

A Banquet of Food for the Soul (Part 1)

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[0:00] Luke chapter 14 in the text, I should say the larger text, because we're not going to be able!

verses 1 through 24, but I am going to go ahead and read all of it, verses 1 through 24, and then we shall look at a portion of it this morning, and hopefully look at the rest of it next time.

I think two sermons will be enough for this passage, but this is rich, rich with the teaching of the Lord, and the example of the Lord, and so we're going to take a little bit of time with this.

Let me go ahead and read 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.

And behold, there was a certain man before him who had dropsy. Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers of the Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

[1:24] They kept their silence. They kept their silence. And he took him and healed him, letting go. Then he answered them, saying, Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?

And they could not answer him regarding these things. So he told the parable to those who were invited when he noted how they chose the best places, saying to them, When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down at 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, Get 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.

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.

[2:56] But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the main, the lame, the blind. Now, 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. And he said to him, A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper, supper time, 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 milk of oxen, and am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused. Still another said, I have to marry a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. And 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 main and the lame and the blind.

[4:11] And the servant said, Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room. And 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 these, for those men who were invited, shall taste my supper. It's an interesting passage. And you might, maybe at first glance or first hearing, think, well, what does all of this have to do, all of these various parts of the story have to do with one another?

And yet, perhaps you notice that there is a certain common activity, one that we all engage in daily. A certain activity that kind of ties all of the various parts of this story together.

You know what it is? It's eating. I heard it right off right over here. Eating. Eating. That runs all throughout the story.

I mean, Jesus is invited to a dinner. Jesus heals a man at this dinner. Jesus tells a parable about a dinner. Jesus gives his host a few lessons on how to invite people to a dinner, or who to invite to a dinner.

[5 : 35] And an invited guest at the dinner, kind of essentially stands up and gives a toast to a future dinner, one that will occur in heaven. And then Jesus tells another parable about another certain kind of dinner.

So it just, it runs throughout the passage and it ties all of this together. And, you know, I think most of you would be with me on this. One of my favorite activities in life is eating.

I just love eating. And I know it shows, but I love eating. I love to sit down at the dinner table and you can call me once, you can call me often, but you don't have to call me twice to the dinner table. I love to eat. And sometimes the dinner table consists of tasty foods, doesn't it? I'm talking about comfort food. The kind of stuff we just really like to gobble up, like roast and potatoes and pork tenderloin and hash brown casserole or perhaps it's ham, baked ham and mashed potatoes and all the trimmings.

And I think I heard somebody's stomach growl. And so sometimes we sit down at the dinner table and it's just tasty food. We just love it.

[6 : 52] We overeat and so forth. Now, sometimes the dinner table consists of what we might call strictly healthy foods. Right? Sometimes that's the case.

And, you know, when some people eat, that's all they're really interested in, food that is good for them. And from my perspective, that's just downright on America.

Not really. I'm just kidding. Dinner time in China, as I've shared with you a number of occasions, is usually a challenge.

And some of you have the pleasure of going. You know what I'm talking about. I didn't even get to the point where I read it at dinner time. And I found myself always having to ask, what is this?

And you know you're in big trouble when you have to ask that question. But almost always the answer would be, well, if you eat this, it's good for a certain part of your body, a certain part of your life.

[7 : 50] You know, that would be the standard answer. But I'm not interested in that kind of thing. I'm not interested in what, you know, how good it is to my body. I'm interested in how good it is to my palate.

I'm interested in whether or not it tastes good. Now, all kidding, here's what all of us have discovered in life.

We've discovered that sometimes we don't get what we want at the dinner table. We get what we need. Now, some of us don't get that as often as we should.

But sometimes that's the case. We get what we need. And that kind of brings us down to the passage, our passage of Scripture, this portion of the larger passage. Jesus is invited to a banquet dinner.

And he's invited, of course, along with some other guests. And we're not told what the banquet host served at the dinner, whether it was delectable food, comfort food, or whether healthy food.

[8 : 51] We're not told anything about what was served at this banquet dinner. We're only told what Jesus brought to the table. Okay? Now, this was not a potluck affair.

And yet, metaphorically speaking, Jesus did serve up a few dishes here for these religious lawyers and Pharisees that were invited to this Pharisee's house.

And none of what Jesus offered up tasted any good to them. They didn't like it. And so they didn't get what they wanted at the dinner table.

They didn't get what they expected at this dinner banquet. They got what they needed. They got what they deserved. And so I want to follow that motif, motif of the dinner banquet.

