life for us. The place is prepared for us and awaits our arrival when our service is through. Until that day, serve and rejoice. Receive the Word of God and his Holy Sacrament to strengthen you for service and remember: that day is coming when you and I will be ushered down front and into the kingdom.