

Parables from Luke 14

This chapter is associated with the house of a chief Pharisee. The opening verses take place **inside** the house (vv.1-24), the closing verses take place **outside** the house (vv.25-35). The theme of **invitation** runs through the chapter which breaks into four sections:

- vv.1-6: *The Dropsy Man*
- vv.7-14: *The Parable of the Chief Rooms*
- vv.15-24: *The Parable of the Great Supper*
- vv.25-35: *The Cost of Discipleship*

Luke's theme of discipleship again runs through the chapter. What does it mean to be a disciple? Disciples are persons who, out of love for the Teacher, have determined to **learn** His mind and plans and have resolved to devote their person and life to furthering His interests. The Lord Jesus Himself was a disciple of the Father: *Isaiah 50.4: The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the **learned** (disciple), that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the **learned** (disciple).*

Healing on the Sabbath (Luke 14.1-6)

The Lord Jesus had been invited on the Sabbath day into the house of one of the 'chief Pharisees' (v.1), a likely member of the Sanhedrin. The reason for the invitation was that they might 'watch' Him. This implies 'close inspection' with the purpose of finding fault, something they had done on various other occasions often with regard to healing on the Sabbath day (Mark 3.2, Luke 6.7, 20.20). We can be sure that there are many people watching us closely in order to find fault with the way we live as Christians.

The Pharisees had planted a man 'before Him', literally 'right in front of Him' (v.2). This man does not appear to have been an invited guest (cf. v.4) but was there to encourage the Lord Jesus to heal on the Sabbath. This man had 'the dropsy' which was the swelling of body tissues caused by the accumulation of water due to a heart or liver disorder. Note the Lord Jesus 'answered' the lawyers and Pharisees, yet no-one had spoken (v.3). He was answering either a hidden thought, or more likely, their actions in placing this man before Him. In any case, the Pharisees were unable to respond to the question of the Lord (v.4, cf. Romans 3.19) who in great compassion and mercy heals the man.

The Scriptures teach that no **work** should be done on the Sabbath (Exodus 20.8-11), but the Pharisees had **added** to the law, teaching that healing on the Sabbath was 'work' and therefore breaking the law, unless the disease was deemed to be so severe that the victim would not last until the following day. The charge of adding to the law was familiar to them (cf. Mark 7.7, Luke 11.38-41). By doing this, they were **dishonouring** the name and character of God by making Him out to be unmerciful and uncaring. These Pharisees would be happy to immediately rescue a son or ox from a 'pit' (or 'well') on the Sabbath (against which there was no regulation), but they would make a suffering man wait for his salvation. Acts of divine mercy and love never cease even on the Sabbath (John 5.17). Are we a people who add or take away from the Word of God? It is most serious to do either (Revelation 22.18-19) as it is possible to dishonour the name of God. Everything we do, say and practise should be regulated by the Book!

The Parable of the Chief Rooms (Luke 14.7-14)

Now the 'party' was in 'full swing', the Lord Jesus first turned His attention to (or 'marked') the guests (vv.7-11), and secondly, the host (vv.12-14). These verses have valuable teaching concerning **humility** and **hospitality**.



It would seem as if there was an 'undignified scramble' for the best seats or reclining places at the table (v.7). Seating guests in Eastern homes was a tricky affair. It often involved a number of **tricliniums** (a table with seats for three). The centre seat of the centre table was the highest seat of honour. The host would normally assign these places and then take the lowest place himself. On this occasion it seems as if the guests chose their own seats and judged their own importance!

When the Lord Jesus saw 'how' the guests had chosen their seats, He spoke a parable (based on Proverbs 25.6-7) to illustrate spiritual truth (v.11, Romans 12.3). When invited to an important occasion it would not be wise to seat oneself in the

place of highest honour for fear that the host might ask you to move if a more important person were to attend (vv.8-9). He would then have to shamefully move to the lowest place (presumably every other seat would now be taken). Rather, it would be more sensible to sit in the lowest place of honour and then be invited to 'go up higher' (v.10). The moral of the parable is clear: *For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (v.11). The Lord Jesus repeated these words three times (Matthew 23.12, Luke 18.14), each time with specific reference to the Pharisees. They often exalted themselves with their words, but never practised what they preached (Matthew 23.1-12).