And I want us to consider what Jesus brought to the table. What Jesus served up at the table. And I want us to discover its goodness to us.

[9 : 52] Because Jesus served up food for the soul here. And it may not seem palatable at first. It certainly did not to these Pharisees.

May not be tasty. May be at first sampling. But it is good for us. Good for us if we will eat it. And so I think we could imagine that Jesus served up. At least I imagine that Jesus served up a three-course meal here. He served up a three-course meal to these Pharisees and lawyers, these experts in the law, these Jewish leaders, these hypocrites.

Jesus called them that on more than one occasion. Three-course meal. And so we'll just call it the appetizer. That would be the first course. Then the main course.

That would be the second one, of course. And then lastly, the dessert. Now, it's the appetizer we're going to focus on this morning. And we'll try to see the rest of it all in one wad next time.

[11:02] Okay? So let's consider the appetizer. And I'm going to call it this. Based upon what Jesus is teaching in the first course of his meal.

We have here the appetizer of compassion. It's the appetizer of compassion. That's what we need to get from this first part of the story.

This is what Jesus is teaching. Compassion to these legalistic, hypocritical, steeped in religiosity Pharisees and lawyers.

The appetizer of compassion. So again, here is Jesus invited to the home of a, I think we could assume, very prominent Jew. He's a Pharisee most likely.

Though the Bible doesn't particularly say that. But I think he is. And there are other important people invited to this supper. You know, the important people in the community.

[12:05] There are, the Bible does tell us, there are some lawyers there. They're not lawyers in the sense that we understand lawyers. But those who are simply experts in the Hosaic law. And then there were, of course, Pharisees.

Not only the hosts, but also other Pharisees. There were lawyers and Pharisees invited to this dinner. And Jesus is invited. And we're also told, and we've almost come to expect this, that it was on the Sabbath.

These kind of things always happened on the Sabbath. So it was a Sabbath day. And apparently, then, after synodog that morning, Jesus was invited by this Pharisee to his home for a dinner.

For a dinner. On the Sabbath. And the Bible says, and this is the first thing we should know in the story. The Bible says, in verse 1, they watched him closely.

Now that's something you ought to pay attention to. First of all. They watched him closely. And I can tell you that in the Greek text, the word watched is a partisan. And in fact, it's a present tense partisan.

[13:14] What does that mean? Well, it means literally that they were watching him. Watching him. And it suggests that they were continually watching him.

And so the idea, this is how we ought to picture and see. Their eyes, all of their eyes were on Jesus. Continually. And so what do we have here? Well, simply we have one of those staged events.

Don't we? I mean, this has already happened a number of times before. And it was staged here by those who were constantly looking for something to accuse Jesus of.

Something to entrap him with. Some reason to discredit him before the people. And so this was one of those staged events. Now, why were they watching him so closely and continuously?

Well, verse 2 begins to tell us this. Verse 2 tells us, and behold. That's how Luke worked it. And behold. This was one of Luke's favorite expressions.

[14:15] Behold. And it conveys. It's a word that conveys a kind of surprise. It's an idea of surprise. Something is there that stands out.

It's out of place. It's something unusual. Its presence is unexpected. Behold. We might say it this way. Would you look at this? Or what's this?

A man with dropsy. A certain man, the Bible says, was before him, before Jesus, who had drops. And we've run across this dropsy before.

I looked at nearly all the other translations. They all translate the same way because, quite frankly, we don't know what it is. But it's a very serious condition. As I'm not saying, it's probably some form of edema.

You know, the kind of excess of fluids building up in the body's tissue. Possibly from some heart disease. Some heart problem.

[15:15] Or kidneys. Or livers. But the point of it is, this man's condition is very, very serious. And it's failed for him.

There's nothing they can do for him. Now, the question, though, is not what is problem of us. The question is, what is he doing here? What's he doing here at this supper of a prominent Pharisee? What is he doing here among all these other high, muckety-muck officials in the Jewish community there? The high society. What's this guy with bronxie, this guy with a terminal illness, disease, what is he doing here in the midst of all these other things?

Because it's out of place. It doesn't belong. You wouldn't expect to see this guy here. Or anybody like him. Now, listen, there's only one way this man could have been invited to this dinner party, this dinner banquet.

Only one way. He was a plant. That is, he was the bait. He was the bait for what?

[16:22] Well, it's really for who? For Jesus. For Jesus. This man, they knew, would be the irresistible bait for Jesus.

And then notice something else. Notice how they positioned him in the room. Luke says that he was before him. Before Jesus.

