

INVITE THE POOR, THE CRIPPLED, THE LAME, THE BLIND

(You Will Be Repaid at the Resurrection)

Luke 14:1-24

Key Verses: 13-14, "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."

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. Opposition against him was mounting. But Jesus was resolute, determined to finish his mission from his Father God. How distressed Jesus was until he could accomplish it. While keeping in step with his mission, Jesus was discipling his disciples day by day. Jesus was challenging and rebuking his opponents, teaching the crowds, and training his disciples.

One of the main points of contention against Jesus was his healing on the Sabbath. His enemies regarded it as work. But Jesus did not back down under pressure. In the synagogue on a Sabbath, Jesus healed a woman who had been bent over for 18 years. Jesus said to his critics, "Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?"

In today's Scripture passage, Jesus continues in this Sabbath day battle. But this time it is at the home of a Pharisee. Jesus uses this dinner invitation to teach further about choosing seats, who to invite, and about a Great Banquet being prepared and who is invited. May we not disregard Jesus' invitation to the Great Banquet, but accept it, and invite others as well.

First, the healing of a man on the Sabbath (1-6).

Look at verses 1-2. "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."

We don't know why this Pharisee invited Jesus on a Sabbath to his home for dinner. We don't know if his intentions were kind or curious or critical. In any case, Jesus did not shy away from the invitation. Jesus had no fear of men, because he lived before God, his heavenly Father.

The Bible says that they were watching Jesus carefully. And it so happens that there was a sick man right in front of Jesus. Could it be that this man was intentionally invited off the street? We see later that he does not even stay for the dinner, but Jesus rather sends

him away. It seems to be a set up to catch Jesus in an act, from their perspective, of violating the Sabbath by healing someone. Haven't they gotten the message yet from Jesus, that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, and that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (6:5)?

Jesus knows what they are up to. So Jesus says to them, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" But they remained silent.

What about this man, the one who had dropsy? Does anyone care about him? Jesus did. Jesus saw him not as bait or as someone to avoid due to religious rules and legalism. By the way, what is dropsy? It is a swelling of the body due to fluid build up, also known as edema. So hands or legs or the face can swell. It is a disfiguring disease that is easily visible. It is most usually caused by heart or kidney disease. It was not necessarily a life-threatening or urgent disease. But that didn't matter to Jesus. Jesus still cared about this man. And Jesus didn't mind angering his critics to show compassion on a suffering man. Jesus took the man and healed him, and sent him on his way. Like I said, he didn't stay for the dinner. I don't think he was on the official invited list to this dinner; clearly he wasn't a close friend to this dinner host.

After healing the man, Jesus said to them (5): "Which of you, having a son^[a] or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" And again they were speechless. Jesus was sorry that they cared more for their farm animals than for this man. How about us? Do we care about the poor, the needy, the suffering? Does it show in our checkbooks and bank accounts, based on what we are spending our money on? What we spend our money on shows where our heart is. Do we spend more on feeding our pets than we spend on feeding the poor? Do we spend more on new clothes than on clothing the homeless? I gave a homeless man \$5 this past week, and I admit that I felt pretty generous. I did not give \$500 or \$1000 like some of those rich people do in the videos. Here's another probing question: Do you think more about how to invest your money on earth, or about storing up treasure in heaven?

Second, seek God's honor (7-11).

Jesus went on to tell a parable to the party guests. He noticed that people were quick to choose seats of honor. Perhaps there were places to sit near the host or near the food, and there were places at the walls or in the corner. Who likes to sit in the corner? Anybody? Maybe if you're the quiet type. But if you're the life of the party, and there's no good seat left, you might just go home.

Jesus told this parable (8-10): "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, 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. 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."

Isn't it human nature that we want to be recognized, praised and honored by others? Aren't we clever in finding ways to talk about or advertise ourselves, our children, what we own, what we do? In a word, we're very self-centered, aren't we? In a meeting, don't we like to share our ideas, since of course, our ideas are so good, and probably, superior to others, right? We have so much to learn from Jesus.

Jesus concluded the parable: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Jesus is not teaching that it is bad to want honor or recognition. The problem is who is giving it. Jesus says, "Don't exalt yourself." Let other people exalt you. Even more, let God exalt you. And what is way to be exalted by others and by God? Humble yourself. What does that mean: humble yourself?

Apostle Paul writes in this same spirit: gives us good advice along these lines:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:3-4) And Paul goes on to explain how Jesus is the greatest example of humbling oneself: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Php 2:6-8)

Jesus humbled himself to the point of death. Apostle Paul marveled at the humbleness of Jesus. Paul wanted to imitate this humble Jesus, even becoming like Jesus in his death. This is why Paul is so great and influential—even more than his labors for Christ. It was his desire to grow in the character of Christ.

What was the end result of Jesus' humility? He was exalted by God to the highest place and given the name above every name, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Php 2:10-11)

Third, seek God's repayment at the resurrection (12-14).

