

A Banquet of Food for the Soul - Part 2

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[0 : 00] Let's take your Bibles this morning and let's turn to Luke chapter 14.

! We started to look at this passage a couple of Sundays ago and took a Sunday off, some kind of surgery thing, you know. And now we want to get back to it and the larger passage is verses 1 through 24 and we've kind of divided it into parts.

Though there is a theme that kind of ties it all together and I'll mention that again here in just a minute. But let me go ahead and read the passage, Luke 14 and verses 1 through 24.

Now it happened as he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath that they watched him closely. Behold, there was a certain man before him who had dropsy.

And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? But they kept their silent, kept silent.

[1 : 16] And he took him and healed him and let him go. Then he answered them saying, Which of you, having a donkey? Some versions have son there, okay?

We talked about that last time. Or an ox that has fallen into a pit will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day. They could not answer him regarding these things.

So he told a parable to those who were invited. When he noted how they chose the best seat, saying to them, When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him.

And he who invited you and him come and say to you, Give place to this man. And then you begin with shame to take the lowest place.

But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes, he may say to you, Friend, go up higher. Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you.

[2 : 25] For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Then he also said to him who invited him, When you give a dinner or supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. You will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Now when one of those who sat at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then he said to him, A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at suppertime to say to those who were invited, Come, for all things are now ready.

But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused. Still another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

[3 : 47] So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.

And the servant said, Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room. Then the master said to the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper. All right, so that's the larger passage, and we're taking a little bit of time to work our way through this passage.

And as I mentioned last time, there's a certain kind of common activity, one that we all engage in every single day. In fact, more times than one a day.

And this common activity kind of ties all of these various elements, various movements of the story together. And, of course, it's eating. Something I love to do, and I know many of you do as well, I can tell.

[4 : 58] And it takes one to know one. Eating. And that's what ties all of this together. And it's pretty easy to see, really. And I recommend to you as you're reading the Bible to try to find consistent themes or things that tie a story together.

And this one's just easy to see. Jesus, in the first place, is invited to a dinner. So that's how the whole thing starts. And then, of course, a man is healed at a dinner. And then Jesus tells a parable about a dinner.

And then he gives his host a lesson about dinner parties and who to invite and so forth. And then an invited guest in the dinner stands up and, so to speak, gives a toast concerning a future dinner, an eternal dinner.

And then, of course, Jesus then offers up another parable about a certain dinner. So it's just pretty clear. And it just runs all the way through the passage. And I'll try to get us done this morning in time to eat dinner.

Okay, I think we'll manage that today. All right, so let me kind of set the story up again. Jesus, as I've already said, has been invited to a banquet, to a banquet dinner, along with some other guests, of course.

[6 : 18] He was not the only one there. And there were those who were, who would call the, we would call the high muckety-muck of the Jewish community there.

And we are only told here, not what the host served for the dinner. I mean, you're not told that information. You're not really looking for that. But we may not have noticed on the kind of casual observance of the passage that Jesus actually did serve up something here for the dinner guests. So to speak, he kind of brought something to the table. Now, it was not a potluck affair. I'm sure this was something very formal, something, you know, very societal, something that people in the community would love to attend.

And it's certainly not a potluck thing. Everybody is not bringing a dish, you know, that kind of thing, something that we might do, especially as Baptists. And yet, again, I would say to you that in a sense, Jesus did serve up a few dishes here.

He served them up to these religious kind of lawyers. Some of them were lawyers, some of them Pharisees. They were all leaders. They were all high society Jews. And Jesus served something to them.

[7 : 37] And none of it tasted very good to them. It's pretty clear. They didn't get what they wanted at this dinner. But they certainly got what they deserved. And if we'll pay close attention, we'll get something here that we not only deserve, but we need what we need.

And that's why I say that Jesus served up a kind of a dinner that we might call consisted of food for the soul. Food for the soul. All right, so then in my kind of sanctified imagination, I see Jesus serving up a three-course meal.

First of all comes the appetizer. The appetizer. And then the main course. And then finally, the dessert. And really, Jesus only alludes to the dessert.

It's interesting, as we shall see next time. Jesus said that the dessert was not for this group that had gathered. And so he has the appetizer, the main course, and the dessert.

