

2/11/23

**SCRIPTURE Luke 14:23-24**

*"And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"*

This is the Word of the Lord,  
Thanks be to God.

**INTRO**

Last week we talked about Jesus' disclaimer of what it would cost people, in their life on earth, for them to follow Jesus. He warned them to count the cost before they made the decision to follow him. I had said last week that Jesus saw possessions and relationships as a hinderance to spiritual growth. This morning, I want to look at the passage that led up to this cost of discipleship teaching.

This passage starts with Jesus being invited to eat dinner with the Pharisees. This is the third time in Luke's gospel that he has an interaction with them, specifically with this issue of healing on the sabbath. They believed that this was the biggest atrocity and blasphemous thing that Jesus probably did. A lot of scholars believe that this dinner was a trap. Because this man suddenly appeared at the dinner.

It's important to remember what the Pharisee are. The nation of Israel was in moral decline. This group formed calling themselves, Pharisees, which means 'set apart ones'. They devoted themselves to keeping the whole law, even seeing themselves as officers of it. They believed that if they were to keep every law for a single day that it would bring about the Messiah. The same Messiah that stood before them.

This dinner that they set was a way to trap Jesus into breaking the Law. Which again these pharisees saw themselves in charge of.

**BODY****Luke 14:1-6**

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

Jesus asks them this because there were laws against working on the sabbath, but there were also exceptions to that law. The example that is used in Deuteronomy is when a donkey or Oxen falls into a pit, you are to help them out<sup>1</sup>. The Pharisees interpretation of the Law would not permit a person to help their animals if they were giving birth. Potentially they would have to let the cow and its calf perish if there were complications in birth, because it was not permitted to help. That was interpretation not what the law actually says.

Which is why Jesus first asks them the question because he knew it was a trap. As if to say are you opposed to me healing this man based on your interpretation. They said nothing. Jesus heals him and he follows up with what the Law actually says about providing aid to someone on the sabbath. They knew

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<sup>1</sup> Deut. 22:1-5

Jesus was right and still they could not reply. He practically shows them why their opinions and interpretations were wrong.

These Pharisees held their moral superiority in great regard, believing that they were going to be permitted entrance into heaven based upon their ability to maintain and uphold the Law. After all they are the set apart ones. As we know much of Jesus ministry was him showing the people that our understanding of the word of God falls short. When he said in his sermon on the mount, where it is unlawful to murder, but if you have hatred toward your brother you have already committed murder. It was the establishment that God's standards are so high. His holiness is so far above what is achievable for mankind, that they cannot achieve holiness or the ability to be set apart without a savior.

Jesus does not shy away from this, now being in the presence of these self-righteous law keepers who possess the moral high ground. He begins to teach them about heaven through this parable of a banquet. Each reference to banquet is a reference to heaven and the Master of the Banquet is God. There are three parables about heaven as a banquet. Remember for all three of these parables his audience is these Pharisees. The healing of this man would have taken place before they all sat down to eat.

Now at a traditional dinner party the tables would have been a 'U' shape and they would recline on the floor and the guest of honor would sit at the bottom of the 'U'. This way everyone else would be seated surrounding the guest of honor. These Pharisees, who hold themselves in such high regard, it would have been awkward for a moment finding their seats. There would not have been name tags at each seat and there would not have been a seating chart so they would have had to sit down and awkwardly try to find who was the one to sit in this place of honor. Jesus uses this situation to address their falling short of the standard of heaven.

#### **Luke 14:7-11**

*"Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, <sup>8</sup> '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, <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

This awkward exchange Jesus is telling them that this approach of pride and arrogance fighting for the place of honor is how they are approaching God. They had this posture that because of their 'moral superiority', that they believed that their entrance into heaven was somehow guaranteed. Like they had possession of it and had power over it.

This possession was because of their heritage of being Jews, God's chosen people, but it was validated by their morality. Their position as religious leaders entitled them to this place of honor not just at this dinner, but they believed also in heaven. They are approaching God and heaven with pride and arrogance and Jesus is calling them out on it. They are not approaching God with humility which is necessary.