Jesus then turned his attention to his host. Jesus said to 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."

Jesus addresses another common behavior: We tend to do generous things to others when we expect something in return. But we are not so eager or quick to give generously to others when we don't expect anything in return. In other words, we give, not out of love or generosity, but out of calculation and reciprocation. Christmas is often a challenging time: who should I buy gifts for among all my acquaintances, and how much should I spend on these gifts? Jesus says, "Give without expecting anything back." That is the right spirit of giving, and that is giving that God will repay.

Jesus says, "Invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame, and you will be blessed. Although they can't repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." This is Jesus' promise. This requires faith to believe it and obey it. It also requires love, love for those who are truly in need, who have no means to repay someone's generosity.

Jesus is telling us here that God keeps an account of our giving to those who can't repay us. Wise is the person who builds a bank account in heaven. Do you feel that serving Christ is a losing business? Then you are not thinking correctly. Serving Christ is no losing business; it is storing up treasure in heaven. Jim Elliott was one of the Wheaton College missionary martyrs. He famously wrote: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." Moses is another example. He chose to be mistreated with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin in the palace. "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward" (Heb 11:26).

Fourth, accept the invitation and invite others to God's banquet (15-24).

One of those reclining at table with Jesus interrupted Jesus' teaching. He said (15), "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Maybe this man was a good listener of Jesus, for Jesus had recently taught that people would come from all over and recline at table in the kingdom of God (13:29). Or, perhaps this man wanted to change the uncomfortable mood caused by Jesus' words about inviting the down and out to dinner parties.

Jesus used the moment to teach another parable, explaining that not everyone would be at the Great Banquet in the kingdom of God. Here is the beginning of the parable:

"A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 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.' 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.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master."

Clearly, the man who threw the banquet was a wealthy man of high status, since he invited many people to his great banquet. The man represents God. These people had been given general invitations. This refers to the prophets of God who made known his will to his people Israel. The servant went out to tell them to come to the great banquet for everything was now ready. This servant refers to Jesus who came preaching, "The time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news." But the people had many excuses: their properties, their businesses, their marriages, were all more important to them. In fact, they felt quite bothered by this invitation, since they had more important things to tend to, so they thought.

These excuse-makers sound a lot like those who refused the invitation to follow Jesus as his disciples (9:59-61). These excuse-makers refer to those who refused to take Jesus seriously, like the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

The master of the house became angry at the excuse-makers. He said to his servant (21b): "Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame."

These people were not on the original guest list. They were quite unexpected to be invited to this great banquet. But the master was quite generous. He wanted to invite them all to his great banquet. Who do these people represent? They could refer to the needy people like the man with dropsy. They could also refer to those who felt unworthy to be invited—that is, to those who knew that they were sinners, like the tax collectors and prostitutes. Some people know very well that they are sinners. Many years I invited a man at work my lunch time Bible study. He replied, "That's not for me. I'm a sinner!" Jesus invites them too.

The servant invited the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame, and reported back to the master, "Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room." So the master said to the servant (23): "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled."

This master is really eager to have people come to his house and share in his great banquet, even if not so many people are interested. Who are these people from way outside the city? This refers to the rest of the world, outside Israel. God invites all peoples of all nations to come to his Great Banquet. Whosoever will may come (song).

The parable ends on a sour note: For I tell you [all], none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet." The master is very sorry that his invited guests are not interested in his banquet. But he is not daunted. He will still have his great banquet. And he will still find those who accept his gracious, undeserved invitation. Have you accepted his invitation to his great banquet? Or, are other things more important to you?

If you have accepted his invitation, are you inviting others to share in the Great Heavenly Banquet? This is a banquet that no one should miss. Sadly, it is a banquet that many don't even know about. Some are not interested, since they are focused on building wealth and achievement and honor in this world. But there are those who are seeking God's kingdom. They need meaning and peace and hope and purpose for their lives. They are tired of investing in things that perish, spoil and fade.

I invited a few people to this worship service today. Two of them made excuses: brunch plans and a graduation to attend. Thankfully, they are open to learning about God's word. I heard it said that if someone was invited to church by a friend, 80% of them would accept the invitation. Have you invited anyone?

Over 2000 people have registered to attend our International Summer Bible Conference. There is still room for more and we have til June 30 to register online. Yesterday, our 8 messengers gathered online to rehearse and pray. God speaks through his living, active and enduring word in the Bible. Lives will be impacted and changed for good at this conference. Have you accepted the invitation? Have you invited anyone? The invitation to heaven doesn't totally depend on this invitation, but it can definitely help a person to hear God's word personally and get a glimpse of his heavenly glory.

May God help us to grow in the compassion of Jesus. May God help us to seek his honor and reward at the resurrection. May God help us accept his heavenly invitation for ourselves and invite others with our time and resources. Amen.