

XXV. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Christ’s Call to Compelling Evangelism”

Luke 14:7–24

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This is our 25th study in the L.E.A.D. series. Let’s look now at Luke 14. We will do a big overview of Luke 14:1–24 but we will start with Luke 14:1–6 which says [1] *One Sabbath, when he (Jesus) 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.* This is the Word of God, it’s the truth.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Now we’re going to look at Christ’s call to compelling evangelism but at this moment we’re in the fall and in Alabama that means football – great sport but bad god. Don’t let it be god in your life. In football season you will find play by play commentators and most of them will say at half time ‘the coaches are going to the locker room and they are going to make half time adjustments for the strategies in the second half.’ The fact is that may or may not be true. Yes there will be adjustments but the adjustments aren’t necessarily in response to what happened in the first half. The coach is not a dummy. The coach planned out the strategy in the first half and very likely the strategy in the first half was to set up the change they are going to do in the second half. They have actually planned on that so as they go into the second half they are going to make a strategic change.

Sometimes the other team does surprise you so you have to make a strategy change on the fly and that’s what is happening in Luke 14 – half time, playbook strategy change. One had been planned and the other one was reactive. Jesus’ public ministry is about three years and at Luke 14 we’re about at the half way point and Jesus makes a change. The change is that from here on out He is going to predominately teach with parables and allegories. A parable is a simile in a short story form. An allegory is a collection of metaphors in a story form. A parable is spotted just like spotting a simile, with ‘like’ or ‘as’ but the reason I’m making this point is that a parable has a singular focus and it may have some supporting points. A seminary professor told me a parable is a one-legged animal and that I have to find a way to make it walk in a sermon.

Jesus makes the turn and Luke and Matthew emphasize this as they bring the parables. We will be looking at three of His parables in this study and one in the next study. The three we look at in this study is what we call ‘banquet parables.’ Here in Luke 14 Jesus is at a banquet, a dinner party has been called by a ruler of the Pharisees. Sitting at this banquet table, Jesus will give three ‘banquet parables’ in row as each one of them brings a lesson and each one builds on each other which is why I want to cover all three in this study. Also there is a singular point I want to make of putting the three together concerning a lifestyle of evangelism.

Jesus has a number of adversaries and one of them are the Pharisees. The Pharisees are also making a playbook strategy shift here. What is their half time shift? Up until now the Pharisees have tried to get in public debates with Jesus. When you get into a public debate with Jesus who do you think is going to win? It would be Jesus and the Pharisees are getting tired of getting shut down in debates so now they hold a dinner to catch Him and scrutinize Him. Luke 14:1 says they were watching Him closely to see if they could catch Him doing something in opposition to the law of God. This dinner party takes place on the Sabbath. So the Pharisees are in this 'gotcha' strategy.

Secondly, I want you to see that two different times in those first six verses the Pharisees didn't say anything, not a word. It said in Luke 14:4 that they remained silent and in verse 6 it said they couldn't reply to Him. Jesus even asks them a couple of questions. There is a man at this dinner that has dropsy. Dropsy, in Greek ο υδρωψ, comes from the word for water, υδωρ (hudor), from which we get words such as hydrocele and dehydration. This is the only time you find this in the New Testament. It means that they have this rather grotesque collection of fluid. I imagine the underlying cause might be something like congestive heart failure but here are the Pharisees closely watching Jesus wondering if He is going to break the Sabbath by healing this man.

Jesus then asks them if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Now according to the traditions of men, added to God's Word, the Pharisees said that healing could not take place on the Sabbath. You can see how ridiculous that is because the Bible doesn't say you can't heal on the Sabbath and isn't the Sabbath there to heal your soul? If spiritual healing is okay on the Sabbath then why isn't physical healing okay on that day? The Pharisees realize they are about to get trapped so they remain silent.

Then Jesus asks a second question having to do with your son or your ox in which one of them falls into a well on the Sabbath and He says 'would you not immediately pull them out?' They were silent. I'm trying to imagine if I were the son of one of those Pharisees and heard that question asked of my dad and he doesn't say anything, does my dad really love me? That would not be good news about your college tuition at all. They are afraid to debate and when Jesus shuts them up He makes the point that He is violating their traditions but He is not violating God's Word which is consistent with reality because they would pull their son or ox out of the well on the Sabbath if it happened then. This man was sick so Jesus healed him and sent him away and the Pharisees remained silent. This is what opened the door for His three parables.