There are many practical lessons to be learned. The path of true exaltation is humility. This is the path that the Lord Jesus has trod (Philippians 2.5-11). Isaiah 53.12: Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong (**exaltation**); because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (**humiliation**). Hebrews 2.9: But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death (**humiliation**), crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man (**exaltation**). GO AS LOW AS EVER YOU WILL, THE HIGHEST HAS BEEN LOWER STILL.

There are many scriptural examples of those who sought to exalt themselves and were subsequently abased, e.g. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4.29-33) and Herod (Acts 12.21-23). The local assembly is never the place to seek pre-eminence (3 John 9). BE CONTENT TO BE NOBODY AND NOTHING DOWN HERE AND HE WILL REWARD YOU UP THERE.

It is also a blessing to note the **gospel** application. Believers are those who have taken the lowest place in acknowledgement of their guilt and need (cf. 1 Timothy 1.15), but also those who have been lifted up to the highest heights. We have been called to 'come up higher' (v.10) by God Himself (Ephesians 1.3). What of the **local church** application? God has placed us all as believers in the body, and given some a public position which might appear to be of more importance than others (1 Corinthians 12.12-31). We must remember, however, that every member of the body is of vital importance and no one individual is superior to another.

The Lord Jesus next speaks to the host concerning **hospitality** (vv.12-14). Hospitality, as at this feast (v.1), was often extended as a means to accumulate honour for the host. Those invited were rich, with the expectation of the favour being repaid at some future date (v.12). The Lord Jesus taught that instead, hospitality should be extended to those who are needy and poor as a demonstration of unselfish compassion. This would result in honour and reward from God (v.14). It should always be the case that as believers we seek honour from God, not from men. Let us not be men pleasers, but God pleasers. Ephesians 6.5-6: Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters... not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

The Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14.15-24)

Perhaps it was the reference to the 'resurrection of the righteous' which caused a dinner guest to speak of the coming festivities in the Kingdom of God (v.15). The Lord Jesus never taught anything He did not already practise Himself. As such, He tells of the future 'great supper' which God has prepared for **all**. This is the ultimate demonstration of unselfish compassion. Here there would be **no** social order or jostling for position (Matthew 8.11).

Although this is not called a parable, a very similar story is told (on a different occasion) in Matthew 22.1-14 which is referred to as such. Note the clear dispensational aspect of this 'parable'. The 'certain man' is God and the 'great supper' refers to the coming marriage supper of the Lamb which will take place on earth (Revelation 19.9). The Church will attend these festivities as the Bride of the Lamb, clothed in the 'righteousnesses of the saints' (Revelation 19.7-8). The 'certain man' sent out a double invitation to the supper (a common Eastern and Jewish custom, cf. Esther 5.8, 6.14) when he 'bade many' (v.16) and subsequently announced: 'Come; for all things are now ready' (v.17). This corresponds to the invitation of the prophets to the nation throughout OT history (cf. Isaiah 53.1, 65.2) and the call during the ministry of the Lord Jesus to 'come' (Matthew 11.28, Luke 4.18, 44, 8.1, John 7.37). The very fact that the King was in their midst signified that all things were 'now ready' (v.17). On both occasions, the nation rejected the call. They 'all with one consent began to make excuse' or 'refused' God's offer of blessing (v.18). As a result the call goes out to the poor parts of the city and the dregs of society (v.21). This corresponds to the movement of the public ministry away from the city of Jerusalem into the outlying areas of Judea and Samaria where very often the poor and diseased were delighted to welcome Him. Finally, the call goes **outside** the city (representative of the Jews) to the 'highways and hedges' and in picture, the Gentiles (v.23).

Although this is the strict interpretation, it is possible to make an application to the gospel. Consider the 'great supper' as a picture of God's salvation. The call goes out to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile (Romans 1.16). All those who accept the invitation and eat of the supper picture those who appropriate God's salvation for themselves (John 6.53-54).