What Jesus is saying is this pride toward God has created this belief that they don't need salvation from God because they have saved themselves. They believe that their morality is enough. If that is the case, then the Messiah that they are so desperately looking, for is not necessary. They do not see themselves as falling short of God's law and desperately needing the salvation that comes from God. They believe that they are righteous and holy, and they deserve heaven, because the good outweighs whatever they may have committed so long ago.

This is where Jesus starts to peel back the layers. He is showing them where this pride and arrogance came from. It is a here is how you got to this point of approaching God with pride. Before it was pride it was a selfish, self-seeking attitude.

**Luke 14:12-14**

*"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. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

They held heaven and redemption over the people, and they gave it only to those that they could reap a benefit from. The care that they are to have for others, they are suppose to approach with love not self-interest. These teachers of the law gave their wisdom when it benefitted them. Again, with this sense of pride, they believed that they had something to offer that was unachievable for the people. They used it as a way to achieve favor, not from God but from others.

This is the friend or family member at Christmas that gives out gift for everyone so that they will receive a gift in return. They feed of the idea that every year you know they are going to do this so you feel obligated to have something for them in return. These Pharisees would give wisdom, teachings, pardons in order to have wealth or food or whatever they desired.

This was because they did not see themselves as just set apart from the people of Israel but they saw themselves as above them. Jesus specifically mentions the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. The pharisees would have taught, that these things the people had, were a result of sin. Either, the sin of their parents, or a sin that they committed themselves. Which is why the Pharisees would often justify not helping these kinds of people. They believed that God did this too them for a reason and for them to try and change it would be to go against God. Which is why you see Jesus' disciples when they see a man who was born blind in John 9:2, they ask Jesus, 'is this a result of his sin or the sins of his parents'. That would have been a common well-spoken belief by these religious teachers.

Jesus' ministry was to come for the lost, the broken and the destitute. He came for those that were in need of saving. Which is all of us. Jesus came for those lost in sin. These pharisees did not believe that they were in need of saving. He is pointing out the contrast between what the ministry of the Messiah is supposed to be and how they are on the complete opposite end of the spectrum. In order to change the pride they had to change the self-seeking purpose in ministry to find salvation in God. The needed to devote themselves to the things that God would actually want them to do, in preaching salvation and helping those in need caring out of love and selflessness.

Because the goal as Jesus said in not to achieve a reward on earth but a reward in heaven. We should not be worried about what we receive in return because our reward will come at the resurrection. This is a reference to Daniel 12:2 which talks about the resurrection of God's people in the final Judgement a

resurrection that can come because of the work of the Messiah. Again, who is standing right in front of them and they don't even realize.

Then one of the Pharisees just up almost with a toast. A way of celebration but it only proves that at least this guy misunderstood what Jesus is saying.

#### Luke 14:15

*"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!"*

At this dinner party this individual give the toast of bless are the ones that will enjoy heaven. Now what he said is right those that enter God's kingdom will be blessed. However what this individual insinuated with this gesture is, 'blessed are we who are the only ones to enter the kingdom of Heaven'. If nothing else this man was a distraction. At its worst this man derailed everything that Jesus was trying to say. He distracted all those at the dinner party from realizing that Jesus is talking about them.

R.C. Sproll says that he has a law of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of the bible. His rule is if the bible is talking about someone doing something dumb. It's talking about you. We shouldn't go tisk, tisk. How could they do something so dumb. Because well we are the dumb ones.

The pride and the self-seeking behavior is talking about and too the pharisees and they don't see it. This is where Jesus peels back the final layer of their pride and it is their apathy.

