

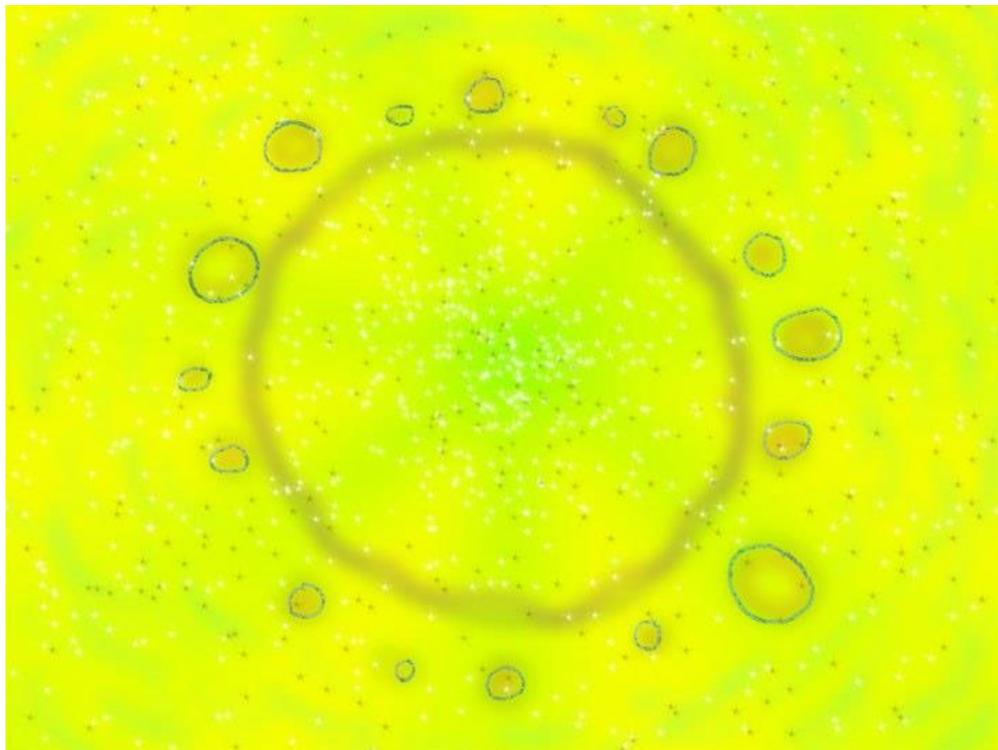
SERMON FOR SEPTEMBER 1, 2013

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i
United Church of Christ – *Labor Day Weekend*
Communion Sunday – 15th Sunday after Pentecost

7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: **Luke 14:1, 7-14 (Focus)**; Hebrews 13:1-8,
15-16

Message: **"*GOD Calls Us to Creative
Interdependence!*"**
Kekapa P.K. Lee



Gathering in the Word

Creative Interdependence is defined as:

- ✓ Depending on one another,
- ✓ Unable to exist without each other,
- ✓ Relying on mutual assistance, support, cooperation,
- ✓ Interaction among constituent parts or members.
- ✓ . . . Sounds like what the Church is and to be!

Our Bible lesson calls us to creative interdependence!

- ✓ We cannot thrive, or even survive, without recognizing and acting on our sense of **interdependence** in our church, our neighborhoods and the world around us!
- ✓ **Authentic Creation** emerges and comes to light from **healthy relatedness**, and **not** from picking-up-by-your-bootstraps rugged individualism!
- ✓ By claiming our **interdependence** and the role of others with us—most especially GOD—in our successes—our successes will benefit our families, our friends, our neighborhoods, our church—and the people all around us all the time!
- ✓ We will put the “law of love” above the “law of self” and discover a world of constant opportunity to see holiness everywhere and welcome angels in every one we meet and bump into or them into us!

Hearing the Word

Luke 14:1, 7-14 (The VOICE Bible)

14 ¹Another Sabbath Day came and Jesus was invited to an official’s home for a meal. This fellow was a leader of

the Pharisees, and Jesus was still under close surveillance by them.

⁷ Then He noticed how the guests were jockeying for places of honor at the dinner, so He gave them advice.

Jesus: ⁸ Whenever someone invites you to a wedding dinner, don't sit at the head table. Someone more important than you might also have been invited, ⁹ and your host will have to humiliate you publicly by telling you to give your seat to the other guest and to go find an open seat in the back of the room. ¹⁰ Instead, go and sit in the back of the room. Then your host may find you and say, "My friend! Why are you sitting back here? Come up to this table near the front!" Then you will be publicly honored in front of everyone. ¹¹ Listen, if you lift yourself up, you'll be put down, but if you humble yourself, you'll be honored. ¹² Jesus still wasn't finished. Now He turned to the host who had invited Him to this gathering.

Jesus: When you host a dinner or banquet, don't invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your rich neighbors. If you do, they might invite you to a party of their own, and you'll be repaid for your kindness.

¹³ Instead, invite the poor, the amputees, the cripples, the blind. ¹⁴ Then you'll be blessed because they can never repay you. Your reward will come from God at the resurrection of the just and good.

So Jesus gets invited to a dinner party at an important leader of the Pharisees (*Jewish religious group*). Why was

he invited? Probably because of social necessity—Jesus was getting popular and etiquette demanded that the Pharisee leader not snub and insult this new rabbi. They also could have been setting Jesus up—and wanted to watch Jesus carefully.

