

**Luke 14:1-35**

**The Kingdom is for those that can't afford it.**

Being where you don't belong. It is not a foreign sensation to us. As kids, it can be quite an adventure.

Hitchcock pool late at night. Swimming was fun, sure. But there was something about being on the verge of being caught that made it so exciting.

As adults, however, it becomes embarrassing (at least before the "Karen-culture" mentality of belonging wherever I darn well please!)

Jesus is smack in the middle of an event that turns out to be about belonging. About position, entry, privilege. Not what those invited would expect and it might not be what we would expect as refined readers in 2022.

**The Kingdom is for those that can't afford it.**

*Context:* Nice to be back in the Gospel of Luke. What have we seen?

Jesus' arrival and ministry. Kicks off his ministry by proclaiming that the year of jubilee has come. Since that moment he backs up the claim with healings, miracles of feeding, calling disciples unto himself, calls to repentance, and fruit-bearing. There has been confrontation with religious elites about what really matters.

Through it all, it's always upside-down. Opposite of what the culture - even of God's people - expects. This heralded kingdom is for the least, the dirty, the poor, the broken-hearted. And that is who his ministry reaches.

Now as the story progresses, the rulers are increasingly trying to catch I'm in blasphemy and that's the vibe of this meal at the house of the lead Pharisee. As they "were watching him carefully."

It's a set-up too. On the Sabbath and they invited a sick man as bait for Jesus. They still haven't learned their lessons.

"And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy." Edema - fluid, swelling, a sign of organ/system failure - close to death.

"Is it lawful of not?" To heal... and the audience here stays silent. This is the fourth time he heals on the Sabbath in Luke's Gospel. They know better than to argue with him.

Jesus took him and healed him - not just symptomatic healing but the language connotes complete healing. Life.

Then Jesus says that they all care more for cattle than their neighbor. No Bueno.

Jesus launches from there into some instruction and storytelling that sets the tone for the Kingdom. For this crowd, it is important because there is a danger that those originally invited won't taste the feast.

**You are invited into the Kingdom but not because you can repay.**

Jesus calls out the host and the guests for lacking humility. And he starts to paint a picture that the Kingdom (banquet) is for those we don't expect.

He teaches proverbial wisdom. Don't sit in the place of honor, in fact, take the lowest place. You might be moved higher.

I want to hate on the guests at this meal for acting like this. Bumping elbows to get the best seats. To sit near the action. To seem more important than maybe they are. But I can't hate them too much because I see myself in them!

We get this - humans live like this. Always jockeying for place, for honor. Even the mentality of "fake it until you make it" proves the point.

The story of Frank Abagnale (Catch Me if You Can) where he committed fraud for fun seemingly, pretending to be what he wasn't.

“Their sin was intensely spiritual. Human honor gave them a sense of substance and reality. Human recognition told them they were superior to their fellows. And if that was true, they were also of greater value before God. The same illusion is rampant today. Salvation by recognition. Eternal life through temporal significance. Immortality through notoriety.” Kent Hughes

Jesus is saying to those familiar with Torah and the wisdom books, “you’ve missed the point” take the low place. Be humble.

**Luke 14:11** “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

True humility does not seek honor and praise in this world as its goal.

Humility is a marker of the Kingdom.

Brings to mind the story of a church conference probably forty years ago now. Frances Schaefer was set to headline with a few sessions of teaching. And the setting was just right. A retreat center in the mountains. One of the conference staff used to tell the story of waiting up to show the guest of honor to his room.

As he waited in the cold lobby the door opened late in the night and a bedraggled old man with a hiking backpack came in. Assuming he was lost, the worker asked how he could help the man. He responded that he had hoped to take part in the conference. The worker relayed that registration would be open again in the morning but all of the rooms were occupied. The old man said he didn’t need much space, just some floor would do to sleep on. So the worker let him sleep in the lobby and eventually returned to his room figuring the speaker was a no show.

The next morning the worker met the host in the lobby and was exclaiming that Frances Schaefer never showed up. The host said, “well of course he did, he is asleep there on the couch!”

“Followers of Christ are not to exalt themselves by presumptuously seeking positions of greatness; rather, they are to assume lower positions of service and allow God to exalt them. Humility is the true path to glory.” Tony Evans

Humility is the way.

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you” (1 Peter 5:5, 6).

What’s more, Jesus told them ‘don’t waste your invites!’ He goes after the host a bit, “When you give a banquet, don’t invite those that can repay you.”

We see this as good strategy - perpetuate the blessing! I invite you, you invite me. Jesus flips it though (giving a picture of the Kingdom). And he says to invite those incapable of repayment.

“When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.” You will be repaid at the resurrection - orienting us toward the future.

This is scandalous. I wonder how many people in the house wondered to themselves or spoke to others saying “how dare he speak like that!”