#### Luke 14:16-20

*But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. <sup>17</sup> And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant<sup>[c]</sup> to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' <sup>18</sup> 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.' <sup>19</sup> And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' <sup>20</sup> And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'"*

This final teaching using the metaphor of heaven as a banquet would have made Jesus' point crystal clear to them and there would have been no mistaking that Jesus was referring to them. The reason that they approach with pride and self-interest, is because **they treat God and the promise of Heaven with Apathy.**

When a rich man throws a banquet, it is done as an opportunity for them to invite others to enjoy his company, his wealth and his generosity. This would have been a big event. This would have been like a marriage feast they would have sent out invitations to all the guest that were to be in attendance. They would have been made aware of when this event would take place so that they could be prepared. They sent in their RSVP so that the Master of the Banquet knows who has accepted the invitation.

All of these invited guest, when the banquet had been prepared and it was ready for the guests to arrive, the servants would have been sent out again to make the invited guest aware it was ready. In the ancient near-east there is an unwritten rule of hospitality, as a part of the culture, that it was extremely rude to reject an invitation especially when it was an invitation that was previously accepted.

The individuals in this parable that are the invited guest would have been the Jewish religious people. Those that are from the nation of God's chosen people and the ones that claim to be loyal to the God they serve. Instead of attending the banquet, when they were called to arrive, it says they made excuses why they could not attend. This was a rejection of an invitation that was previously accepted. In Matthew's gospel of this parable, it says that they 'paid no attention' or they just didn't care that the banquet was ready.

Each of these excuses point to a disruption in the priorities of the ones that receive the invitation. They believed that they had more important things to do than attend this banquet. Each of these excuses was pointing out how the things of this world were viewed as more important than the eternal status of their souls.

Looking at both Luke telling of this parable and Matthew's side by side. Luke tells of Jesus teaching this parable at the Pharisees house. Matthew's gospel is Jesus teaching in the temple before he was arrested in Jerusalem to the chief priest<sup>2</sup>. This parable Jesus probably taught multiple times, which is why they are slightly different. The differences give us insight to the hearts of these religious leaders.

The first guest says that they purchased a field, and they must go and see it. In Matthews gospel it says that they must go to their farm. This is Jesus pointing to possessions. The first guest saw the things that he possessed as more important than their entrance into heaven, the great banquet. Rather than working to be prepared for the banquet they spent their time building their possessions.

The second guest said that they have purchased 5 yokes of oxen. This would have been 10 oxen, 5 teams of 2. They would have been used to plow fields and plant. He says he must go and test them. In Matthews gospel it says that he has to go to his business. This is Jesus pointing to our work or our careers as being more important than their entrance into heaven, the great banquet. This person was more focused on advancing his career than securing his entrance to the banquet.

The third guest says that they just got married and they can't come. Somehow marriage hindered their ability to attend. Maybe his wife was just an introvert and didn't want to people that day. This third guest is the big difference between Luke and Matthew, but in Luke gospel this is pointing to relationships. They saw the earthly relationships as being more importance than their entrance to heaven.

In Matthews account the third guest it says that they seized the servants, shamed them and killed them<sup>3</sup>. This is displaying a resistance and hostility towards God and heaven. It ironic that Jesus is teaching this to the high priest 24 house before the high priest has Jesus arrested and has him crucified. His parable clearly shows where the high priest's heart is.

You know what all these excuses have in common? None of them are good ones. Especially when we know that this banquet is a representation to heaven. The level of importance to what these guest go to do and the value of the banquet is huge. There is a great imbalance in the scales of priority.

The man who goes to see land he purchased. He bought land, sight unseen, and rather than attending the banquet he goes to see it, as if it won't be there after? It like saying God I know you're here to take me to heaven but could you come back tomorrow? Possessions can often seem as though they are an

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 21:23-24

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 22:6

accomplishment or important. But if they stand in between us and our relationship to God, they are a counterfeit for true joy.

The man who buys Oxen. He bought them without testing them first. Apparently, he can't test them another time? Many people think a career will satisfy their deepest longing and give them meaning and purpose. But those are all purviews of God, and if you place your hope in your career, then it has become a counterfeit to his place in your life.