Let's look at the first one in Luke 14:7-11 which says [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.'*

Jesus notices at this banquet that all the guests are jockeying for the seats of honor. When He sees this He begins to tell this parable. He basically tells them when they go for the seat of honor they have just positioned themselves for shame. The one who made the invitation list also has the seating arrangement so that if you choose the lower place, when he puts you where you belong then you are honored by him. None of us are ever guilty of this, are we?

I want to share with you the utter conviction that was renewed in my soul when I was studying for this. I was invited to come speak at Goshen Presbyterian Church at one of their homecoming meetings just outside of Charlotte, North Carolina in Belmont. In that week of meetings on Wednesday night they would have a BBQ dinner before the meeting and they had the best pig picking I've ever had. To me, it was the best eastern Carolina BBQ possible. I was so looking forward to that BBQ. When my kids were growing up I would try and take one of them with me so they could see what I did for a living. I happened to take my son to this one. I knew they would ask the visiting preacher to pray over the meal before we ate so I positioned myself and my son near the first of the line. Sure enough they asked me to pray and when I finished someone said 'Oh pastor you're right there so why don't you start us off for dinner.' I said "Okay if you insist."

As we finish the meal I go into preach and here I am preaching on this passage in Luke 14. In the middle of my sermon I am utterly convicted of my sin and I stop to say 'I have to stop here because I am so guilty of this and not only that I taught this to my son. Son, forgive me. Congregation forgive me for I maneuvered to get the first place.' I should have gotten in the last place and then let them put me there if they wanted to and if they didn't want to then I would have been where I ought to have been. This is the old man in us.

Have you ever noticed that even when we confess our sins we make a case for ourselves? We are always trying to best position ourselves. Jesus is watching the people do that here at this banquet. It is possible that not only were the Pharisees doing this but also His Disciples or even maybe some people in His own family. Two of His Disciples at two different times asked for the position of honor and their mother made a case for them on one occasion. Those two Disciples were James and John who were cousins of Jesus because their mother, Salome, was Mary's sister who was Jesus' mother. So this is so easily found within us.

Jesus is making the point that when you come to the banquet table there is a particular lesson to be learned here. The lesson is the guests at the Lord's Banquet of salvation renounce all self-promotion. The reason I use the Lord's Banquet is that there is a prophecy about Him in Isaiah 25 called the Messiah's Banquet. It is also found in Revelation 19, the Wedding Feast of the Messiah, the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. It is the metaphor for salvation where God has spread at His Banquet Table the feast of salvation by grace through the mediatorial work of His Messiah, His Son Jesus Christ. When you get to that Table your focus is on the Host of the banquet, not your seat.

Yes, this is good manners. Learn how to take the lessor position and if someone wants to honor you then they honor you and if they don't, they don't for it's fine because you're right where you need to be anyway. But this is more than just good manners. When someone comes to the table of salvation that only Christ can provide, they come renouncing all self-promotion. It's not about us. It may be for us but it's all about Him.

The last verse in this parable (*[11] For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*) is a quote from Proverbs, James, Luke and I Peter. This is a basic principle all throughout Scripture. Those who come to the Lord come denying themselves, not seeking their own self-promotion. Then Jesus goes to a second parable where we not only have a banquet but there are hosts.

Luke 14:12-14 says *[12] He said also to the man who had invited him (the host), "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 (righteous)."

Now Jesus is talking to those who host banquet/dinners. He knows you will invite family and friends but He is bringing out the point of when you make a list, don't necessarily think of those you will benefit from by inviting, but think of those who will benefit if they come, those who need it. These would be the marginalized, the lost, the least, the last, those that nobody would invite. Why should you invite them? It is because you and I are one of them. We were spiritually lame, poor, bankrupt, in need and we were on His list and He invites us. Don't give meals so that you can tell others who came to your meal or invite those who will invite you but invite those who need to be there. That will extend beyond that premiere invitation list which will go to those who need to be there.

Here is what you need to see in Christ and in Isaiah 25 which is the lesson from parable number two. The Host (Jesus) of the Banquet of salvation invites those who need Him, not those whom He needs. Who does Jesus need? He needs nobody, but you still were invited. He invited you not because He needed you but because you needed Him. We love Him because He first loved us. Jesus does not save us from our sins at the banquet of grace because He needs us, He saves us because He loves us. That's why He saves us.

