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Who's Coming To Dinner?

LUKE 14:1-14

Introduction

1. Where do you find identity and personal meaning in life?
2. The world around us teaches us that these things are found in our own personal wealth, power and prestige.
3. If you were a person who had little to no knowledge of the Bible, I am confident in saying that names of such people as Enoch, Noah, Rahab, Hannah, Samuel, Ruth, Elijah, Daniel, Peter, John, Paul and a host of others would mean very little to you.
4. And yet these names are precious to God. They belong to His faithful.
5. You see, in His kingdom, God reverses life's values and expectations.
6. Jesus constantly calls upon you and I to walk upstream, against the world's current.
7. Our reading this morning addresses this very issue, and Jesus teaches us how those of us who seek to be a part of His kingdom must live.
8. Let's see what He has to say.

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I. A Setup?

A. THE MAN AT THE MEAL

"It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy." (Luke 14:1-2, NASB95)

1. On yet another occasion as Jesus is making His way back to Jerusalem, a leader of the Pharisees invites Him to his house "to eat bread" on the Sabbath.

2. This most likely would have been the mid-day meal which consisted primarily of bread which had been prepared the day before (Friday) in order to avoid breaking the Sabbath.
3. Luke tells us the Pharisees are “watching Him closely.” Why?
4. It is because there, “in front of Him,” is a man “suffering from dropsy” (v. 2).
 - a. His limbs and tissue were swollen from the excess accumulation of fluid.
 - b. This was most likely an indication of another medical problem present within his body.
5. The fact that the Pharisees are watching Jesus suggests a trap — they had invited the man to the meal to see what Jesus would do.

Slide 3**B. JESUS' FIRST QUESTION: "IS IT LAWFUL TO HEAL ON THE SABBATH?"**

“And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” But they kept silent.” (Luke 14:3–4a, NASB95)

1. Jesus knows what the Pharisees are thinking.
 - a. They are wondering whether or not He will violate the Sabbath law.
 - b. They considered the act of healing to be work which was forbidden on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 13:14).
2. So, Jesus asked them a simple “legal” question about healing on the Sabbath: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”
3. However, the Pharisees did not respond. Why?
 - a. They knew if they were to say, “it is lawful,” then the question would be raised about their tradition and their interpretation of the Law.
 - b. However, if they were to say, “it is not lawful,” then they would be viewed as standing against doing good and showing compassion.
 - c. If they were responsible for having invited the man and were now to prevent Jesus from acting on his behalf, it would raise questions about their motive for inviting him.
4. On a previous occasion, in a synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus encountered a man with “a withered hand” and asked “the scribes and Pharisees” who

were also “watching him closely,” “is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or destroy it?” (Luke 6:9).

5. Jesus had already demonstrated what His answer would be on this occasion (cf. Luke 13:14-16).
6. On this occasion, the Pharisees remained silent — they had learned nothing from His previous Sabbath healings.
7. Their silence, however, does not mean they approve.
8. On this occasion as the previous occasions, Jesus did good by healing the man — He no doubt saved his physical life.

“And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away.” (Luke 14:4b, NASB95)

9. Afterward, He let him go.

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C. JESUS' SECOND QUESTION: WOULDN'T YOU RESCUE YOUR OWN SON ON THE SABBATH?

“And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?” And they could make no reply to this.” (Luke 14:5–6, NASB95)

1. Jesus defended His action.
2. He pointed to the Pharisees own practice on the Sabbath to justify His actions: “What would you do if one of your own sons or an ox was in danger on the Sabbath?”
3. He appealed to their own sense of compassion and the natural inclination to rescue.
4. His point is that these same concerns should govern human relationships, even on God's day of rest.
5. Again, they remain silent, but their silence speaks louder than words.
6. Their inconsistency has been exposed — no reply is possible — they stand condemned.

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II. The Guest God Honors

A. THE PROBLEM OF PRIDE

“And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table . . .” (Luke 14:7, NASB95)

1. During all of this, Jesus had been doing some watching of His own.
2. He had watched the various guests as they entered the house and sought out the seats of honor.
3. The “seats of honor” were those located next to the host or the master of the house.
4. The Pharisees and scribes sought out these places (Matthew 23:6; cf. Mark 12:38-39; Luke 20:46).

“They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,” (Matthew 23:6, NASB95)

5. Our attitude toward God is seen in how we treat others (cf. 1 John 2:3-11).

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B. WHAT NOT TO DO: TAKE THE PLACE OF HONOR

“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.” (Luke 14:8–9, NASB95)

1. Do not go to the seat of honor, just in case a more prominent person has been invited.
2. If we choose the place of honor, and a more distinguished person happens to come in after we do, we will find ourselves terribly embarrassed when the host asks us to move down.
3. Imagine how red faced we may become when we have to get up in front of everyone and move to the end of the table.

4. Jesus message to each of us is simple, but to the point: "Don't overestimate your importance!"

Slide 7**C. WHAT TO DO: TAKE THE LAST PLACE**

"But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'" (Luke 14:10–11, NASB95)

1. Take the last seat.
2. Then, if the host comes to you and asks you to move up to a better seat, instead of being embarrassed, you find yourself honored.
3. Jesus' point: "It is better for others to recognize you than for you to promote yourself."
4. Humility should govern our lives — this is true not only in our personal relationships, but also in our relationship with God.
6. God honors such humility (Romans 12:6; James 4:6, 10; 1 Peter 5:5).

"Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation." (Romans 12:16, NASB95)

"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6b, NASB95)

"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." (James 4:10, NASB95)

Slide 8**III. The Guests God Calls Us To Invite****A. WHO NOT TO INVITE: THOSE WHO CAN RECIPROCATATE**

“And He also went on to say 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, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment.” (Luke 14:12, NASB95)

1. Jesus said, do not invite your friends, family, relatives or wealthy neighbors to dinner.
 - a. “Do not invite” — the language of habitual invitation.
 - b. Do not invite them exclusively.
2. Why? Because to invite such people is to expect repayment at some point.
 - a. “Pay back” hospitality is of no great merit to God.
 - b. This is hospitality which is exchanged (i.e., I invite you, you invite me.)
3. Our fellowship should not have social limits.
4. God calls upon us to practice a hospitality that is given with no expectation of return or repayment.

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B. WHO TO INVITE: THOSE WHO COULD NEVER REPAY

“But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you . . . ” (Luke 14:13–14a, NASB95)

1. Instead, Jesus said, “invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” .
2. These are people who have need but cannot repay.
3. Such hospitality is given without concern for whether or not you will be paid back.
4. This is the hospitality that pleases God.
5. True hospitality is generosity which has no motive beyond simply giving.

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C. YOUR REWARD

“ . . . for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:14b,

NASB95)

1. Jesus promised that when we do this, blessing will come.
2. Those in need cannot repay us, but God can and He will.
3. He honors such graciousness.
4. When your righteous soul is raised on the last day, God will pay you back far beyond all you can imagine for your gracious acts here.

Conclusion

1. What has Jesus been saying to us through all of this?
2. He has been telling us that how we live our lives reveals the authenticity of absence of our faith.
3. A proud, me-first lifestyle indicates we are not a part of God's kingdom.
4. A social life which only seeks to serve those who can return the favor is not the life God expects of us.

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5. He calls us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39; Galatians 5:14; cf. Leviticus 19:18).

“For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”” (Galatians 5:14, NASB95)

6. Our lives here upon this earth are but a span, and God calls us to do a golden deed every time we have the opportunity.
7. Is this the way you are living your life in God's kingdom? If not, He calls you to change.