

Sunday, April 14, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

Week 20 | Luke 14:1-24 | "Food for Thought"

Last week, we talked about *rejection*. The Jews missed a golden opportunity with Jesus. He was their Messiah, and yet, they turned their back on him; they *rejected* the Son of God. Such a decision, whether back then or today, has *severe* consequences. Though the Lord is longsuffering, he presents all people with a choice: enter through the narrow door or be cast out into a dreadful place where there is no comfort, only weeping and gnashing of teeth. **An alliance with Jesus, rather than just an acquaintance, keeps us from rejection.**

Have you ever gone to a dinner party where a *single* conversation seems to envelop the room? Though multiple discussions are going on, they all focus on something being said at one end of the table.

Today, Jesus will converse while sitting at a dinner party, and everyone will have their eyes fixed on him. And true to form, the Lord did not disappoint; he gave all in attendance that day *food for thought*. He'll discuss various topics (four to be exact), but, as we'll see, Jesus uses the banquet as a theme and weaves it throughout his entire dialogue. However, given how this particular dinner goes, it will be no surprise that this will be the *last time* Jesus is invited to dine with the Pharisees.

There are **four** takeaways in this passage:

i. Piety without mercy is cruelty.

READ: Luke 14:1-6 (ESV)

¹ One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. ² And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. ³ And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" ⁴ But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. ⁵ And he said to them, "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?" ⁶ And they could not reply to these things.

Vs. 1-2 – The phrase “watching him carefully” meant to “watch lurkingly.”¹ But why? One, it was the Sabbath, and two, there was a man with “dropsy.” Dropsy is a condition in which, due to excess bodily fluids, there is massive swelling (e.g., **INSERT PICTURE**). And much to the Pharisees’ displeasure, Jesus had healed on the Sabbath many times, so their fixation with Jesus makes sense (cf. 6:9; 13:14-16). *They had anticipated this moment and were waiting to see what Jesus would do.* While there is no explicit mention that this was a set-up, it is nevertheless quite likely; the odds that it was a trap are very high. The last meal Jesus went to put a target on his back, and the religious leaders were actively trying to undermine and discredit him (cf. 11:54). Also, Jews thought dropsy was brought by sin, and so a Pharisee, especially one who was a ruler, wouldn't have allowed the man into his house willingly or without some ulterior motive.

Vs. 3-4 – Jesus asks the religious leaders, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” If they say it is lawful, they will argue against themselves. In times past, they had argued that it was, in fact, wrong for Jesus to perform miracles on the Sabbath (cf. 6:7). If they say it is not lawful, they will be perceived as being uncompassionate. And so, since neither answer is preferable, they say *nothing*. Assuming it was premeditated, whoever thought this was a good idea didn't think it through.

Regardless of the Pharisees' trap, Jesus wouldn't let the man with dropsy suffer. Luke tells us he “took him,” which is to say he touched him in some way “healed him,” and then, mercifully, “sent him away.” The man may have come to dinner a pawn in the Pharisees’ ploy to undermine Jesus, but he would leave a person restored.

Vs. 5-6 – Jesus presents the religious leaders 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?” What monster would let their child or ox drown? Even if it were the Sabbath, everyone would do all they could to save them. Likewise, should not Jesus save this man who was literally swollen with bodily fluids?

It is hard to argue with such sound logic. And so, for the second time, the religious leaders were silent. Luke tells us, “They could not reply to these things.” What could they say? “Actually, Jesus, the Sabbath is so special that if my child or farm animal had fallen down a well, I'd let them drown.” No. That's ridiculous, and the Pharisees knew it.

¹ Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 9:51-25:53*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapid, MI; Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1256.

Luke tells us this story to illustrate how blind faith in a tradition leads to transgressing God's word, even if one may be intent on following God's word. There's never a wrong time to do a good thing. **Piety without mercy leads to cruelty.** If we follow God, we will care for those he cares about. Those who work for the kingdom are propagators of good. They look for ways to improve the well-being of their fellow man. They are conduits of grace, not gatekeepers. Hosea 6:6, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." 1 Jn. 3:16-18, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

ii. **The humbled will be brought up; the prideful will be brought low.**

READ: Luke 14:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸ "When you are invited by someone to a **wedding feast**, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the **lowest** place.

¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in 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 table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Vs. 7-9 – In the first century, rank, not age, determined *seating order*. So if someone of low social standing took a good seat and someone of greater social standing came in, the former would have to give way to the latter. Understandably, such a moment would be cause for great embarrassment.

Vs. 10-11 – Jesus argues it would be better to take the lowest seat because, either way, it's a win. At the very least, if they take the lower seat and someone of greater social standing comes through the door, they will have saved themselves the embarrassment of having to move. But, even better, should a person take a lower seat, there's a possibility that the host may insist they take a better seat. This would be an honor they wouldn't have had otherwise.

But is Jesus just talking about dinner etiquette? If the humbled are exalted in the context of an earthly feast, how much more with God?

iii. The best kind of hospitality is given without reciprocity.

READ: Luke 14:12-14 (ESV)

¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Vs. 12-14 – This is not a condemnation of repaying someone with a meal. It's a condemnation of keeping score and counting favors (e.g., wedding journals in Ireland). The irony of Jesus insisting that “the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” be invited to “a dinner or banquet” is that those very people were not regarded well by the upper echelon in Jewish society. Should someone invite those to eat who cannot reciprocate, Jesus calls them “blessed” because such people will be “repaid at the resurrection of the just.” God pays the tab for the poor. Never think you've lost money when you give to those less fortunate. The Lord keeps a spreadsheet and ensures that hospitality given without reciprocity is reciprocated.

iv. Man cannot save himself, but he can damn himself.²

READ: Luke 14:15-24 (ESV)

¹⁵ When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” ¹⁶ But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. ¹⁷ And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ ¹⁹ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ ²⁰ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’

²¹ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ ²² And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ ²³ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in,

² Bock (1996), p. 1278, quoting Manson (1949: 130).

that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.”

Vs. 15 – At this point in the meal, it is clear some are tired of Jesus droning on. Someone says, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” In other words, “Why put such an emphasis on earthly meals when heaven is more important?” And then, using a parable, Jesus shows that he agrees. But there’s a *twist*.

Vs. 16-20 – The Lord tells the story of a man who held a “great banquet and invited many.” Notice that the invitations have already gone out; the guests have had ample time to prepare for the feast. Despite this, all who had been invited ahead of time gave excuse after excuse for why they couldn’t come to the banquet. One said he bought a field, another said he purchased some farm animals, and the last said he had just gotten married. The point was that their excuses were legitimate.

Vs. 21 – The man who put the banquet on was upset. Why? Everyone had ample time to prepare for the banquet. Had the first guy really wanted to be at the dinner, he wouldn’t have picked that day to buy a field. Had the second guy really wanted to be at the dinner, he wouldn’t have picked that day to get some farm animals. And had the third guy really wanted to be at the dinner, he would have allowed his wedding to interfere. Why were their excuses so upsetting? It revealed a lack of commitment.

Well, since the honored guests—i.e., those who got personalized invitations—refused to come, what should the man do? He tells his servant to “Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.” Again, the “poor...crippled...blind...and lame” were shunned in Jewish society. In other words, “Find me the people no one else wants and bring them to the banquet. If my friends did not appreciate my hospitality, perhaps the less fortunate will.”

Vs. 22-23 – The servant does as he's told, but surprisingly, there is still room. And so, for the third time, the master of the house sends his servant out and says, “Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.” The word “compel” is not force but rather convince. The servant was tasked with persuading people from the “highways and hedges” to attend the banquet. The implication is that these would be perfect strangers. The master wanted his house so filled that no room would be left. This would ensure that “none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.”

When God calls us, we must answer; otherwise, there may not be a second chance. Or worse, we may come late and find the doors locked with the house so full that no room is left.

Video Description:

The Road to Redemption | Week 20 | "Food for Thought" (Luke 14:1-24)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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Season 38 | 20