

Scripture Reading:

Luke 14:1 “1 Now it happened, as [Jesus] went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. 2 And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. 3 And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" 4 But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. 5 Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" 6 And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

7 So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 8 "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. 11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." 12 Then [Jesus] also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

15 Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" 16 Then [Jesus] said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, 17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'

18 But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' 20 Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' 22 And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' 23 Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' ""

"Of Dinners, Feasts & Banquets"

Last week I warned that the message might not be the most pleasant ever given from this pulpit. I hope you can tell from the title this week, that I need to give no such warning today and I trust we can whole-heartedly join in much of the feasting and celebrating that we see in these accounts!

I hope to accomplish three tasks this morning:

- 1) To paint the big picture of what is being presented in these first 24 verses of chapter 14**
- 2) To help us see how all of this fits together with the outline you have seen in the order of worship for these past few weeks**
- 3) To consider a very important Kingdom altering lesson that is nestled quietly in this morning's text**

We are continuing our journey through Luke and Acts:

- I want to AGAIN point out that Luke himself presents his Gospel and the Book of Acts as his "orderly account."**

We know from the verses we reviewed a few weeks ago that Jesus is on His final journey to Jerusalem. Assuming the Scriptures mean what they say, we must understand what Luke presents from the end of chapter nine until the Triumphant entry into Jerusalem in chapter nineteen to be his orderly account of this final journey and more important, the final teachings from Jesus on this journey that He would give outside of Jerusalem.

Here I must stand at odds with our good friend John Calvin who argues that Luke is here giving bits and pieces of teachings that Jesus gave at other times, without ever really explaining why Luke puts them here: An example of what can happen when we try to make the Scripture fit a preconceived idea of what is being presented as Calvin does in his commentary on the 3 "synoptic" Gospels.

Now of course, I run the same risk trying to present an outline of what I think Jesus is doing, so please know that I do this with much fear and trepidation and certainly want us all to be good Bereans and take what I say back to the Scriptures to see if it is true!

With that being said I do think that Jesus is giving us some valuable lessons for living and that much of what we see here in chapter 14 is reviewing and/or reinforcing what we have been taught the past few weeks.

BUT before I make that case, let's take a look at what we see here in the first half of chapter 14:

- **As I point out in the sermon title, we have a dinner, a feast and a banquet**

Jesus is invited to dine with one of the rulers of the Pharisees which may have been a common custom

- **We see Jesus challenging the religious leaders and healing on the Sabbath which we have seen several times before...**

Jesus then explains how we should present ourselves if we are invited to a great wedding feast warning these proud leaders that whoever exalts himself will be humbled... And Jesus also teaches that he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Someone at the table got excited and said “blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God!” This gives Jesus a “teaching opportunity” and so He tells another parable: A parable theme He would present even more pointedly to the religious leaders of the time when he arrives in Jerusalem. BUT we should note that again it involves a man who is giving a great banquet!

Food... Food... FOOD! As we often point out the Bible is full of it!

As we can see from the man who reacts at this dinner, it is something those who think about God’s Kingdom can relate to! In fact, here we sit almost two thousand years after Jesus sat at this man’s table and consider how we can relate to what He shares...

- **Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them important lessons with the healing of a man and the telling of stories while attending a Sabbath meal**

This should remind us of the importance of our fellowship meals that we have each Lord’s Day:

- **It is an important time for us to fellowship together.**
- **An important time to celebrate God’s many blessings as we remember birthdays and anniversaries!**
- **An important time for us to better understand the needs that we each have... Or even to get to know one another!**
- **It is also a time of learning as we ask questions and discuss what has been taught**

Our prayer is also that it establishes a pattern that is carried out throughout the week, with other dinners and lunches and coffees!

- **Jesus also tells the story of a wedding feast... And guess what is being planned for the end of this month?**
- **And finally, we have our times of special banquets or feasts... Like the time we celebrate at the Fisher’s or the upcoming Harvest Festival and certainly our week of feasting and fellowshiping at Family camp!**
- **We even do our annual meetings over a meal!**

I guess the bottom line is that it should not surprise us to see Jesus using dinners, feasts and banquets as not only something to be enjoyed, but as teaching opportunities where even some of these hard-hearted religious leaders began to understand!

This leads to my second task this morning: Explaining my outline...

- **I do not think it is just a coincidence that we see the same themes in the lessons Jesus has been teaching repeated here is this discussion at the ruler's table.**

It is the Sabbath, and once again Jesus teaches the religious leaders that He is the Lord of the Sabbath and that the welfare of needy men and women takes priority over their man-made rules.

- **He joins in their restful celebration but teaches them things they need to understand if they are going to be His disciples**

In both the account of the wedding feast and the banquet we see images of how God desires to fill the earth with His Kingdom... How they will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south.

Learning that the humble will be exalted... even though we may not see that clearly right now...

AND learning that EVERY seat at the banquet will be filled, though many who had their invitations in hand will be left outside when the door is closed. This is closely related with the third lesson we looked at last week about discipline and judgment: God reviews our responses and work and deals with us accordingly

Jesus has given us three lessons you can see on the outline that apply to all areas of our lives:

Lessons I have labeled as:

- **Sabbath: Where we rest on the Lord's Day's, worship and receive God's instructions for living**
- **Labor: Where we go forth & obey the Lord's Commands in order to advance His Kingdom**
- **Judgment: Where we then evaluate the fruit of our labors on the basis of God's Word**

We should clearly see how this applies with our weekly practice of covenant renewal worship. God calls us to rest one day in seven, instructs us from His Word, feeds us at His table and sends us out to labor in His Kingdom for the next six days

- **We return the next Lord's Day to judge how we have done:**

Where we have failed, Lord willing we honestly confess our sins and hear God's promised forgiveness and good news that Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins!