We skip verses 2-6 (man with dropsy; edema—had labored breathing). We move to verse 7ff.

The dinner party is off to a rocky start—it's time to sit for the meal—and with a wry and ironic grin on Jesus' face—Jesus takes note of the polite, yet indisputable jostling-push-and-shove that is going on as the guests try to get the best seats.

So Jesus takes the lead and speaks,

“You know I was just thinking: when someone invites you to a wedding, don't try to sit at the head table on your own initiative. Next thing you know—the host asks you to move because that seat has been reserved for someone else and you'll be so dreadfully embarrassed!

Just sit in the back of the room. It's the humble way to go at life and anyway—if then the host requests you to sit closer to the front of the room—you will have nothing to feel shame-faced about—but will actually be honored!”

So what happened? I imagine that once Jesus said this *none-too-subtle-rebuke* all of those snooty-high-and-mighty dinner guests with down-trodden eyes—just plopped into the seat closest to them!

Jesus is on a roll!

So now he addresses the host – the leader of the Pharisees and says: when you throw a party, don't invite friends, brothers, and rich people. Jesus was describing every person around the table. **Instead, Jesus says—go out and invite the poor, the blind, and the crippled!**

So if you're at the table and hear all this—you're ready to quietly leave—the part is essentially over. All anybody wanted to do was to leave—and quickly!

Luke doesn't tell us how the Sabbath-day dinner party ended. But we have to guess that when Jesus left—his host didn't smile and say "come again." The next dinner part Jesus attends comes in Luke 15.

So we know who Jesus' kind of people were. The question to us this morning is whether Jesus' kind of people are our kind of people?

Jesus wasn't being rude here—Jesus was poignant—and trying to make an impression on the folks by his teaching!

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16 (The VOICE Bible)

13 Let love continue among you. ² Don't forget to extend your hospitality to all—even to strangers—for *as you know*, some have unknowingly shown kindness to heavenly messengers in this way. ³ Remember those

imprisoned *for their beliefs* as if you were their cellmate; and care for any who suffer harsh treatment, as you are all one body.

⁴ Hold marriage in high esteem, all of you, and keep the marriage bed pure because God will judge those who commit sexual sins.

⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have because He has said, "I will never leave you; I will always be by your side." ⁶ Because of this promise, we may boldly say,

The Lord is my help—I won't be afraid of anything.
How can anyone harm me?

⁷ Listen to your leaders, who have spoken God's word to you. Notice the fruits of their lives and mirror their faith.

⁸ Jesus the Anointed One is always the same: yesterday, today, and forever.

¹⁵ Through Jesus, then, let us keep offering to God our own sacrifice, the praise of lips that confess His name without ceasing. ¹⁶ Let's not neglect what is good and share what we have, for these sacrifices also please God.

The reading from Hebrews 13 describes a lifestyle of spiritual interdependence and awareness!

Hebrews 13 teaches us to a way of life where we pay attention to GOD's presence in **every** relationship around

us! Every moment in our life, wherever we are—can be a divine encounter with GOD.

- ✓ Our marriage, our children & family!
- ✓ Conversations we have with friends and strangers!
- ✓ Our job and where we work are holy as well!
- ✓ Every moment of our lives!

We may be entertaining angels in disguise—and this reality calls us to treat everyone as an angel in the making—all the time!

Doing the Word

So what is the Word of God for us this first day of September 2013 and Communion Sunday?

1.ONE: WE ARE TO LIVE ACTIVE INTERDEPENDENCE LIVES EVERY DAY!

Creative Interdependence is defined as:

- ✓ Depending on one another,
- ✓ Being unable to exist without each other,
- ✓ Relying on mutual assistance, support, cooperation,
- ✓ Interacting with everyone,
- ✓ . . . **sounds like what the Church is and to be!**

2.TWO: IN GOD'S KINGDOM AND REALM—THE PLAYING FIELD IS LEVELED ECONOMICALLY, RELATIONALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY!

- ✓ No one has the upper hand—even though we may be more successful economically or more

awakened spiritually—we are all sisters and brothers and members of GOD family!

- ✓ Our place in society and church depends on the efforts and affirmation of our sisters and brothers and even strangers—not ourselves!
- ✓ We are Family-‘Ohana; we are all sisters and brothers together!

3.THREE: WE KNOW WHO JESUS’ KIND OF PEOPLE WERE *(based on today’s lesson)*; **THE QUESTION TO ASK US AND OUR CHURCH IS WHETHER JESUS’ KIND OF PEOPLE ARE OUR KIND OF PEOPLE AS WELL!**

Another way to look at this is **grace**. In invitation of **grace=gift** is not “you scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours” kind of faith and practice. Because we have received **GOD’s grace**—extend that **grace** to others, even the homeless/houseless; people we see on the sidewalks; not “our kind of people,” and—without expecting a payback!

Sent in the Word

According to both lessons from Luke 14 and Hebrews 13—our aspirations, goals and ambitions betray and tell our hearts—with GOD, or with other gods. We are all sojourners and travelers who are passing through in a land that does not belong to us but to GOD.

We are here for a while . . . we are a people of GOD’s grace! Let us be GOD’s grace to everyone!