That means he was sitting right smack dab in front of Jesus. And the idea, I think, is implied, but I think it's clear. This is where they sat him.

This was methodical. This was on purpose. They sat him right there in front of Jesus. All right, so the state is set. It's pretty incredible.

Perfect. It's the Sabbath day. Perfect. Jesus is in the home of a Pharisee. Perfect situation. And there are many other Pharisees and lawyers there.

[17:21] And a sick man is there. He's seated right in front of Jesus. Perfect. Perfect scenario. And the audience, they're set. And their eyes are glued on Jesus.

They're ready for a show. And they are watching Jesus closely. A perfect set. It's really a standard seat.

All right? Well, if they thought everything was perfect. And they thought they had him now. They were going to be highly disappointed. Because Jesus, as always, was wise to their plan.

Beforehand. I mean, he is God after all. Those old things before they happened. And so it's not a surprise to us, really. Those of us who are students of God's word.

And we've been studying the gospel. We've already seen this happen more than once. It's not a surprise to us that Jesus turned the tables on these guys. In fact, we might come to the conclusion that Jesus was the one who set all this up.

[18:25] And so Jesus had something cooked up for them. You know, we're thinking of the motif of eating. He cooked something up for them.

Essentially, Jesus served them up a plate of compassion. That's what he did. A plate of compassion. Here, eat this. This is what you need.

Is essentially what Jesus is doing. You see, Jesus knew that their diet was absolutely compassion deficient. We have diets that are deficient in one thing or another.

And theirs was deficient in compassion. We're not just compassion. We're going to see as we go further in the story of the next time. They didn't have any compassion. Now, think about it. The Bible says they were watching Jesus.

So, who were they watching closely? Jesus. Were they watching the needy man? The poor man? The sick man? Absolutely not.

[19:26] They were watching him. They didn't care anything about him. They were watching Jesus. They were watching the poor, sick, terminally ill man there in their midst.

They were watching him. They didn't care anything about him. I mean, he was, in their eyes, an extreme sinner anyway. He wouldn't be so sick. At least that's the way they would see things. They didn't see things.

And so, with that kind of, all that picture of what we see all of that here, let's notice the masterful way that Jesus kind of uncovers their non-compassion, their coldness, the coldness of their hearts. First of all, he does so with a pointed examination. Very pointed examination.

Albeit, he really hits them from the back door. They're not really expecting this, but it's a very pointed examination. And Jesus takes them to the word of God. Well, he does. First of all, that's how he deals with us, too.

[20:32] He takes us to his word. Verse 3, look at it. And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? All right, you tell me, is it in the law?

That is, is it in the word of God? And so, he is a very pointed examination. That's it. Because, you see, Jesus knows what they're thinking. He knows, of course, what they're up to. And he knows that they are on point. He knows what they're hoping will happen. Right? Jesus will heal this guy on the Sabbath, and then we'll have him. We'll have him. We've caught him breaking the Sabbath laws. But, of course, Jesus spoils their plan. You say, how so? How does he spoil their plan? Well, he spoils their plan, takes the wind out of their sails, by asking a question. And essentially, what he's doing is saying, you know, before I do what everybody in this room knows I'm going to do, let me ask you a question. [21 : 40] Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? That's a quiet question. How did they respond? Nothing.

They couldn't respond. They kept silent. That's what they said. And the question is, why? Why did they keep silent at this point? It's not simple. They could not cite a single verse in the Word of God that prohibited healing anyone on the Sabbath. That's why. And they could not cite it, not because they were ignorant of it, but simply because it didn't exist. There's no prohibition in the Word of God to heal anyone on the Sabbath. As a matter of fact, there's no prohibition in the Word of God to do any merciful and good thing on the Sabbath. No prohibition against it. You see, no one but Jesus ever challenged them in this way. That's the incredible thing about the Father. It was so astounding. That's why they always looked like dumb idiots every time they got me or tecky. No one ever approached them this way. [22 : 50] No one ever asked them, well, is it in the Word of God? Is it in the Bible? That seems like the most logical first question to ask.

No one ever approached them that way. You see, the Pharisees and lawyers were enforcers of what was called the tradition of the elders. Okay? Okay? Some 800, I think 700 and some odd, but close to 800 separate statutes that were ostensibly created to help people obey the law of the Sabbath. I mean, just, you know, laws to keep the law. What they had devised. And they were burdensome laws. They were meticulous laws. Most of them were absolutely ridiculous laws. And they were the keepers of that. But guess what? There was not a single law in these traditions that prohibited healing on the Sabbath. Not a single one. [23 : 53] They could not cite a single law that prohibited healing on the Sabbath. Either God's laws or their own man-made laws. They could not cite a single law that prohibited acts of mercy, acts of goodness, acts of compassion, acts of kindness on the Sabbath.

