

HUMBLE PIE**Luke 14:1-24****(Read Luke 14:1-24)**

Intro: Jesus accepted invitations. We've already established that over the past several weeks. Jesus liked a good meal and he enjoyed a good party. It's obvious that Jesus was invited because it's recorded here time after time in the Gospels. One of the reasons for the invites is obvious here in our text – the religious leaders who were increasingly threatened by Jesus, simply wanted to keep their eye on him. They were watching for any slip-up that could be used against him. Every time he came into one of their houses the whispers behind the hand were flying with "What's he going to do now?!".

That's a bit cynical maybe, since there were a lot of really good Pharisees who wanted to walk closer to God, and they knew something was wonderful about Jesus. So, even though Jesus had frequent disputes with the Pharisees, he never failed to spend time with them. Remember Luke 19:10? Jesus had come *to seek and to save the lost* and so he came to love them and show them a godly example whether they were holier than thou or groveling sinners who knew what they were.

One of Jesus's most effective missions was the events he attended – and meals were a huge part of that. *The son of man came eating and drinking* Matthew 11:19, and that's why we have so many lessons from a dinner table. There are several lessons from this one meal that I just read about from Luke 14 so I better get started.

First, let me continue with what I just talked about a bit ago, and take it a bit further...

They were watching Jesus and they are watching us too

- I'm talking about the jealous religious leaders. They watched him closely. As time went on he was under constant surveillance. The Pharisees wanted to be shocked. They hoped for him to do something, anything, that they could use to discredit him and bring him down. It's funny how 2000 years later it's still that way with preachers – there is always someone who wants you to fail. And the sure thing is, with humans it WILL happen sooner or later in some form or another. But, though Jesus was a man, he was also God, and perfect, so no matter how they tried to trip him up with questions and difficult scenarios they could not make him fail.
- Some think that this was one of those difficult scenarios and believe that the man who was brought to him with dropsy was a plan to back Jesus into a corner. The poor man had dropsy which an old name for fluid retention. It may have come from kidney or cardiac problems and both are bad news in our day of modern medicine, but in the first century they would eventually be fatal. This man was obviously a tough case – his face and legs were swollen and the Pharisees just dared Jesus to heal the man – and heal him on the Sabbath. The latter was a sin and the former was impossible – they had him now! If Jesus even tried they had him, and then when he failed they'd be vindicated.
- But Jesus had them. He asked, "*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?*" (v. 3) and they couldn't, or maybe more so, wouldn't answer. So Jesus healed the poor man and sent him happily on his way. And then he put the ball back in their court with another question, "*Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?*" (v. 5). Once again they had no answer because he had backed them into their own corner.
- Instead as they watched they got schooled. Notice that Jesus did this with love and grace. Everyone saw what Jesus would do in varying situations and they formed their opinions about him (and his Father) based on what they saw. This why Jesus was so wildly popular with the regular Joes and Janes he ministered to – they saw love and grace that come with a real relationship with God the Father. They may not have necessarily known it was a relationship with God – but that was coming.
- PEOPLE ARE WATCHING US TOO. Let's learn from Jesus and make sure we represent our God well. We too, need to respond with restraint, grace, and mercy.
- Here's something else to learn from Jesus . . .

Jesus saw a need and did something

- That meant the man was instantly changed.
- The Pharisees brought the man with dropsy to Jesus not because of any concern for his condition – they wanted to make Jesus fail. In turn Jesus redeemed the situation with a healing. G. Campbell Morgan writes,

“Jesus is bringing into the teaching that members of his kingdom should act towards others as God has acted toward them. God gives to those who cannot requite him. His kindness goes out to those who can offer him nothing in return – but love. To act this way towards one’s fellow man is to enter into the spirit and purpose of God, and is to be richly blessed at the final judgment.”

- There was another need that Jesus saw. He saw Pharisees who needed to see the true way to salvation. His question had only one, no-braine, answer, “You aren’t cold, brutal and cruel. You’d never leave your son, or even an ox, in a well, on any day, let alone the Sabbath. Right? So, extend that same common-sense compassion to needy people.” Morgan writes, *“Thus, while our Lord rebuked the wrong attitude and temper of these men, he did so by appealing to the best within them and calling them to be true to it. His purpose is not that of shaming men, but that of saving them.”*
- If he meant that message for Pharisees – he meant it for us too. And it comes from yet another meal parable. Last week I pointed out that we are broken people following Jesus into a broken world. Tim Chester writes, *“If you tell someone he’s a sinner who needs God while you’re handing him a cup of soup, then he’ll hear you saying he’s a loser who should become like you. But when you eat together as friends and you tell him what a messed up person you are, then you can tell him about sin and grace.”*
- And this from Chester, *“Jesus didn’t run projects, establish ministries, create programs, or put on events. He ate meals. If you routinely share meals and you have a passion for Jesus, then you’ll be doing mission. It’s not that meals save people. People are saved through the gospel message. But meals will create opportunities to share that message in a context that resonates powerfully with what you’re saying.”*
- You might say you don’t have time to evangelize or that you don’t have the evangelism gift – but we all have to eat. Three meals a day, 7 days a week. That’s 21 opportunities to just be with people and be Jesus to them. More on this at the end of the talk.
- Something else that comes from Jesus’s teaching at this meal is the seating chart at the banquet in vv. 7-11 is this . . .

