



The Road Less Traveled:

Gospel of Luke.

In the middle section of the Gospel of Luke, we see a unique aspect of Jesus' ministry, his life and ministry on the road. We see him interact with strangers, answer difficult questions, and teach with boldness. Along the way, Jesus teaches his disciples—and us as well—what the Kingdom of God is and what it means to follow Him.

WEEK FIVE

THE UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM

Message Passage: Luke 14:1-14

Small Group Passage: Luke 14:15-24

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

Luke 14:1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

It may be surprising to see Jesus on the Pharisees' turf after he had denounced them so many times. Perhaps this Pharisee actually wanted to learn from Jesus or was interested in a discussion with him. But the fact that Jesus was being watched seems to reveal that the religious leaders were hoping to trip up Jesus. Because it was another Sabbath, perhaps they again hoped to find Jesus violating their Sabbath rules, for it seems quite suspicious that a man was there in front of Jesus whose arms and legs were swollen.¹

Luke 14:2-6

Notice the change in the question; it went from 'is it lawful to help someone' (a stranger, a hypothetical person) to 'would you help someone you cared about?' The answer is obvious. "Of course I would help someone I loved and call my own." That was the issue. **The Pharisees legalistically refused to help people on the Sabbath**

¹ Bruce Barton et al., Life Application New Testament Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 316.

because they did not care about people who were not “their people”. They did not love the stranger. Obedience to the law was their cover for a heart of stone that viewed people as burdens or, at best, means to an end. They did not love the man struggling with swelling. They did not even care about him. But now everyone in the room knew it due to their silence (vs 6).

We must be cautious of the potentially dangerous assumption that the same mindset and hard heart cannot guide our lives. **We can just as easily become too consumed with ourselves to love others well.** That is what Jesus points out next.

Luke 14:7-11

If we are consumed with exalting ourselves, our decisions and lives will reflect it. We will have the constant striving to advance our agenda and get what we want. But if we choose to have a heart of humility, we will stop with the never-ending striving to make everything about us.

The Pharisees and the story are linked: Many readers have been confused about the connection between the conversation and the examples of a wedding banquet. Jesus used this parable because the guest in the parable and the Pharisees have the same issue. **They both thought much of themselves and little of others.** Jesus used this common image of a wedding feast to convey two key points.

- 1) Worship of self is a common problem because selfishness is part of the fallen human condition of sin. It is dangerous to assume we are the exception to the rule.
- 2) The signs of a selfish life are far more subtle than we realize, while the consequences are far more damaging than we realize.

Luke 14:12-14

If we are going to be followers of Jesus, we must view people as Jesus viewed them. We must view people as more than just obligations or even means to an end. Instead, we must truly love people, not just those who are easy to love, or even those who have something to offer in return. We must love people with a sacrificial love that Jesus showed towards us. **The poor, crippled, and blind had nothing to offer the banquet host. Likewise, we have nothing to offer God. Yet he loved us anyway.**

Segway to Small Group: The key to loving people who have nothing to offer us is first realizing that Jesus loved us when we had nothing to offer Him.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Set Up The Passage: The tie between this parable and the previous one is the resurrection. The host who invites the poor, crippled, lame, and blind will be rewarded at the resurrection. Jesus went on to explain that God himself, the heavenly host of the messianic banquet, would offer the same invitation..... This Pharisee assumed that he and his fellow Pharisees and other leaders would have the privilege to share in the Kingdom of God. They counted on their ancestry and their law-keeping to have reserved places for them. Jesus would shatter this preconception.²

READ: Luke 14:15-24

1. What sticks out to you about the excuses that people gave for not going to the banquet?

Leader Note: "All the excuses smack of insincerity. One does not purchase property without seeing it first. And since the purchase was already complete, there was no urgency. The land would still be there after the banquet. Likewise (v. 19), one does not purchase oxen without first testing them. The man who had recently married (v. 20) was excused from business travel, or serving in the military (Deut. 24:5), but there was no legitimate reason for newlyweds to avoid such a social engagement."³ Regardless of how valid the excuses were, Jesus wanted to point out that any excuse for refusing to believe and follow Him would ultimately prove to be foolish. As is true today, if we are not careful, we will allow good things in life (possessions, relationships) to keep us from our devotion to the greatest thing (Jesus).

2. Vs 19-21 - Whenever you read a parable, it is essential to identify who or what the parable is representing. The first guest to be invited represented the Jewish leaders of the day, including the Pharisees, whose gathering Jesus was attending. The second invitation goes out to the poor, lame, and destitute. Who is this referring to?

Leader Note: The second invitation goes out to the poor, lame, and destitute of the community to the banquet. They gladly accepted the invitation. Jesus was making clear to whom the Good News of the Gospel was going to be made available to in this

² Bruce Barton et al., Life Application New Testament Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 317.

³ John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1544.

parable. The poor and lame in this parable refer to all the people the Pharisees looked down upon and felt would be unworthy or incapable of being in communion with God. This would include: sinners, tax collectors, and even the poor and lame, as it was assumed that their problems were due to their sin (John 9:2-3).

3. Vs 23 - In verse 23, a final invitation is given for anybody who could be found to be invited to the banquet. Who is this invitation referring to?

Leader Note: Most Bible scholars agree that this invitation is in reference to the Gospel invitation going out to Gentiles. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile - Rom 1:16."*

4. What was Jesus trying to teach the Pharisees with this parable?

Leader Note: Jesus was trying to teach the Pharisees that they were not highly esteemed and welcomed at God's great heavenly banquet. Instead, they are the ones who have rejected their invitation by rejecting Jesus. They did so because they could not see past their own pride and self-righteousness.

5. As believers in Jesus Christ, how should this Parable shape how we view ourselves?

Leader Note: As believers in Jesus Christ, we can rest assured that we will one day all be at the marriage supper of the Lamb described in Revelation 19:6-9. Yet this parable reminds us of how and why we received that invitation. It is not because we are impressive. It is not because we bring something to the table that would benefit Jesus. Quite the opposite! We are the poor and crippled described in verse twenty-one. We have nothing to offer Jesus, yet he still freely gave all of himself to save and redeem us (Eph 2:8-9, Titus 3:4-7). Therefore, a spirit of humility and gratitude must mark our relationship with Jesus (1 Cor 1:26-31).

6. How should this parable shape how we view other people?

Leader Note: There are no haves and have-nots in the Kingdom of God. That is a central theme that runs through the Gospel of Luke and on into Acts. Therefore, we must view fellow believers through the eyes of brotherhood if we are truly all sinners saved by grace. As for those who are not yet believers in Jesus, they are the mission field.

PRAYER TIME

Today's discussion provided a great opportunity to pray for those who have not yet believed in Jesus Christ. Specifically, those who do not realize that they have a need for a savior. Such individuals are often the hardest to reach.

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