The man who got married, what better way to celebrate a union between husband and wife than to attend a lavish banquet together. Marriage is a God-ordained institution, but it should not be elevated to an ultimate thing. Marriage and relationships can be satisfying and fulfilling, but if a spouse thinks their marriage will bring ultimate joy, the relationship has become a counterfeit source of life's meaning.

To the ones that were resistant and hostile, you couldn't just say 'no' you had to kill the servants of the master that invited you? Resistant also to what? The Master of the banquet, aka God, invites you to enjoy his splendor wealth and generosity and you want no part in it? Why? They value their illusion of control?

#### **Luke 14:21-24**

*"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.'<sup>22</sup> And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'<sup>23</sup> And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.'"*

At all of this it says the master of the banquet became angry. In Matthew's accounts it says that he burned their cities, which was God's judgement coming on those that reject his invitation to heaven. Because of the rejection from the invited guest, the Master creates an open invitation to the banquet.

He sends his servants to invite the poor, crippled, blind and the lame. These are a metaphor for the undesirables of the culture. Remember the Pharisees would have seen their situation being a result of sin. His servant is to go to the sinful, the broken the socially reject and bring them to the feast. Already the Pharisees would have been offended. Jesus is telling them that they, the invited guests, are being 'passed over' to bring in the ones that are not morally upright. In this parable this would have been a sign of the Jews, the ones that the Pharisees saw as beneath them.

The servants do this but there is still room, so he sends them to the highway and the hedges and press those to come. This would have been a metaphor for the gentiles. Those who were not Jewish. This would have been hard for the Pharisees to comprehend. This idea of non-Jews being welcomed into heaven. Even though in all the prophecies of the Messianic kingdom, say this kingdom is comprised of all-nations. They could not conceptualize, not just gentiles being in heaven, but actually being welcomed in by God.

When he says 'compel them', it would have meant convince them to come. This was not that it would take much convincing for them to go to a rich man's house and eat all of his expensive food. At least it would take me much convincing to go. This compelling would have been to over ride the cultural norms. Gentiles would have known that they were not welcome among the Jews, especially in their

celebrations. The servant would have to go to them and say 'no please come. It's okay you are being requested by the Master of the banquet himself'.

He sends his servants that his house may be filled. This preparation for the feast would be for those that accept his invitation. Since the invited rejected it, the invitation was opened to anyone and everyone

## GOSPEL

### Luke 14:24

*<sup>24</sup>For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."*

This is flipping things on its head. Those that were invited are now excluded and those that were excluded are now invited. Jesus' teaching this to the Pharisees is telling them, 'Hey this whole heaven thing your looking forward to. This idea of the Messiah coming and establishing his kingdom. The thing that you believe that you have worked so hard to get into, You are not going to make it.'

As much as they think that they are going to the banquet they may have accepted the first invitation. They sent in their RSVP, but they value silly things over God. **They approached him with Pride, with self-interest and apathy.** When the time comes to accept the invitation, when the banquet is ready, they reject him. This of course is evidenced by their rejection of Christ. He was the servant that came to tell them, 'hey the banquet is ready' and they killed him for it. They had fields to look at, they had oxen to test, they just took a wife, or they were resistant and hostile towards the servant.

Matthew's gospel goes into a bit more detail explaining this

### Matthew 22:11-14

*"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. <sup>12</sup>And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen."*

The man without a wedding garment is a representation for those that accepted the king's invitation but he accepted it on his own terms. He showed up but he really didn't want to be there. The King, master of the banquet, God, saw this as improper. This man faced judgement. This is a picture of those being cast into hell for eternity.

Jesus explains that many are called but few are chosen. He is saying that God invites many into his kingdom and offers salvation, but not all who consider themselves as a part of God's kingdom, are genuine members of it. Those that respond favorably to God's invitation can join him in this celebration.