And so last time we considered the appetizer, and I called it this, the appetizer of compassion. That is clearly what Jesus is talking about here in the first part of this passage.

[8 : 48] Compassion. And so again, here he is. He's invited to the home of a very prominent Jew. The Bible calls him a ruler of the Jews.

So that probably means he was the ruler of the synagogue. So he would be the top guy in this community. And so he's invited to his home after synagogue.

And he's invited along with some of his cronies. His, you know, his kind of buddies who are part of the elite society of the Jewish leadership.

And so you can kind of picture this whole scene here. And so as we learn from the text, and we've already learned to expect this, it was on the Sabbath day. It just seemed like nothing ever really happened with Jesus unless it was the Sabbath day.

Many of his miracles were performed on the Sabbath day. And a lot of his preaching occurred on the Sabbath day. And so we've kind of come to expect this. When any big event took place, it was always the Sabbath.

[9 : 51] And so that indeed was the day here in our passage. And the Bible says in verse 1 that they, that is the Pharisees and lawyers and so forth, they watched him closely.

That is, all eyes were glued upon Jesus here at this dinner party. And so, you know, this was, again, one of those staged events, which happened quite often in the life of Christ.

It was a setup. It was set up and staged by those who were constantly looking for some reason to find accusation against Jesus. Some way to catch him in something illegal.

Some way to disgrace him and discredit him in the eyes of the people. And so this was all kind of set up here at this dinner party.

And verse 2 gives us a little more information. It tells us, And behold, which is meant, of course, to convey the idea of surprise.

[10 : 56] Surprise, something unusual. Behold, there was a certain man before him who had dropsy. That is, he was severely ill. Probably a heart condition.

And this is strange. This is odd because what's he doing there? You would not expect to find this kind of man at this kind of high society banquet or dinner.

Well, he's there because he was planted there. He's there because he is the bait, of course. And the bait for Jesus. Because this man would be irresistible bait for Jesus.

And so that's why it says that they were watching him closely. Would he heal the man? That's what they're hoping. And they were not disappointed in that. Jesus did heal the man.

And so he's kind of set there as bait for Jesus. But as I mentioned last time, Jesus turns the tables on them. Because they thought they were setting this up.

[11 : 58] And in reality, Jesus had set the whole thing up. Jesus then had something cooked up for them. Yeah, the host had a dinner cooked up. But Jesus had something cooked up for them.

And essentially, Jesus served them up a plate of compassion. That's the first dish. The appetizer. He said, Here, eat this.

This is what you need. Speaking to these hypocritical, these hyper-religious, with no real substance in their hearts, Pharisees.

And you see, Jesus knew that their diet was absolutely compassion deficient. They needed compassion. I mean, who were they watching there that day?

Watching carefully. Were they watching this sick man, this poor man, this needy man? Well, certainly not. The Bible says they were watching Jesus.

[12 : 57] They didn't care anything about this sick man, this poor man. In fact, he would not have been there if Jesus was not there. They would have never invited him here to this dinner.

They didn't have anything to do with those kinds of people. To them, they were gross sinners. They were sick because they were outside of God's will. They must not even be saved. And so, he would have never been there otherwise.

And so, their eyes are not on him. They don't care about him. They care about Jesus. They only care about trapping him into something. And again, Jesus turned the tables on them.

And so, Jesus, in response, before he heals the man, kind of sandwiched, the healing is sandwiched in between some lessons that Jesus gives these Pharisees.

Jesus served up a plate of compassion and it stuck in their throats. They couldn't get it down. They couldn't swallow it. It stuck in their throats.

[14 : 05] This plate of compassion, the Bible says in verse 6, and they could not answer him regarding these things. He showed them that they had more compassion for an ox stuck in a pit than he had for this sick man who was created in the image of God.

A plate of compassion, appetizer of compassion. We saw that last time. But now, Jesus is not through. Jesus has the main course now. Now, Jesus is going to serve up the main course and I want to call it the main course of humiliation.

The main course of humiliation. Look at verse 7 again. So, he told a parable to those who were invited. And why did he tell a parable? Well, it was according to verse 7 because when he noted how they chose the best places.

Now, you can just kind of picture this. Jesus is watching. He's observing. They're getting ready to be seated around the table. And he's watching these Jews, these leaders, these elite people, these

high society people, these, quote, religious people.

