

Week 4: The Kingdom's Economy

Luke 14:1-14

BIG IDEA

The Kingdom of God operates according to a different economy than the world, valuing mercy over appearance, humility over status, and generosity over personal gain.

ANCHOR Truth

The Kingdom comes close when we begin valuing what Jesus values.

What Does an Economy Reveal?

As our nation approaches the 250th anniversary of American independence, historians have been spending a lot of time revisiting those first fragile years after the Revolutionary War.

Winning independence was one thing. Building a nation was another. The colonies had won their freedom from Britain, but now they faced enormous challenges. They were burdened with war debt. Different states issued different currencies. Inflation created uncertainty. Trade was unstable. The question before the young nation was not simply, "How do we survive?" It was, "What kind of nation are we going to become?"

One of the most important questions facing the founders was this: **What will we value?**

What will back our currency? What will create stability? What will hold this nation together? *Because every economy reveals what people value.*

An economy is not merely a system of money. It is a system of values. It reveals what people consider important. It reveals what people reward, pursue, protect, and sacrifice for.

The same is true spiritually. The Kingdom of God has an economy. Not an economy of dollars and cents. An economy of values. An economy that reveals what matters most to God.

And in Luke 14, Jesus attends a dinner party where everyone in the room is operating according to the world's economy. The Pharisees are calculating. The guests are calculating. The host is calculating. Everyone is trying to gain something. Everyone is pursuing value according to the world's standards. And during one meal, Jesus exposes an entirely different economy.

An economy where mercy is worth more than appearances. Humility is worth more than status. And generosity is worth more than personal gain. Because every economy reveals what people value.

I. The Kingdom's Economy Values Mercy Over Appearance (vv. 1–6)

Luke tells us that Jesus entered the house of a ruler of the Pharisees on the Sabbath.

This was not a casual family meal. This was a gathering of influential religious leaders. These were people with status, reputations, and they cared deeply about appearances.

And Luke tells us that "They were watching him carefully." The guests thought they were evaluating Jesus. But Jesus was evaluating them.

And immediately we are introduced to a man suffering from dropsy (a condition involving severe swelling caused by fluid retention).

The question is why he was there. Many scholars believe this man was intentionally placed before Jesus as a test case and a trap. He was a theological object lesson. When they saw this man, the Pharisees saw a controversy.

But Jesus saw a person. The Pharisees saw a legal question. Jesus saw human suffering. So, Jesus asks, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"

And they remain silent. They know they are trapped. If they say yes, they lose their argument. If they say no, they reveal their lack of compassion. So, they say nothing. And Jesus heals the man.

Then He asks 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?"

Again, silence. Because they know the answer. They would rescue an animal. They would help their own family. Yet somehow they objected to helping this suffering man. The problem was never really about the Sabbath. The problem was about value.

The Kingdom's economy values people more than appearances. People more than systems. People more than traditions. People more than being right. Churches can fall into the same trap.

We can become so concerned about preserving our preferences, our procedures, and our traditions that we fail to notice hurting people sitting right in front of us. Jesus never does.

Because every economy reveals what people value.

Have you ever been in an important meeting when someone walks in with an urgent need? Immediately, priorities are revealed. One person thinks, *"This interruption is ruining the agenda."* Another thinks, *"This person matters more than the agenda."*

The interruption doesn't create our values. It exposes them. That's what happens in Luke 14. The man with dropsy interrupts the dinner party. The Pharisees see a disruption. Jesus sees a person. And every economy reveals what people value.

But the man with dropsy wasn't the only thing Jesus noticed that day. As He looked around the room, He discovered another problem—not in someone's body, but in everyone's heart.

II. The Kingdom's Economy Values Humility Over Status (vv. 7–11)

As the meal continues, Jesus notices something else. The guests are scrambling for the best seats. In the ancient world, where you sat communicated your importance. The closer you were to the host, the greater your honor. People were literally jockeying for position.

They were trying to be seen. Trying to be recognized. Trying to improve their standing. And Jesus begins telling a parable.

When you're invited to a feast, don't take the place of honor. Take the lowest place. Because if you take the highest seat and someone more important arrives, you'll be publicly humiliated. But if you take the lowest seat, the host may invite you higher.

Now Jesus is not teaching dinner etiquette. He's exposing pride. He's revealing another value system. The guests are living according to the world's economy. An economy that says, "You need to climb. You must promote yourself. You have to get noticed to make sure people know your value." Jesus says the Kingdom works differently.

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." This is one of the great themes of Scripture.

Pharaoh exalted himself. Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself. The builders of Babel exalted themselves. And every one of them was brought low.

But God exalts the humble. Mary sang about it. Jesus taught it repeatedly. And then Jesus demonstrated it perfectly. Philippians 2 tells us that Christ did not cling to His rights and privileges.

He humbled Himself. He took the lowest seat imaginable. He left heaven. Took on flesh and became a servant. He was obedient to death, even death on a cross. And because He humbled Himself, God highly exalted Him.

The path of the King becomes the path of the Kingdom. We may not fight over seats at banquets. But we still pursue status. We want recognition. We want influence and respect.

We want followers. We want platforms. We want to hear applause. The question is not whether we seek honor. The question is where we seek it. Because every economy reveals what people value.

Then Jesus turns from the guests to the host.