These Pharisees are a great example of those that are called, they believe that they are a part of his kingdom, but they are not prepared. They offer excuses, if they reject his invitation, and they attempt to come by their own holiness. They attempt to enter the banquet on their own terms. They are there, they showed up to all of the service in the synagogue, they attended a small group bible study, but they really didn't want to be there. They were never a genuine member of it. They are doomed to face judgement no matter how well they kept the law because they did not come through Christ.

### John 14:6

*"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"*

### APPLICATION

Now we can look at these Pharisees and think, 'How dumb can you be? Can't you see that he is talking about you?'. Tisk, tisk. Remember R.C. Sproul's law of hermeneutics, if the bible is talking about someone doing something dumb, its probably talking about you.

Last week we talked about how relationships can be a hindrance to people truly being apart of God's kingdom and finding true joy in him. But what about you, are you finding your joy in your possessions or your career?

The saying "Live to work or work to live" can be helpful in identifying counterfeits. If you live to work, then your work has become a counterfeit for God, whom you are to live for. But if you work to live and to serve God, who is your true life, then it is a vocation.

Ask yourself, what are you living for?

Are you living for the banquet? Have you accepted the first invitation. Send in your RSVP and are waiting eagerly for the servant to come and tell you the banquet is ready? Or do you value your field, your car, your house more and will give the excuse I can't live in waiting for the banquet I have to go and look at all the things that I have worked for.

Are you living for your career? Do you value your Job so much so that it causes you to compromise on the work that creates you as a disciple of Christ. When the final invitation comes are you ready with your wedding garment? Or do you have oxen to test? Do you have to compromise on the body of Christ because you can get more overtime?

Workaholism is a problem when people work too much. This is not because they must for their family's survival. It is an important responsibility is to care for our family's needs, but workaholism is a problem because that is where they find their identity. Instead of saying no to unnecessary work, they say no to themselves and others and rely on their work ethic to give them identity and purpose.

While there is a growing emphasis on work-life balance, finding it is still a problem for many. In the professional service industry, 94 percent of workers work 50 hours a week and 48 percent of Americans believe they are workaholics<sup>4</sup>. A job is something to celebrate, but it can easily become a distraction or false substitute for God.

What has become your idol? What holds your worship? I heard a Pastor once say, 'show me where you spend you time, energy and money and I will show you what you worship'. We do not work for the things that don't matter when we compare them to the kingdom of God. Like in the final parable the excuses that they made pale in comparison of importance to the banquet that awaits us. We do not work for things that moth and rust can destroy. Things that thieves can come in and steal. We store up our treasures in heaven<sup>5</sup>. Because where you treasure is there your heart will be also.

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<sup>4</sup> "10 Statistics on Work-Life Balance That May Surprise You," Apollo Technical, January 3, 2023, <https://www.apollotechnical.com/statistics-on-work-life-balance/>

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 6:19-20



We cannot enter the banquet on our own terms. The passage that we taught on last week and the passage that immediately follows this parable in Luke's gospel, outline the terms of the invitation.

**Luke 14:26-27, 33**

*“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.... So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

We have to count the cost. We have to be willing to give everything up in order to be his disciple. We have to renounce all the things of this world, our relationships, our possessions, and our careers in order to follow him. We must understand what truly matters. We must know what we are working towards, what we are living for.

This is not a message of go and quit your job, but a message of where does your career and your possessions fall in your list or priorities. If you are called you to take a job that was a pay cut because he called you to do that, are you prepared? Are you willing? Or do you hold your things and your career of greater importance. If so, you have not renounced it. You might be the one excusing themselves for their field or for their oxen.

We who are the poor, the cripple, lame and the blind, we who are the travelers on the road, we have been grafted into the promises of Israel<sup>6</sup>. We have been invited. We have been called, but have we been chosen? Are we the ones prepared to enter the banquet? Right now, is the time to make that change. Right now, is the opportunity to lay it all on the line. Be prepared to give it all up for the sake of the gospel. For the sake of our relationship to the God that is the master of the feast.

**PRAYER AND REFLECTION**

**COMMUNION**

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 11:11-24