

The first will be last and the last will be first.

I grew up in a place and time of privilege.

Richardson Texas, and outline suburb of Dallas.

The 1950s and 60s in the early 70s

I was and I remain a white or if you prefer Caucasian male

In my high school, JJ Pearce, home of the mighty Mustangs, there were over 1800 students and not a single student of color.

We had one African-American English teacher.
She stayed one year.

We had one Jewish student whose name was Jaimie.

She was a shirttail relative of Stanley Marcus, of Neiman Marcus fame.

We allowed her on the edges of society, because she gave us rides to school and her big car, it was generous with us and using her department store discount

We were white, we were largely male.

The world gave us everything, and we thought we owed the world nothing.

We hear these words

the first will be last and the last will be first.

What what we make of them?

Are they a real threat?

because we know we are first – at least in our own minds.

True, sometimes we play mind games with ourselves to try to spiritualize the meaning

Or foolishly tell ourselves and somehow we are the persecuted enough the persecutors the poor and not the rich the powerless and not the powerful.

But really, it comes down to economics – after all Jesus is talking about real workers here in the real wages and real disparities.

in reality, economically at least we are each and all of us in the top Echelons of our large and diverse world.

Even the poorest people in America, sit atop The steeple composed of humanity material goods greed and conspicuous consumption which is what we have made of this world.

That's even more true now than it was when Jesus spoke.

And Jesus words

the first will be last

are a not so gentle reminder that in gods eyes, and God's realm the truest reality of realities, things are quite different than they appear.

In the unspoken assumption is that we had better start acting that way and we better do it darn quick

What does that mean, practically speaking?

That means we expect an offer welcome to all, regardless of their social status, their orientation, their religious or political beliefs, their culture, their mental capacity or incapacity.

That means that we listen carefully and actively to other people stories, and that we celebrate the truth that they bring us, even if those truths are not our own.

Finally, whenever we as a group as a voting block, as a family, as the neighborhood, I have the opportunity we treat others as we are so like to be treated.

Flannery O'Connor was a great chronicler of human life in her Southern Gothic novels and short stories.

In one story, entitled revelation, A woman named Mrs. Turpin thinks her self to be the cream of society,

She Has the awful truth revealed to her in the vision

Until the sun slipped finally behind the tree line, Mrs. Turpin remained there with her gaze bent to them as if she were absorbing some abysmal life-giving knowledge. At last she lifted her head. There was only a purple streak in the sky, coming through a field of crimson and leading, like an extension of the highway, into the descending dusk. She raised her hands from the side of the pen in a gesture hieratic and profound. A visionary light settled in her eyes. She saw the streak as a vast swinging bridge extending upward from the earth through a field of living fire. Upon it a vast horde of souls were rumbling toward heaven. There were whole companies of white-trash, clean for the first time in their lives, and bands of black niggers in white robes, and battalions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping and leaping like frogs. And bringing up the end of the procession was a tribe of people whom she recognized at once as those who, like herself and Claud, had always had a little of everything and the God-given wit to use it right. She leaned forward to observe them closer. They were marching behind the others with great dignity, accountable as they had always been for good order and common sense and respectable behavior. They alone were on key. Yet she could see by their shocked and altered faces that even their virtues were being burned away. She lowered her hands and gripped the rail of the hog pen, her eyes small but fixed unblinkingly on what lay ahead. In a moment the vision faded, but she remained where she was, immobile.

At length she got down and turned off the faucet and made her slow way on the darkening path to the house. In the woods around her the invisible cricket choruses had struck up, but what she heard were the voices of the souls climbing upward into the starry field and shouting hallelujah.

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Where will we be?

Amen.