

LUKE

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Chapter Fourteen

Luke 14:1

It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely.

We do not know who invited Jesus to eat at a leader of the Pharisees but we know that the reason for the invitation was not totally friendly as they were carefully observing Him. We will see in verse 12 that Jesus specifically addresses the man who invited Him. The Sabbath was a time of joy with families enjoying food prepared on a previous day:

- Neh 8:9-12 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest *and* scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. (10) Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (11) So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." (12) And all the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.
- Exo 16:23 then he said to them, "This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning."

This response from the Pharisees is not what one would hope for after Jesus has announced that He comes in the name of the Lord (13:35). Instead they are looking for some way that they can slander Him regarding the Law and reminds us of: *The wicked spies upon the righteous, And seeks to kill him.* (Psa 37:32)

Luke 14:2-6

And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. (3) And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" (4) But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. (5) And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" (6) And they could make no reply to this.

Dropsy is an abnormal accumulation of liquid in cells or tissue causing swelling and poor circulation. The man's swollen limbs and belly would make his condition that more obvious to everyone. An unfortunate symptom of the problem is an unquenchable thirst with the drinking making the problem worse. In this time period, dropsy was thought of as a consequence of gluttony. In this world, dropsy was also seen as a metaphor for greed and lust. People would think that the man's body was reflecting his spirit condition and thus he was ostracized by the

society. We could say that the Pharisees needed to be healed of their moral dropsy and there was someone in their midst who could cure them. Jesus answers their unspoken question by asking them a question pertaining to the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath. This question has been asked before by Jesus and He has healed three times on the Sabbath (4:31-37; 6:6-11; 13:10-17). Jesus understands that they are more motivated by their self-interest rather than by obedience to God.

Luke reports that the Pharisees and lawyers did not answer the question of Jesus and He took hold of the man and healed him and sent him away. The translation “took hold” could mean that He assisted the man and the translation “sent him away” may have been so that the man would not have to face an inquisition by the Pharisees and lawyers. Jesus then poses a question for them as He strives to get them to understand some implications of healing on the Sabbath. The question is rhetorical for none of them would certainly leave one of their sons in a well rather than helping them out on a Sabbath day. The implication is that the man with dropsy was a child of God and should be shown a similar effort as one would show for one of their children. They were rendered mute to the question by Jesus.

Luke 14:7-11

And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them, (8) "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, (9) and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. (10) "But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. (11) "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Since the lawyers and Pharisees did not answer Jesus, He turned His attention to the invited guests to teach them a parable involving how they were picking the places of honor at the table. The couches in the dining area were assigned traditional rankings and where one sat determined his rank relative to others present. Jesus had already pronounced a woe on the Pharisees for their love of special seats in the synagogue and for respect in the marketplace (11:43). This scene portrays the itch for honor each person feels as they make a dash to obtain a seat of honor to which they think they deserve. However it is the host who determines the order of seating at a banquet as most of us are familiar today by looking for our place cards at such affairs. If someone took a place of honor higher than deserved the host would have to come to him and ask him to move down in the seating order so that the more deserving person would have his proper seat. This would be an extremely humiliating situation for the person who had to move down and his ashen face would show his shame: *Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale; (Isa 29:22)*

It would be a great honor to choose a lower position at the table and to be asked by the host to move up in status. Saving face was more important than obtaining wealth and Jesus wants to wake up these people to the problem of trying to choose their own status in life. They also do not recognize that the Lord of the Banquet is in their presence. Self-admiration and self-exaltation can lead to disastrous consequences in the world but they will lead to even more disastrous results in the final judgment. The future tense of verse 13 illustrates that God is the One who will give the final evaluations:

- James 4:6 *But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."*
- 1Peter 5:4-6 *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (5) You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. (6) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,*

Luke 14:12-14

And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. (13) "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, (14) and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Because of a misunderstanding of the verb tense, there have been a lot of false applications of these verses. The verb interpreted above as “do not invite” should be translated as “do not habitually call”. Jesus is not telling the host to never invite his friends, family, and neighbors to a meal but He does forbid an exclusive invitation to such people. In Scripture we see such friendly invitations such as:

- Acts 10:24 *And on the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.*
- Luke 15:8-9 *"Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? (9) "And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!'"*