He's watching them as they are trying to find and sit in the best seat around the table. And so, since he's watching that and he observes some things that they're doing, he then tells a parable about that.

[15 : 33] A parable. And the parable is about humiliation. Now, the words best places, I think we ought to understand this, when it says they were seeking the best places, that's how it's translated in the New King James, that comes from one Greek word in the Greek text and the word refers to the chief places at the table.

Or the chief seats, we could call it. Or the seats of honor, I think some versions of it translate it. And we're not really certain about the Jewish customs concerning, you know, the seats of honor around a banquet table or dinner table.

The Jewish Talmud, which is basically just a book of Jewish teachings, ethical teachings and so forth. The Talmud does seem to indicate that the center seat, we would call it the head of the table, was the seat of highest honor and it would be occupied traditionally by the host, the host of the banquet.

And that would be, again, the chief seat, the seat of highest honor. And then, to the right of the chief seat would be the second seat of honor.

And then to the left would be the third seat, but really, not much difference between the left and right. These would be the seats of honor next only to the host or the chief seat.

[17 : 00] And since, in the case of dinner banquets, all the seats that would, if you move out from the head-to-head seat, as you move out from there, the seats would become of lesser honor.

The further you moved out from the seat where the host would sit, the chief seat. And since, in the case of a large banquet, and this may have been a large banquet, we don't really know that, there would have been other tables, perhaps, even set up.

There would be the head table, you know, we have this kind of thing at banquets today. There's the head table and all the, you know, the really important people sit at that table. And then you have other tables that kind of are scattered out from there.

and so there would be seats out there of less honor. You might even have other rooms that were set up for a very large banquet and where you would sit in a completely different room from the host and from the chief seats.

And quite often there would be seats set up or cushions set up around the perimeter of the banquet room or whatever it may have been. And you could, others could sit there.

[18 : 12] They could participate in a sense with the banquet but they were kind of on the periphery. And those would be seats that would have basically no honor or little honor at the very, very, very most.

And, you know, nobody wanted to sit there. It would be an extremely degrading experience to sit that far away from the chief seat and seats, the seats of highest honor.

And this was ingrained in the Jewish culture of the day and really in many cultures today it still is. You might remember, by the way, a reference to this in Mark chapter 10 verse 35.

This is in reference to a couple of Jesus' apostles, a couple of brothers by the name of James and John. You remember this story? James and John asked Jesus to do something very special for them.

They said, grant us that we may sit one on your right and the other on your left in your glory. That's a huge request.

[19 : 17] And Jesus' response was essentially if you really knew what you were asking you wouldn't ask it. And he said, can you drink the cup that I'm going to drink? And they said, yes, but they didn't really know what they were talking about.

But what's interesting there in that passage is how the other ten apostles responded when they heard about this. The Bible says that they were greatly displeased. And that's kind of putting it mildly.

Actually, it literally means they were indignant. Indignant with James and John. And why would they be indignant with James and John? Because they wanted the chief seats. I was just plain and simple. And you see, this was ingrained, instilled, it was just a part of the fabric of Jewish life that you should desire the chief seats and do whatever you can to get those chief seats.

Now, it says here that Jesus noted how they chose the chief seats at the table. I think this is kind of interesting. And, you know, again, with my imagination, I can imagine that each one of these guys had their own method of getting that best seat.

You know, there might be a number of different methods that they could use. And I got to thinking about that. I thought, well, you know, there might be some methods that would come under the category of diversionary tactics.

[20 : 36] You know, like the old, oh, what's that over there? And then you sit down in the seat, you know, kind of thing. Or maybe this one, the ever popular tap on the shoulder trick. You know, you tap on the shoulder and then you sit down in the seat.

And maybe they use methods like that. Or how about this one? Did you see that mouse run under the table? And then you go ahead and sit in the chief seat. Or there might have been some methods that we could call deception tactics.

You know, we say, hey, bud, you know, there's a phone call for you. Of course, he comes back later and says, what's a phone? You know, or maybe the old switcheroo. You know, I think the chief seat is on the other end of the table.

You might want to pick one of those, you know, kind of a deception tactic. And then to get a little bit more severe, maybe there were some divide and conquer kind of tactics like the musical chair routine.

