



northminster presbyterian church

2400 old alabama road  
roswell, georgia 30076

02-Sep-2007

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 13:1-8,15-16 Luke 14:7-14

**SERMON:** And They Called It Puppy Love (Carolyn Christie)

It was Labor Day Weekend, 1972. There was a hint of fall in the air, the leaves were just beginning to turn and every once in a while you could catch a whiff of muscadines when you walked in the woods. Summer was almost over. Lynnae White and I were leaning over the bridge that crosses the end of the lake at Camp Calvin. We were doing our favorite thing to do at Camp Calvin; we were watching Stuart McMullen paddle a canoe. Stuart was the preacher's son, he sat on the first pew every Sunday in all his sullen glory, slumped over and glaring at his father, wishing his dad had chosen any other profession in the world. He was almost an Eagle Scout, and as he guided the canoe around the glassy lake, he was the epitome of grace. And I loved him deeply, with all the passion of a twelve-year-old girl. Those of you with twelve-year-old girls know what I'm talking about. That was the weekend that I finally realized that Stuart McMullen would never belong to me. I spent the entire afternoon that Monday sprawled across my lime-green shag carpet, weeping and listening to Donnie Osmond.

*[Carolyn sings]*

*And they called it, puppy love,*

*just because we're in our teens.*

*O, I guess they'll never know, how a young heart really feels,  
and why I love him so.*

I had had my first taste of rejection. Well, ever since Suzie Miller stole Matt Matthews from me in first grade, I'd had it pretty easy.

But we all know about rejection, don't we? We all know what it feels like to be cut from the team, or to get a letter of regret from the one college we really wanted to go to, or to be downsized out of a job, or to be the one who didn't get an invitation to the slumber party. Yes, we all know that sinking sick feeling that being rejected gives you in the pit of your stomach, the way we can feel that nothing will ever be right again.

I often wonder how the children at Thornwell get over their feelings of being rejected by their parents. I worshiped with the Thornwell community last Sunday. Pastor Alice had us whisper to one another "*God loves you.*" We did that several times during the service and the sound of children's voices whispering in my ear "*God loves you,*" was one of the most beautiful things I have ever heard. And I felt the love of God in that community, the love that can begin to heal those wounds. And I knew that that's what being a Christian is all about.

The writer of Luke's gospel is very focused on the issues of wealth and concern for the poor and outcast. The scripture we've just heard is telling us exactly how God wants us to treat each other. "The next time you put on a dinner, don't just invite your friends and family and rich neighbors, the kind of people who will return the favor. Invite some people who never get invited out, the misfits from the wrong side of the tracks. You will be, and you will experience a blessing. They won't be able to return the favor, but the favor will be returned – *oh, how it will be returned!* – at the resurrection of God's people."

Some scholars believe that the author intended his book to be read and heard by those of higher status in Greco-Roman society and that the banquet in our Scripture can be seen as a symbol of that society. Luke was trying to spur those Jesus followers into taking action. We've heard that

message at Northminster Presbyterian Church. We take action. With God's help we provide clothing and food for those who need it, we provide safe havens for children to meet with their birth parents, we build habitat houses, we built a church in Brazil, we offer angel food, we race for the cure, we do so many wonderful things for so many people. But sometimes we forget who is in control. Sometimes we get scared and we get worried and we wonder about our future. Especially in times of transition, it's easy to let our minds go in circles trying to figure out exactly what's going to happen and how we're gonna' make it happen and how quickly it will happen, and what will happen if it doesn't happen. We just drive ourselves crazy! In the midst of one of those crazy times, I was trying to write this sermon, and I had nothing. I finally just stopped trying to think at God and just listened. I prayed "God, what message do you want your people to hear?" And it came to me like that billboard that says "*Just tell the kids I love them.*"

God loves you. God's love is not puppy love. *It is an all-consuming raging forest fire love.* It is a love that will never reject us, that will always embrace us, that will always forgive us. When we open ourselves to that love, it is too much for one heart to contain. It spills over in a joyous celebration of love that pushes us outside of our comfort zones and forces us to share that love with others. And when we look at each other through God's eyes of love, there are no misfits; there are no outcasts, because we see others as beloved children of God. Now I want you to turn to your neighbors and whisper into the ears of three or four people "*God loves you.*"

Praise God in all things. God is in control. *God loves you!* **Amen.**

---

#### **Hebrews 13:1-8,15-16**

1Let mutual love continue. 2Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. 4Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. 5Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." 6So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" 7Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. 8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 15Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

#### **Luke 14:7-14**

7When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 8"When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 9and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 10But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 11For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." 12He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

*The New Revised Standard Version*, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.