We also celebrate our victories in our worship before God, the presentation of our prayers and gifts and our time of fellowship together!

Your homework was to consider how this pattern of Resting – Obeying -- & Judging could apply to all areas of life, like our marriages, vocation, childbearing and so on... Any discussions? I would encourage more in the weeks to come: What we should be learning here is how to “hear the Word of God and keep it.”

Remember what Jesus told the woman who cried out about how blessed His earthly mother was, early in this final journey? “MORE than that, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!”

We are using that verse in the order of worship this year as we move through the normal or ordinary time in the church calendar... *Anyone tell me which week?*

The church calendar is just a bigger picture of the weekly pattern that I just described! Learning how to apply these truths to ALL areas of our lives is what Christian maturity is all about!

Here is how the writer of Hebrews challenges his hearers: Hebrews 6:1 “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits...”

[many want to stay here & debate such things endlessly!]* After giving warnings about being unfaithful, he goes on to say in verse 9 “But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” *We see Rest – Labor – Judgment!

- **This is where the rubber meets the road in life... ALL of life if we take the claims of Christ’s Lordship seriously!**

From childrearing to piloting a plane to being a foreign missionary the same principles apply:

- **First you must be willing to sit under someone who knows what they are doing and be instructed.**
- **You must apply what you learn to real life situations**
- **Then you must judge what you have done: Something that should be done often to avoid catastrophic results!**

God’s sovereignty stands behind our success in all these areas...

If a son wants to pilot a plane we send them to flight school, which is a good thing because they believe and respect the laws of nature that God has established!

BUT when it comes time to find a spouse or raise children we think there are MANY ways to get the job done, or worse yet, we run off to “experts” who have written books or are on television who deny the very truths about human nature that God has revealed in His Word! -- *God says go to fathers & older women!*

If someone desires to serve God on the mission field we often send them to learn under professors who do not believe the early chapters of Genesis is real history or deny the missionary power of the truths about salvation taught in Romans chapters nine through eleven -- *Better they serve under a faithful pastor!*

- **THESE are some of the discussions that we need to be having if we are to grow and be mature in the faith!**
- **When we are serious about such discussions then we will be mature**
- **But if we overlook them, we are just playing church, like those Jesus was having dinner with that night!**

Look at how stubborn these men at the dinner had become, when they cannot answer a simple question like “is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” They had LOTS of Sabbath rules, but none could help them make the right choice that was right in front of them! Jesus confounds them so “they could not answer Him regarding these things.” Jesus then gives them the account of the wedding feast instructing them to be humble and ends with the account of the great banquet where he warns them of coming judgment if they continue to make excuses...

Excuses, I might add that we often see today...

- **I just bought a new house and there is SO much work to be done!**
- **They just installed some new equipment at work & I need more time to learn how to run it!**
- **I have pressing family matters that I must attend to...**

I covered this in greater detail a few weeks ago when we learned about rejoicing on the Sabbath, but here Jesus reminds us to always review our priorities about the Lord’s Day!

HOWEVER, I promised this would not be an unpleasant sermon, so let’s finish with a closer look at the jewel of a lesson that Jesus placed between these two parables...

"When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

- **Here Jesus gives us a simple command that can change the world!**

Obviously, Jesus is not saying that we stop all the various celebrations we have discussed with friends and family!

- **What He is saying, is that we must be careful not to forget those in need even when we are busy about doing good things!**
- **In fact, Jesus wants us to make them a priority!**
 - **We all work out who is coming to what houses at the holidays... Gets more complicated with large families!**
 - **We trade off invitations within the church family... We can ALWAYS do more of this!**
 - **Some of us may have work obligations to host or be hosted!**
- **These are all good things, but fall under what a servant should be doing and not expecting a reward for doing! We will learn more about a servant's duty in chapter 17!**

What Jesus is suggesting here to his hosts, to the listening guests, and to us... is something that does not get much attention today...

- **But something that not only could bring incredible blessings to those who obey, but greatly advance the Kingdom of God!**

I don't think that Jesus is here suggesting that we open up more soup kitchens or orphanages that can care for special needs children... I certainly don't think He is suggesting that we make sure we are sending checks to such ministries, which we do...

- **These are GOOD things and must be done, but I don't think it is His focus here**

What Jesus is suggesting is that we become less self-centered and more Kingdom centered in what we are doing in our lives... Our everyday lives...

- **Which if we are living Biblically includes a lot of dinners, feasts and even a few banquets!**

IN fact, the more we practice this type of Biblical living the easier it will be to obey what Christ is saying here...

- **We need to invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind to such events.**

I am not prepared this morning to tell you exactly what this means in our modern affluent age, but we need to consider it seriously because Jesus said it will bring blessings at the resurrection!

More importantly, it will advance the Kingdom of Christ...

Jesus says to invite those who have physical needs, however we also know that they will have spiritual needs and that such invitations will give us the opportunity to help on both fronts:

***As Paul declares... Romans 10:13* “For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"**

We must pray that God would open our eyes and help us see the poor, the maimed, the lame and blind people who He would have us invite to a dinner or a feast!

Imagine the world wide impact if every Christian began to take this simple command seriously!

Communion Meditation:

Esther 5:8 [Ester said] “If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.

"9 So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart...

11 Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. 12 Moreover Haman said, "Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king.”