And now things become deeply personal.

Jesus says, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors..."

At first glance, that sounds strange. Is Jesus forbidding family dinners? Of course not. He's exposing a way of thinking.

The host had filled his table with people who could repay him. People who would invite him back. People who could increase his social standing. People who might prove useful in the future. In other words, this wasn't really generosity. It was investment.

The world's economy works this way. We are constantly calculating. What can I gain? What is my return? How does this benefit me? What advantage does this relationship provide? And before long, we begin evaluating people according to what they can do for us. We rarely say it out loud. But we think it.

Can this person help my career? Can this friendship increase my influence? Can this connection advance my goals? Can this relationship benefit me somehow?

What starts as friendship slowly becomes transaction. What starts as hospitality slowly becomes strategy. What starts as generosity slowly becomes investment. The world tells us to network. To build connections. To cultivate relationships that increase our opportunities.

And while there is nothing inherently wrong with meeting new people or building relationships, there is a danger lurking beneath it all. We can begin viewing people not as neighbors to love but as assets to leverage. Not as image bearers to serve but as opportunities to advance ourselves.

That is exactly what Jesus is confronting. The host's guest list revealed his values. Because every economy reveals what people value. And Jesus says there is a better way.

"Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind." Invite people who cannot repay you. Invite people who cannot advance your status. Invite people who cannot improve your reputation. Invite people who cannot return the favor. Why?

Because that is what Kingdom generosity looks like. The world's economy asks, "What can this person contribute to my life?" The Kingdom asks, "How can I contribute to theirs?"

The world's economy asks, "What can I gain?" The Kingdom asks, "How can I serve?" The world's economy asks, "What is the return on this investment?" The Kingdom asks, "How can I display the love of Christ?"

This applies to our money. It applies to our homes. It applies to our time. It applies to our relationships. Even churches can fall into transactional thinking. We naturally gravitate toward people who are like us. People we enjoy. People who are useful. People who make us comfortable.

But the Kingdom consistently pushes us toward people who have nothing to offer us except the opportunity to love them. Jesus says, "You will be blessed, because they cannot repay you."

Notice He doesn't say you will lose. He doesn't say you will be foolish. He says you will be blessed. Because in God's economy, generosity is never wasted. The Kingdom's economy values generosity over personal gain.

And if we're honest, that sounds almost unreasonable. Everything inside us begins doing the math. What about my resources? What about my future? What about my security? But that's because we're still thinking like owners.

Jesus teaches us to think like stewards. You are not the owner. God is. Your money belongs to Him. Your possessions belong to Him. Your home belongs to Him. Your time belongs to Him. Your opportunities belong to Him. And He has entrusted them to you for Kingdom purposes.

The question is no longer, "What can I get from this?" The question becomes, "How can I use what God has given me to bless someone else?"

And that raises a much deeper question. Why would anyone live this way? Why would anyone choose generosity over gain? Why would anyone move beyond transactional relationships? Why would anyone willingly give to people who can never repay them? The answer is found in the Gospel itself.

The Gospel: God's Economy

At this point we need to recognize something remarkable. Jesus tells us to invite the poor. The crippled. The blind. The helpless. Why? Because that is exactly what God did.

Spiritually speaking, those people are us. We were spiritually bankrupt. Spiritually crippled. Spiritually blind. Unable to save ourselves. Unable to repay God. Unable to earn His favor. Unable to contribute anything to our salvation. And yet God invited us anyway.

The Gospel is not the story of deserving people earning a place at God's table. The Gospel is the story of a gracious King welcoming people who could never repay Him. Romans tells us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Not after we improved ourselves. Not after we cleaned ourselves up. Not after we became useful. While we were sinners.

At the cross, Jesus paid a debt we could never pay. He took our judgment. He carried our guilt. He bore our sin. And through His resurrection He opened the doors of God's Kingdom to all who will repent and believe.

That is God's economy. And the cross reveals what God values. God values sinners enough to give His Son. God values rebels enough to pursue them. God values the lost enough to seek them. The cross is God's declaration of value.

Which Economy Are You Living In?

At this dinner party everyone is calculating. The Pharisees. The guests. The host. Everyone is asking, "What do I gain?"

But Jesus keeps asking, "What do you value?" The world's economy values appearances. The Kingdom values mercy. The world's economy values status. The Kingdom values humility. The world's economy values personal gain. The Kingdom values generosity.

And every economy reveals what people value. Look at your calendar. Look at your bank statement. Look at your ambitions. Look at your prayers. Look at what excites you. Look at what disappoints you. Look at what you sacrifice for. Every economy reveals what people value.

As America approaches 250 years as a nation, we can look back and see the values that shaped our national economy. But the more important question this morning is not about America's economy. It is about yours.

What does your economy reveal? What do your priorities reveal? What do your choices reveal? What do your investments reveal? Do they look more like the world's economy? Or the Kingdom's?

Because the Kingdom comes close whenever people begin valuing what Jesus values. When mercy becomes more important than appearances. When humility becomes more important than status. When generosity becomes more important than personal gain.

And it all begins at the cross. Where the King welcomed people who had nothing to offer in return. Where grace was given freely. Where sinners were invited to the table. Where God's economy was put on full display.

And every economy reveals what people value. The cross reveals what God values. And thanks be to God, He values sinners like you and me.