The teaching is similar to the following where Jesus is saying it is fine to greet your brothers but don't only do that: *"And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" (Matt 5:47)*

The system Jesus is condemning runs on the basis of “balanced reciprocity” as the host tries to maintain his status as a member of the elite by only always inviting those people in the “upper crust” of society desiring that they will also invite him to their homes. The friends, brothers, other relatives, and rich neighbors all have the ability to repay the honor. However the next four categories of people – the poor, cripples, lame, and blind – cannot repay the honor. Particular Pharisees would not welcome such people into their homes. Jesus then promises that proper

repayment will be made at the resurrection of the righteous. Scripture teaches a distinction between the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous:

- Acts 24:15 *having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*
- Rev 20:4-6 *Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (5) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*
- Dan 12:2 *"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*

This beatitude is the positive antithesis to the warning in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-30).

Luke 14:15-20

When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (16) But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; (17) and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' (18) "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' (19) "Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' (20) "Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'

The first comment seems like a rather coarse comment similar to that made by Peter: *And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"--not realizing what he was saying.* (Luke 9:33) But it does serve two purposes. One is to make a theological link between the invitations to the earthly banquet and the banquet celebrating God's reign. The second purpose is to expose some guests' complacency regarding being invited to the End Times Banquet. Jesus did not reply to this comment but addressed him in a parable fashion. At this time, it was typical of hosts to send two invitations so verse 17 may indicate that the second invitation had now been sent to let the people know it was time to come. Banquets were hard to prepare and people did not have watches so many would wait for the second invitation. However it is very striking that all of them declined the invitation for various weak reasons.

The first one stated that he had bought a field and now he must go examine it. Who would not have looked over a field without first buying it? It may expose the attitude of the man who was totally involved with his worldly affairs reminiscent of the days of Lot:

Luke 17:28-30 *"It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; (29) but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. (30) "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.*

The second excuse is just as lame for nobody would have bought five yoke of oxen without first considering if they were worthy of purchase! The third excuse may seem a bit more proper in light of: *"When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken.* (Deut 24:5). However marriage was not an abrupt decision and would certainly not be an unexpected factor coming between the two invitations. This excuse is even worse because he does not ask to be excused.

Luke 14:21-24

"And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' (22) "And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' (23) "And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. (24) 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

The host was understandably angry at such pitiful excuses which were personal insults to him. The replacement guests are exactly those previously mentioned by Jesus (14:12-14) who could never repay the favor. The host cannot just cancel the banquet for the food has been prepared. A "street" was broader and traveled by many more types of people than a neighborhood road. A "lane" was a small side path that was likely to be populated by the outcasts of society. These people were the actual types of people that the wall was to keep outside of the city for they were not permitted to live within it. The master is informed that there is still room at the table so he needs to extend the invitation further. The "highways" and "hedges" would be areas like in our cities where the homeless lived. The verb "compel" is a strong word although it does not imply force but just being urged to come. They have to be convinced that this invitation is not just some subterfuge but a sincere invitation to come to his house. This invitation is similar to that expressed by Paul: *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.* (2 Tim 4:2)

Some have interpreted this extension of the guest list to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Gospel. The initial invitation list would have then been the Jews with their heritage and spiritual advantages. Verse 24 is a bit difficult to interpret for the word "you" is plural and we need to know who is speaking and to whom he is speaking. There was only one slave so if the person speaking were addressing him; the "you" would have to be singular. The words "For I tell you" are exactly those Jesus uses elsewhere to make a point so most interpreters think the speaker is Jesus. The interpretation would then be that Jesus is addressing all of those who finally are at the

banquet and He tells them that none of those initially invited would taste of His dinner, referring to the End Times Banquet of the redeemed:

Rev 19:9 *Then he *said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he *said to me, "These are true words of God."*

Luke 14:25-27

Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, (26) "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. (27) "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Jesus is now going to further emphasize the necessity of a devoted life to Him with the ready acceptance of possible martyrdom. I am not sure how many "Christians" today have really accepted this level of devotion to Him as their Master. This is a very large crowd going along with Jesus and so they represent a possible source of disciples. They recognize that there is something special about Jesus but they are not sure who He is:

Luke 9:18-19 *And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" (19) They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again."*

When Luke states that they "were going along with Him", he is implying that they really do not know what it means to be with Jesus. A lot of people go along with Him without being totally committed to Him. This event is more like a parade but it will not end with a joyous celebration as we already know what will happen in Jerusalem. Jesus has already warned them regarding just going along, eating and drinking with Him, and listening to His teaching:

Luke 13:25-27 *"Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' (26) "Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; (27) and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.'*

It may seem strange to command people to love their enemies (6:35) and to hate their families but Jesus is using a Semitic expression that expresses indifference to one and preference to another. So when we use this type expression to say I love X and hate Y, it means I prefer X to Y such as in:

- Gen 29:30 *So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.*
- Mal 1:2-3 *"I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have You loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob; (3) but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."*
- Luke 16:13 *"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."*
- Rom 9:13 *Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."*

The command to love mother and father is still valid but Jesus is warning them not to attempt to serve two masters. Family is not to be their master over Jesus. But because we love Jesus more, we will be a better son to our parents.

The last sentence is the strong emphasis on dying to self so as to serve Jesus. The verb tense is present emphasizing the continuing life in this manner. The cross was a horrible shameful thought for the people of this day and for Jesus to tell them they must take up their cross carries with it the possibility of physically doing that horrible event. The word “daily” is missing here as it was included in 9:23 but the verb tense gives it an implicit meaning. Serving Jesus as their Master involves their daily dying to self and living for Him. Luke does not relate to his readers how the people responded to this command by Jesus but we know later they will fall away.

Luke 14:28-32

"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? (29) "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, (30) saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' (31) "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (32) "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

The question is meant to be rhetorical for nobody would build a tower without first calculating the cost to finish the construction. The point is that everybody wants to avoid shame that would come upon them if they were not able to complete the building. This failure to calculate the total cost can be connected with the “hall of shame” in the New Testament with the first recipient being Judas. This could be followed by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), Demas (2 Tim 4:10), and Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1:20).

The second example that would have been well known among these people would be how a king would go about starting a battle. He must first determine if he has the total resources to defeat the enemy. Fear of a great defeat would lead the king to first attempt to negotiate surrender. Discipleship also requires total dedication to staying the course forever. There is no possibility of a token discipleship.

Luke 14:33-35

"So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. (34) "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? (35) "It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus then concludes His discussion of the cost of being His disciple by saying that one must give up all his possessions, which always refers to one’s earthly possessions. “To give up” means to resolutely give over all ownership to the Lord so that all earthly possessions actually are signed over to Him to do with as He pleases. One who initially says “yes” to this command but

then later changes his mind is similar to one who begins to plow and then stops: *But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* (Luke 9:62)

I used to have a hard time with how salt could become unsalty for to me, a chemist, salt was some chloride such as NaCl and if it lost its identity it was something else. But in this time period salt was not pure NaCl but was polluted with dirt and other impurities so that in time the actual salt would be lost from the total composition. It was obtained from the evaporation of Dead Sea water and contained a mixture of many minerals. The actual salt could be dissolved when used and what was left was a residue that looked like salt but was without any salt taste. From their perspective if the "salt" no longer acted as salt then it could not be revived. Jesus commands them to have the salt of preservation and purification active in themselves and then to be at peace with one another. Mathew reports that Jesus said His disciples were the salt of the earth (5:13) and Mark writes of two salt sayings:

Mark 9:49-50 *"For everyone will be salted with fire. (50) "Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."*

The first means that the disciples will be purified by persecution and the second is close to the meaning in Luke. In Luke's context the image of salt relates to discipleship. A false form of discipleship may appear like salt but the gradual process of being in the world and not giving up all to follow Him will leave only a tasteless pile of waste. As stated in Hebrews below, a disciple who becomes saltless is worse than one who never started as a disciple.

Heb 6:1-8 *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (2) of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. (3) And this we will do, if God permits. (4) For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. (7) For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; (8) but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.*

Jesus is stated as concluding by saying that only those who have ears to hear will understand what He is saying. Of course those who have ears to hear are those to whom God has given faith so they can understand His words:

- Eph 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
- Rom 12:3 *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*

As we will see at the crucifixion, not many of those in the large crowd would be given that faith.