Don’t play the self-promotion game

- He who exalts himself will eat humble pie, but he who humbles himself will eat warmed pecan pie with Graeters Vanilla Bean Ice Cream. In the Kingdom of God worldly values are flipped upside down. In Luke 18 Jesus tells a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector who both go to the temple to pray. Listen, *The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”* Luke 18:11-14. Sounds familiar doesn’t it? It’s exactly what he taught here in our text in verse 11. It’s a theme for Jesus and it must be a theme for his people too.
- Don’t take the highest place on your own initiative. Jesus wasn’t just teaching good manners, he’s teaching a genuine humility that puts others ahead of us. Paul wrote, *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* Philippians 2:3 and then he proceeded show how Jesus did just that in the next 8 verses. Humility is simply following in Jesus’s footsteps.
- And the final lesson from a meal . . .

Don’t miss the invitation to the great banquet

- In verse 12 Jesus informs the people around the table that they shouldn’t be so sure that they will be invited to the great Messianic banquet. The names on the guest list will not just those we might think are worthy. G. Campbell Morgan writes, *“Our Lord was showing the relation between bad manners and bad motives, and good motives and good manners. If our motives are bad, our manners are bad. If we are seeking for self-exaltation, then we jostle to get the place of distinction. If our motive is good, if we are seeking nothing for ourselves, we never jostle for the place of distinction. If our motive is in asking people in that; then all our hospitality is of the essence of rudeness; but if we offer hospitality and bring in the poor, and maimed, and the blind, and the lame, who cannot recompense us because they have no means of doing so, then we are blessed that is real hospitality.”*

- As Jesus unpacks what he means by this, someone at the table wistfully says *“Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”* Luke 14:15b. He’s really looking forward to it. It’s actually kind of sweet. But then Jesus rains a little on his parade. He replies, in so many words, “Yes, you like the idea, but what are you going to do about it?” We might like the idea of heaven but we, too often, ignore the invitation to join Jesus at his table there. To be invited is not enough. One must accept.
- What follows is a list of excuses people give to the great banquet in his parable. The excuses are different, but really all the same. We don’t have time to look at all of them, but the truth is, these excuse makers burned their own bridges. Morgan says, *“Their excuses were only a thin veil hiding the fact that they did not want to come. “Back of an excuse is a lack of desire.”*
- Jesus’s point here is “You talk a good game about coming to heaven’s banqueting table, but are you ready to receive the invitation to come? And when it does, will you make excuses?”
- Here is another point he is making – we might be surprised at who will be around that table with us. And they might be surprised to see us. Read vv. 22-23 again, *Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.* Luke 14:22-23. Redeemed sinners, the maimed, the lame, and the blind will be there – all of them the sort of people hoity toity Pharisees wouldn’t even look at. Maybe even . . . (GASP!!!) **GENTILES!!!!**
- Ask yourself, “How am I a hoity toity Pharisee? Who is it that I think should not receive an invitation to the great banquet?” Let me just say, if there is anyone we can come up with for that list, then the very first name on the list has to be our own. All our dessert of humble pie to help us compile our list.

Conclusion: Let me conclude with some suggestions from the chapter in Tim Chester’s book where he unpacked this passage Luke 14 passage. They don’t seem completely related to the rest of this talk but, truthfully, they are. They are ways that eating and partying together can bring people into the great heavenly banquet. With Super Bowl coming soon and Easter Dinner and summer picnics and Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners and parties, throughout the year, here are some ideas:

After describing a number of ways that meals and picnics and parties have been a part of his missional work with groups of people who are far from Christ, Tim Chester writes:

“Running a cafe maybe a great missional project in your context, especially in neighborhoods where there are few other meeting places. But it's hard work. It requires significant amounts of money and time. Attending an existing cafe or bar requires no special effort. Jesus didn't open a cafe. He accepted invitations.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU ASSOCIATE WITH A PARTY? WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE TODAY ASSOCIATE WITH CHURCH? HOW CAN WE MAKE CHURCH FEEL MORE LIKE A PARTY?”

“Our parties are to be a reflection, albeit a pale reflection, of God's Great banquet.

Our attitude to the marginalized is to be shaped by our experience of God's grace to us. God welcomes us to his party, and so we're to welcome the poor.

I wonder what kind of reputation Christians have in your neighborhood? We should have reputation for throwing the best parties. It's not hard to find an excuse to throw a party

Personal occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, new jobs, exams, house warmings

Sporting occasions such as the Super Bowl, the World Series, the World Cup

Seasonal occasions such as 4th of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years

Cultural occasions such as Mexican food themed night” like Cinco de Mayo.

Any good ideas in there for you ABC?

(Tell about Emily and Evan’s neighbors who have something every Friday night)

ABC is Party Church. I don’t mean raucous or drunken parties – that’s not fun and it’s not holy, but times when we just love to be together around a table. Let’s spread that fun and bring people into the kingdom doing it.

I will take any and all suggestions for how we can do it. Amen.