He is commanding that nobodies be welcomed into the feast. We don’t want to miss that the guy with dropsy is invited, likely only to catch Jesus breaking the law. This was a culture that despised the broken and unclean. And he says, yeah, those are the ones you should celebrate with. That you should share your good wine with.

“14:13 Handicapped—Jesus told his Pharisee host he should have a banquet for disabled persons rather than for relatives and rich friends. Then he would receive God’s blessings. The disabled should participate fully in our programs and fellowship. God welcomes the disabled with their special gifts into his kingdom.”

We could say so much here - but as we think of “building” a church and the labor we are called to. It’s not the jockeying for places of honor... the for the least, for the unseen around us.

We have honorable people in Reservoir Church, and we should, but all of us are to be humbled by the grace of Jesus and never “too good” for the least.

This informs our efforts toward inclusion and disability ministry. Creating a space for everyone to feast on the goodness of the Lord in community.

This is who Jesus invites into his Kingdom, those that don't have the credit for it.

The Pharisees has a small view of the law and presume on their roles/status as proof they will eat in the Kingdom of God! It's instead those they presume too far off... those that recognize their need and come to Jesus.

Whether it's poverty, disability, or sin that mars our lives. These are who are invited into the Kingdom.

When you have eyes to see it, you may realize this is you.

Take heart.

### **Jesus bears the burden and pays your way.**

This conversation over dinner isn't going in the right direction for those at the Pharisee's house.

**Luke 14:15** "When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

Changing the subject, trying to get Jesus to move on.

Jesus presses the idea with the story of the Great Banquet.

Why a banquet? Well for one, they are having one. Perfect for the setting. But it is also the imagery they were supposed to pick up on.

**Isaiah 25:6** "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined."

This is the Kingdom.

In this story, the great man invites many to feast with him. Now it was customary then to receive two invitations to a banquet. There was the first to let you know it was happening and you were invited, honored. Then a second when servants came and let you know the feast was ready, the food was on.

But in this story, when the food was prepared, those invited make excuses. One bought a field and had to check it, another five yoke of oxen needed tending to, still another was just married and would not come.

Some scholars and more pastors have delved into the relevance of these excuses but I want us to just recognize them for what they are, reasons to reject the invitation.

The Kingdom works in the same way. There is a double invitation - the teachings and prophets make clear the Kingdom is coming, that the banquet would have well-aged wine and rich food. It outlines life in preparation as God's people and they were to live with for the feast.

Now the food is ready, Messiah has come and calls them in, yet those invited make excuses. They like life as it is - don't recognize their need.

Jesus explains that those who say they have such interest in the kingdom feast do not actually delight in the kingdom. The first two excuses had to do with material possessions, and the third with affections. Possessions and affections cover virtually every reason by which men and women give their regrets to the kingdom.

So the master opens the invites - go to the poor, the crippled, the blind, and lame. And those kept outside the city... the Gentiles. "Compel people to come in."

"He tells his servants to find the most disreputable people of all, those standing around in the highways and near fences, who are begging for assistance and known as vagabonds. "The areas outside the city would have been inhabited by outcast groups (ethnic groups, tanners, traders, beggars, prostitutes), who required access to the city but were not allowed to live in it."

Still the call for all of his disciples. To present the invitation to life and compel our neighbors to come in.

Jesus offers the kingdom, a perpetual feast of peace, a feast of help, guidance, friendship, rest, victory over self, control of passions, supremacy over circumstances—a feast of joy, tranquillity, deathlessness, Heaven opened, immeasurable hope—salvation. Yet people turn their backs on this feast, preferring a visit with their possessions and affections.

It is ours though if we will just come.

Always how it has worked. God's compassion, his mercy, it is never earned but given. You miss it if you reject it.

Rejection often looks like finding other things more important.

The expense has been paid. The master has opened his house and extends the invitation to you. You just have to come. Receive the feast.

**Ephesians 1:7** “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,”

**1 Peter 1:18-19** “knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”

**Titus 2:14** “who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

**Romans 6:23** “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“He paid the highest price, made the most extravagant provision imaginable – his own flesh & blood. There is no more costly costliness than the cross of Christ. He did that for sinners like us. He spared no expense. He held nothing back. He gave it all, that we might have it all.” Jared Wilson

Our sacrifice is insufficient. His sacrifice covers us once and for all. All of him for all of who we are. Forgiveness, salvation, purpose, the Kingdom.

Our response is to reject or come.

### **Coming to Jesus will cost you everything.**

Wait. Didn't I just say you can't afford the Kingdom... how is it going to cost you?

Jesus knows the crowds are following and seemingly out of the blue says that if anyone doesn't "hate" family and his own life in comparison to the way we value him, we cannot be his disciple.