I know the phrase 'Jesus loves unconditionally' is a popular phrase but I don't think it's right. He didn't love unconditionally. Jesus loves you by meeting God's conditions to love a sinner. He died for you but He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. So are you guilty of sin? Everybody is guilty of sin and I hope you know that, but are anticipating eternal life. If God has an inflexible judgment of condemnation, not just the body but the soul (the soul that sins will surely die, Ez. 18:20), an eternal death, then how is it I can live? It's because this just God found a way to be both just and Justifier of a sinner. His Son took our place. God's love is unmerited, unwanted, relentless, and undeserved but it is efficient because God Himself met the conditions of 'holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.'

Therefore there is coming a day where you can participate in the resurrection of the just. Why? It is not because of self-righteousness but because of a Divine righteousness. Romans 1:16-17 says [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."* So that by His blood my sins are washed away, with His righteousness I am clothed, made acceptable and carried up to glory. God Himself did that for me for when He didn't need me, He wanted me and when I needed Him, I didn't want Him yet this God has done that work.

When you know you're in the resurrection of the righteous because of the righteousness of God given to us freely in Christ, then you'll see it with an invitation list that goes to people just like us. If in my mind, I'm getting to heaven because of what I've done or what I have contributed then my invitation list will reveal my self-righteousness, but if I know I was invited in spite of myself, to save me because God loved me when I was unlovable, then that frees up my invitation list to be with no discrimination and no partiality. I am free now to spread the Gospel in the whole field and not just at the parts I want. I'm free to put everybody on the invitation list because I was on the invitation list and I shouldn't have been for I brought nothing to the table but my need. He brought everything to the table that saves me - His Son Jesus.

Let's look at the third parable in Luke 14:15-24 which says [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, that my house may be filled. [24] For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

The man who said 'Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God' understood Isaiah 25 and then Jesus makes a point to it. In the first century it was a big deal to have a banquet and invitations would be sent out to those on the invitation list. Today do something like 'save the date.' When you get to the banquet you don't go right for the table you mingle around a bit. Then when the host or hostess says 'it's time to eat' that is the second invitation. So the first invitation are all who are on the list and at this one everyone is invited. I'm inviting the needy and that's everybody.

Then it came time to sit at the table and all of them had an excuse. He gives three of the excuses but it said they all had excuses. They all turned down the second invitation to actually sit at the table. Let's look at these excuses. The first one is about having to go and look at land they just bought. Who buys a piece of land first without examining it? Why would you need to go and examine it after you bought it? That's a manufactured excuse, it's ludicrous. The second one is similar. Who buys five yoke of oxen before looking at them first? The third one is the fact he is married so he doesn't have social events on their calendar? They are all ridiculous excuses.

Isaac Watts wrote the hymn *How Sweet and Awful is the Place* based on Luke 14. Here are some of verses of this hymn;

1) *How sweet and awesome is the place
with Christ within the doors,
while everlasting love displays
the choicest of her stores.*

2) *While all our hearts and all our songs
join to admire the feast,
each of us cries, with thankful tongue,
"Lord, why was I a guest?"*

(It's only my need that got me on the list.)

3) *"Why was I made to hear your voice,
and enter while there's room,
when thousands make a wretched choice,
and rather starve than come?"*

Note the end of the parable; those who don't come to the Table are lost forever in a place called hell. Yet I came, so why did I not make that wretched choice? Here's why...

4) *'Twas the same love that spread the feast
that sweetly drew us in;
else we had still refused to taste,
and perished in our sin.*

5) *Pity the nations, O our God,
constrain the earth to come;
send your victorious Word abroad,
and bring the strangers home.*

It doesn't get abroad if we don't take it.

6) *We long to see your churches full,
that all the chosen race
may, with one voice and heart and soul,
sing your redeeming grace.*

The lesson from the third parable is that it's one thing to be invited to the feast but it's another thing to show up and sit down. Who does that? It is those who are compelled. It's not enough to be on His invitation list, you have to come to the Table.

Here is the takeaway. God saves those who need Him even though they don't want Him by pursuing them with a compelling message, messengers and a Minister. First is a compelling messenger and when you finish reading this you get to go tell people that every religion in this world tells people what they have to do or give to maybe get something called salvation. You get to tell people that there is a God who loves you and it's not what you do and give, in fact that's really part of the problem, but it's what He did and gave for you, His Son. He did it because He loves you and you need Him. You don't deserve Him but you need Him.