It did not exist. They could cite it, so they didn't have anything to say. The fact, actually, is this. Man was not created to observe the Sabbath. The Sabbath, rather, was created for the benefit of man. God gave the Sabbath to man. They would keep it holy, absolutely, but it was a gift to man. Not man as a gift to the Sabbath. And so, Jesus begins with an examination. A pointed examination. Secondly, a passionate demonstration. Next, we go to a passionate demonstration. I love this. Verse 4. Look at it. Look at it closely. And he took him. That is the guy with the disease. [25 : 07] He took him and healed him and let him go. Now, what I want you to pay attention to is this phrase, he took him.

He took him. From a particular Greek word, epilok, epilokbanami. And it means to lay hold of. Verse 4. It means actually to seize upon with the hands. And so, don't get the idea that there's a suggestion here of violence. Jesus didn't violently grant this sick man. No, but there's every suggestion here of compassion. Visible, physical compassion. Jesus just stepped over there and embraced this man. The sick man. Embracing him. He, I think, literally held him in his arms. [26 : 12] And he healed. He healed. The Pharisees would not even look at the man, much less touch him. They would ever do. But Jesus, what did he do? He demonstrated true compassion. Now, I think it's safe to say that at this point, they'd have their fill with the appetizer of compassion.

They didn't want any more of it. But Jesus kept dishing it out. And so third, a personal application. A personal application.

Now Jesus gives right to the heart. He goes right to their hearts. Look at verse 5. Then he answered them saying, Which of you have your donkey?

Now I realize that some of you have manuscripts that have the word son in there. And that could be right. It's not that the translators have made a mistake.

[27:09] The King James. You and King James. They just made a mistake. And put donkey there. It isn't. That's the word in the manuscripts that they use. Sonos donkey. But some manuscripts.

I could go into some little dissertation about how this happens. And what you ought to think about it. But it's not important. Because he says son and or ox.

And so essentially, he's saying, Which one of you have a son? Or let's just say even an ox. An ox that has fallen into a pit. Which one of you will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?

Okay. See, Jesus makes his third person. He goes right to the heart. He applies their own law. To their own personal application.

Or practice of that law. It's like he's saying, Okay. Let me ask you something. Let me just paint a scenario. Say your ox falls into a pit.

[28:20] And it's on the set. It's pretty valuable to you, isn't it? Your ox. Pretty expensive. I mean, you can't just let him stay. I mean, you can't just let him die there in the pit.

Can you? So, do you pull him out on the Sabbath day? I don't think Jesus is being snobby.

His question really goes right to him. Do you pull him out on the Sabbath day? Of course they do. Of course they're going to do that.

They're going to pull their ox out of the pit. They're going to pull their son. It's called down in the pit.

They're going to even pull their ox out of the pit. You want to add a donkey.

You think it all belongs there. It's the same thing. Your donkey, your ox, your son. These personal things that are part of your life fall down in the pit. It's on the Sabbath.

[29:18] You're going to get him out, aren't you? Well, of course they do. But Luke says in verse 6, And they could not answer him regarding these things.

Why not? They don't dare answer the question. Why? Well, because in the first place, they would have to lie. Wouldn't they?

I mean, how could they admit that they are Sabbath day lawbreaker? At least lawbreakers in their own interpretation. How could they admit that to the people, you know, the people in their community?

And therefore, in the second place, a truthful answer. If they answer the truth, a truthful answer.

Then would be an open admission to the breaking of the Sabbath. And they could never and would never do that.

I would say in the third place, the most important thing. They would be bidding to the coldness of their hearts.

[30:21] They would be revealing their stone cold hearts toward this poor unfortunate man who has the drops. Now think about it.

And Jesus is wanting them to think about it. We ought to think about it. How could anyone think that God would allow on the Sabbath the kind treatment of a domestic animal and not at the same time allow the kind treatment of a man created in his own name?

What makes it a sin? What honors the Sabbath more? The compassion and mercy for animals? Or compassion and mercy for those who are created in the image of God?

Those to whom the Sabbath was given in the first year? See, that's it. And so Jesus serves up compassion. Serves up compassion and the Pharisees choked on him.