From an audience that was comfortable with what they had, with their privilege and place. With their family line and experience. He moves out among the mass of people that have started to follow the excitement of his ministry.

'You keep following me - but you need to realize I want to consume your life.'

The Pharisees wanted to be around Jesus because he had fame.

The full wanted to be around Jesus because they got a meal.

True disciples follow Jesus because they want him alone.

Jesus isn't against family. Loving him this way may actually serve your family.

"Hate" here does not refer to emotional or mental dislike of the family members mentioned nor of one's own life. Instead, it indicates a total rejection of anything and anyone who would block our absolute commitment to Jesus as Lord.

"Our Lord does not use the word "hate" in our common acceptance of the term, for no man would hate his own life. He means that the love of all these must be secondary to the love we bear to him. Compared with our love to our Lord, all lower love must be more like hate. We must be willing to give up everything—to give up even ourselves, our entire selves—to him, for Christ will have all or nothing. He will never divide the human heart with any rival. If we profess to serve him, we must have him for our only Master and not attempt to serve two masters." Charles Spurgeon

If your way into the Kingdom is coming to him, you must know ahead of time, this will be what defines you for eternity. Not your pedigree. Not your position. Not your worldly power. But the person of Jesus.



Convicting. It's like the works that follow faith - genuine faith at its center is utter commitment, and willingness to renounce all that we have to be His.

“The Christian way is different. . . . Christ says, “Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit.” CS Lewis

The essence of being a disciple of Christ is unreserved commitment to him. This involves holding loosely everything else that attempts to take his place.

“So there is a cost to being a disciple of Jesus. It is not one of effort, however, but of reorientation of our values toward the greatest worth of being called into God's kingdom and warmly accepted into God's family, all by sheer grace. For Jesus himself bore the greatest cost, the ultimate cost, in our place—condemnation.”  
GTB

Our living into this is always going to be incomplete, until that day we stand before him in glory, and then it will be perfect. But we still lean into this now because Jesus renounced all that he had to bring us to the feast.

**Philippians 2:5-11** “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Because this is true, we can give ourselves to him. We can invite in the unseen, the unlikely. We can take the lowest place that he would be honored. Oh that our lives would be shaped by this love of Christ, that our sacrifice would be motivated by it.

It's what gives us as his disciples flavor. We are made salty by our all-in commitment and least-of-these love.

*Matt Pilgrim* wrote a poem about a dear woman in her 70s who gave her life to serve... "She Dared"

"I've met a woman who dared to do something -  
Something foolish.  
Something sacred.  
Something about leaving homes and families.  
About buying fields and pearls.  
Something the world has never understood  
And maybe never will  
Because the world can't imagine  
that, in the end, the last will be first  
In the courts of the King.

She dared  
To throw her Golden Years  
Into the furnace of servanthood  
And watch them melt and change  
Into sacred treasures with names  
Like "time" and "health" and "energy"  
That she spent lavishly  
On eternal, invisible things  
Over which angels sing and men weep  
As the scandal of selflessness unfolds.

She dared  
To take her well-earned rest  
And trade it for the burden of souls  
And hapless laborers in thankless harvest fields.  
Burdens that she slung upon her shoulder  
With a wink and a smile  
Having learned in time what gladdens  
The heart of her King.

She dared  
To make the beautiful gamble.  
Betting on four of the weakest cards  
yet winsomely confident  
That love poured out generously is not wasted  
Any more than when priceless perfume  
Or sinless blood are poured out  
As beautiful, precious waste.

She dared  
To trade her “well done good and faithful”  
For a plane ticket to a desert place  
Where few will hear  
Of her blood and sweat and tears  
As they are consumed on the altar  
Of the unreached and ungrateful nations.

She dared  
To trust that the footsteps of Jesus  
Are the safest place for her own feet  
Even when they lead toward the servants’ quarters  
And a rocky, cross-capped hill.

She dared  
To love.  
In her God-gifted ways,  
Calling the Devil’s bluff with every diaper changed  
Every dish washed  
And every storybook read  
For the hundredth time.  
As her life composed  
A testimony to the worth of Jesus  
That will be read in eternity.”

Those that have ears to hear, let them hear.

**The Kingdom is for those that can’t afford it.** And it’s so worth it!

**Repent** - of the jockeying for place, of not seeing others, of trying to catch Jesus in blasphemy.

**Come** - The invite is open, turn to Jesus. Return to him, to his grace, to his consuming claim over you.

**Be Wholly His** - Live like he is all that matters...

This makes real disciples. Those that do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

What will they say of us? “ They couldn’t afford it, but they gave it all...”

**Revelation 19:6-9** “Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God  
the Almighty reigns.

[7] Let us rejoice and exult  
and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his Bride has made herself ready;

[8] it was granted her to clothe herself  
with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

[9] And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”