You know, you've done musical chairs and the music is playing and as soon as it stops, you shove the guy out of the way and sit down in the seat. I don't know if they use something like that or maybe the, what I have decided to call the booty bump and sit.

[21 : 39] You know, you just go boom and sit down. You think they did this to these dignified Pharisees? Well, maybe not. And it'd be even more drastic, it might, you might just pull the chair out and fall onto the floor and then you sit down.

Oh, excuse me, I'm so sorry that happened to you. And I guess we could ask if, you know, this is kind of the most drastic tactic and that would be to yell, fire!

And everybody empties the room and you go ahead and sit in the chief seat. And I, you know, I don't, obviously these were not their tactics, but Jesus was observing what they were doing as they were vying for the best seats and whatever techniques they used, you know, whether it's deception or diversion or just outright meanness, you know, just to get that chief seat.

And by the way, I got to thinking, I wonder where Jesus sat at the table. You know, think about that. Where did they put him? Or, if they're choosing their own seats and I think we're to suppose that initially anyway, everyone was choosing their own seat and they're trying to get the best seat.

If they chose their own seats, then which seat did Jesus choose? You know, and he's the Lord of glory. But anyway, Jesus is watching these Jews jockeying and jostling for the chief seats.

[23 : 01] He's watching them as they're pushing and shoving to get the seats of greatest honor around the table and so he tells a parable. A parable on humility.

And this is the main course. The main course, humiliation. These Jews had a humiliation deficient diet.

They not only were completely lacking of compassion, but they were completely lacking of any humility whatsoever. They were self, kind of self-centered.

They were self-consumed. They were self-promoting. A kind of selfie mindset. I think we have a lot of that in our day, don't we?

And so Jesus tells a parable about that starting in verse 8. Look at it. When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, that would be, of course, the granddaddy of feasts, we'll go on for days, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him, that is, by the host.

[24 : 17] All right? So don't pick the best seat because someone of greater honor may be invited also, and then you're going to be in trouble. Because he goes on and says, and he who invited, that is, the host, and him, the one more honorable than you, come and say to you, give place to this man and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place.

Why the lowest place? Because that's the only one left. Because everybody else has been scrambling for the best seat, including you. And you pick the best one and then to your humiliation. Public display of humiliation. The host says, you have to get up and you go sit in the lowest seat. So Jesus said, don't do that. But, Jesus said, when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place.

So that, when he who invited you comes, he may say to you, friend, go up higher. Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you.

That is, you will have their admiration. You will have their praise. They'll think good of you. All right, now, on one level, of course, a very practical level, this just makes sense, doesn't it?

[25 : 33] I mean, this is kind of the safe way. Don't overreach. Don't stick your neck out too far. Don't puff yourself up because then you're going to be put down and that's going to be very humiliating.

It would be better to go the route where you could go up. Leave you some room, leave some room to be elevated, to be exalted. So this is just very practical. It sounds like a wise saying.

In fact, it sounds very proverbial. And indeed, it is. Because in Proverbs 25, 6, this is interesting, the Bible says, Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence.

Don't stand out. Don't put yourself out there or stand in the place of great men. For it is better to be told, come up here than to be put lower in the presence of a noble or a prince whom your eyes have seen.

So that's a proverb, isn't it? And it just makes good practical sense. All right, so on one level, this is very practical, very wise.

[26 : 40] It's a wise saying. It's something you ought to practice and it's much safer this way and so forth. But now, Jesus is not trying to be practical here. Jesus' point is something much deeper, goes to a much deeper level.

in fact, as we'll see fully next time, Jesus has an eternal banquet in mind. He's gone way beyond any kind of physical banquet.

And we'll see that next time when we talk about the dessert of salvation. But you see, being self-righteous, being self-consumed, and when everything is about you, everything is about your betterment, your promotion, being self-promoting, what is that?

It's pride. Pride, plain and simple. And here's the idea. Here's the point that Jesus is making. Pride, you see, will keep you from the banquet dinner that really counts.

That's what we ought to come away from this passage. Pride will keep you from the banquet party that God is going to throw one day at the end of all things.