I went to a banquet of a wonderful guy because of his ministry to high school and college students who I have supported. When he got to the end he said 'I am asking you to give because these students deserve to hear about Jesus.' I went up to him afterwards and said 'I want you to know we're giving because you do a great job but I'm not sending you because they deserve Jesus for I know what we deserve and it's not Jesus, that's grace but I'm sending you because they need Jesus. You love Jesus and you will compel them with a compelling message to come to Jesus.'

We have a glorious Good News Gospel. Expect the world to make an excuse unless God changes the heart. To the world, the Good News is a scandal and an offense for no one wants to be told they're a sinner and need a Savior. They don't want to be told they can't save themselves or their church or religion can't save them and no one wants to be told that there is no other way but Jesus, unless Jesus changes the heart. We have a compelling message of grace, so take it to the world.

Also be compelling messengers. What kind of messengers are compelling? We're not compelling, that is drawing people to Christ, if we're like them or if we're self-righteously different than them. We are what we are by the grace of God, then what makes us compelling is that we have renounced ourselves, not promote ourselves. We have renounced ourselves at the Table of salvation and that's what compels people who come in. We go and pray for them and

speak to them. We relentlessly pursue with perseverance, persistence and compassion people who don't yet know Christ and haven't come to Him.

One of my favorite moments is to sit down with someone after sharing with them the love of Christ and say 'Is there any reason you shouldn't receive Jesus right now?' I'm always ready for a manufactured excuse and then I get the chance to say 'Can I answer that reason? I want to tell you about the One who loves you.'

Finally, you need a compelling minister. I am not that compelling minister. The compelling Minister is the Holy Spirit for He alone is the One who gives eyes to see and ears to hear. He alone can change a manufactured excuse heart to a surrendered heart and that's what He does.

If you're reading this today you are on the invitation list but you have to come to the Table. I've tried to tell you how much Jesus loves you with a compelling message. It's not about us but it's about Him in you and He has given Himself to you. I'm praying for the Spirit of God to be at work in your life so I want to ask you, is there any reason you shouldn't come to Jesus today? There are people at our church who would love to pray with you so I invite you to the Table, not just to the list but to feast at His Table. Don't let oxs, spouses, business or anything be an excuse not to come to Him.

Do you long to see His church full? Yet in our nation it's emptying. Don't look to the church to come up with a program. It is a compelling message, and compelling messengers that go out in the Spirit of God. If you want His church full go to the highways and to the hedges. Not only go to the streets and lanes but go beyond the hedges. Pursue them relentlessly. Go! Bring them to hear Christ so that seat beside you that's empty is filled with someone you brought to hear Him, with a compelling message, with a heart constrained by Christ and with the work of the Spirit of God working through you.

I know the Lord will fill His church because He says in His Word that all that the Father gives to Him shall come to Him, but I want to be a part of this. I know His people will be brought to Him and fill His Table but I also know there is still room at the Table because He hasn't come back yet. When the Table is full He'll come back but it's not filled yet and I want it to be filled therefore we will go. We'll not only go to our family and friends but those who need Him and that's everyone. We'll even go beyond the hedges, the outskirts but we'll go relentlessly showing them a love that the Host of the Table has for them through us. I long to see His churches full with all the chosen race who would together sing, His redeeming grace. Let's pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much for the grace and mercy that is found in Christ. Thank You so much for the joy of serving Christ. Thank You O God, that You allow us to not only come to the Table compelling us with others who came to us who were compelling messengers with a compelling message and the Holy Spirit who came to us, but now You send us from the Table out to fill up the room and the Table to Christ. So God please give us a lifestyle of compelling evangelism, taking the Good News into a dry and weary land to everyone because everyone needs our Savior for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Three Banquet Parables

Banquet Parable #1

The guests at the Lord's Banquet of Salvation renounce all self-promotion.

Banquet Parable #2

The Host of the Banquet of Salvation invites those who need Him, not those whom He needs.

Banquet Parable #3

It's one thing to be invited to the Feast; it's another thing to show up and sit down—only the compelled do.

Life Takeaway

God saves those who need Him even though they do not want Him by pursuing them with a compelling message, messengers, and a minister.

I. The Compelling Message

II. The Compelling Messengers

III. The Compelling Minister