They care only for external works of piety and religiosity. That's all they care about.

[31:38] And they're completely void of any real heart compassion for people. And it's a glaring and glaring demonstration.

I'm saying that the same thing can happen to others. And it does happen to others. So let me close with a couple of applications.

A couple of lessons. That I think we can begin from this lesson. One, you know, it's important is the lesser of the two. We'll begin with it. The first lesson pertains to how we treat the Lord's day.

That's this day. The Lord's day. Not the Sabbath. The Lord's day. Sunday. How we treat it. It's interesting. Someone has astutely observed what really is easy to see if we take the time to see it.

And this person has said, you know, when you study all of the references to the Sabbath in the New Testament, Sabbath day, I mean, you just take it in quarters. And, you know, just look up all of the references to Sabbath in New Testament.

[32 : 48] If you'll do that, you'll discover three things. Number one, Jesus worshipped on the Sabbath. Number two, Jesus showed mercy, compassion to people on the Sabbath.

And number three, Jesus committed his disciples to take care of their personal needs on the Sabbath. Those are the three things you find.

You just take all of the references to Sabbath in the New Testament and you find those three things over and over again. Now, understand, and I understand that the Sabbath is not the same thing as the Lord's day.

It's not the same thing. You know that the Sabbath is not the same thing as the Lord's day. It just replaced the Sabbath. So all the laws pertaining to the Sabbath apply to the Lord's day.

It's not true. They're not the same. The Lord's day is not, essentially, it's not the Christian Sabbath. I know that you've heard that and some would say that and you'd think that it's really not.

[33 : 56] The Sabbath in the New Testament is Jesus. He's our rest. And the Sabbath and the Sabbath day laws were foreshadowing and pointing to the coming of our eternal rest.

Our rest from our labors. Our rest from our sins. Jesus. The Lord's day is something brand new. Brand new. Inaugurated on the day that Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

All right, so let's make sure we keep that in our minds. And also understand that God has not given us any laws concerning the Lord's day. You can look through the New Testament.

There aren't any laws concerning the Lord's day. You know, things that you can do, things you cannot do. That's what we always learn about. People always ask. What pastor can we do on the Sabbath?

What are those things we can't do on the Sabbath? I can't answer. I can't answer beyond what the Bible says. God doesn't give us a set of laws. Can he's and cannots on the Sabbath day?

[34 : 58] But. Perhaps we can use Jesus' example. Maybe his example can inform us in how he treated the Sabbath day.

And how possibly we should focus and emphasize. What we should emphasize on the Lord's. What are they? Worship. Mercy.

Mercy. Mercy. And necessity. Worship. Compassion.

For people. Whomever they may be. And not this kind of Lord's way. But even. That religiosity. Is not. A substitute.

For. Compassion. And mercy. Toward people. Say. Well I'm very religious. And I'm doing all these things. And. So. You know. This part of it. That mercy.

[36 : 13] And compassion. And. That's not my thing. I'm doing this. You can't. Have a second. You must never think. That what we do here.

Is what. Matters most to them. Sometimes we have that idea. And so when we do it. Then. We fulfill. All the God.

Disappears. And demand. Disappears. We should never get that idea. You want to know. What matters to go. Well. A lot of places.

You can go. In the Bible. But let me give you one. Micah. Chapter 6. Verses 6 through 9. Now listen to this. With. What. Shall I come.

Before the Lord. And bow myself. Before the high God. Shall I come. Before him. With burnt offerings. And calves. A year old. Will the Lord.

[37 : 06] Be pleased. With thousands. Of grams. Ten thousand. Rivers of oil. Shall I give. My firstborn. For my transgression. The fruit of my body.

For the sin. Of my soul. Is that what I should give. Is that what he requires. He has shown you. A man. What is good. And what does. The Lord. Require.

Of him. But to do. Justly. Let's do the right thing. And get this one. The love. And mercy.

That's what we're talking about here. This is what Jesus was serving up. To these Pharisees. Who thought. They were religious. Thought they were. God's people. Yet they had not.

One ounce of compassion. Of mercy. In their hearts and souls. They. They were offering up to God. Sacrifices. And offering up to God. All of the do's. And don'ts.

[38 : 04] And the P's. And the Q's. And you know. They were offering all that. Up to God. They had no compassion. No mercy. What does God require? To love mercy. And then there's a third one.

To walk humbly. With your God. Humility. By the way. To be the next thing. That God. Jesus offers up. With these. These Pharisees. You won't have to wait.
To see that next time.