[28 : 02] You don't want to miss that one. Pride will keep you out of heaven. And the point here in the story is it certainly will keep these banquet guests out of that banquet and that's what Jesus is saying.

And not only them, but it will also keep the banquet host out as well. And so not to leave anybody out, Jesus then rebukes the banquet host, does he?

His banquet host is self-consumed. He cares only about himself. He's only interested in his circle of friends and then only if that's going to benefit him.

That's what we ought to understand here. Jesus is not saying you can't have banquets, invite friends. That's not the point. You missed the point. He's talking directly to the heart of this banquet host and he knows something about his heart and he's identifying that and that thing he is identifying is simply this, is pride.

Pride of his heart. He's self-consumed. Sure, he invited all of his friends to this banquet and he would do that because he's hoping that they will reciprocate.

[29 : 13] He's hoping and counting on the fact that they will invite him to a banquet. See, being invited to a banquet is a big deal in this culture. To be invited to a banquet of the high and lofty in society people would be, would be possibly the highlight of your life.

And so it was very important in society to be invited to these banquets and so you invite people to a banquet so that they will in turn invite you. He says it's all about self.

He's only caring about himself. Jesus said in verse 12, this is what he said to the banquet host. He says, when you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back.

That is with the idea and mindset that they will invite you back and you be repaid. He said, don't do it that way. That is, you see, here's the point. He invites only those who will invite him.

He is giving of his resources, of his wealth, of himself. He's only giving to those who will give it back in turn. He cares only about himself.

[30 : 25] That's the idea here. But Jesus says in verse 13, when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind.

Now, why them? Well, he explains. Verse 14, because they cannot repay you. And you know that. You invite them because you know that they cannot give you anything in return. And so that's how you know that you're giving of yourself, your resources, your money, your mercy, your love, your energy, your time, all of it, with no thought of anything in return. This is true humility. You're giving with no thought of anything in return, no thought of personal benefit. This is self-denying rather than self-consuming. And your reward? Well, Jesus says it's in heaven. Your reward is in heaven. You will be blessed, he said, for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just or the righteous. [31 : 40] And then he says in verse 11, and this is the axiom for life. This is the truism. This is the rule. For whoever exalts himself will what?

Be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted. Now, in this context, humbled by whom? Exalted by whom? Well, God, of course. By God. See, the Bible says God is the judge. Psalm 75, verse 7, he puts down one and exalts another.

God resists or opposes the proud, 1 Peter 5, 5, but he gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves in the presence of God, James 4, verse 10, and he will exalt you. See, that's the principle. And Jesus knows that these Pharisees, these Jews, these lawyers, these high society among the Jewish leadership of that community of that day.

[32 : 51] He knew they were completely void of any humility. It had an implication that went way beyond just interpersonal relationships and just being good guys here in this life.

It went way beyond that because it was a terminal condition for them. Because of their pride, they were going to miss the only banquet that really matters.

They were going to miss heaven. love. I like what J.C. Ryle wrote about this passage and I quote him quite a bit. I have his commentary on Luke and it's just a jewel.

And I want to quote what he said in closing here this morning. My voice is about God. He said this, humility, now listen to this very carefully, humility may well be called the queen of Christian graces. To know our own sinfulness and weakness and to feel our need of Christ is the very beginning of saving religion. It is a grace which has always been the distinguishing feature in the character of every true Christian.

[34 : 06] He said all converted people should labor to adorn the doctrine they profess with humility. If they can do nothing else they can strive to be humble.

And then Ryle asks this question and it's a very important question. More important is the answer. Where does humility come from? How do you get humble?

I mean truly humble in the eyes of God. And here's the answer, his answer. one word describes it. The root of humility is knowledge.

It's knowledge. Right knowledge. The man who really knows himself and his own heart, who knows God and his infinite majesty and holiness, who knows Christ and the price at which he was redeemed, that man will never be a proud man or woman.

He will count himself like Jacob, unworthy of the least of all God's mercies. He will say of himself like Job, I am vile.

[35 : 28] He will cry like Paul, I am the chief of sinners. Ignorance, nothing but sheer ignorance, ignorance of self, of God, of Christ.

That is the real secret of pride. From that miserable self-ignorance, may we daily pray to be delivered.

Think about that. And then he closed with this statement. He is the wise man who knows himself. Amen.