



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 14:1-24

To understand what the kingdom of God requires out of us.

Chick-fil-A Opened On a Sunday?

It's Sunday. You've finished church and you are hungry and in a hurry (you overcommitted again and now you have to fit lunch into a much smaller time slot than you're used to). You don't want to eat something really heavy, but you also don't want a sub sandwich, and then it hits you: "Chick-fil-A!" An exciting prospect until about (hopefully) 5 second later you remember: "...isn't opened on Sundays." America's favorite Christian-based chicken sandwich fast-food chain is known perhaps more than anything else for the fact that they are closed on Sunday, a way by which they honor the Lord and give their employees an opportunity to worship at their own local churches. But do they ever bend the rules? Turns out, they do! In December of 2017, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport lost power Sunday afternoon, causing more than 1,000 flights to be grounded. Unsure of what to do, Atlanta's mayor, Kasim Reed, called the fast-food giant late into the night and pleaded for assistance, and Chick-fil-A employees "immediately mobilized," and began making sandwiches and deliveries to the emergency operations center for stranded passengers.

In Luke 14:1-24, Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath, an action that would have been frowned upon by the religious leaders of His day. Upon healing the man, Jesus looked at them and said: "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" (Lk. 14:5). Jesus draws His detractors to an important truth regarding the Sabbath that they, in their own man-made laws, had missed.

Healing On the Sabbath

Verses 1 and 2 begin on a Sabbath: “One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.” It is interesting to note that despite the increasingly hostile differences between Jesus and the Pharisees, He did not separate Himself from them. James Edwards notes, “The Gospels record Jesus’ ongoing interactions with Pharisees until the final week in Jerusalem. Moreover, in none of the Gospels does Pharisaic opposition play a prominent role in Jesus’ death, for the capital case against Jesus was pressed by scribes and chief priests, not by Pharisees, who are mentioned but once in the Passion Narratives (Matt 27:62)”.¹ Jesus is questioned often for His practices, but in this instance, He anticipates it and questions them first: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” (Lk. 14:3). After a few moments of silence, Jesus asks them: “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” (Lk. 14:5). Jesus sets up a theological dilemma here. While maybe not immediately obvious, this is an allusion to a commandment in Deuteronomy 22:4: “You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and ignore them. You shall help him to lift them up again.” This hypothetical scenario positions the Pharisees to either break the Sabbath and fulfill Deuteronomy 22:4, or break the commandment in Deuteronomy 22:4 in order to honor the Sabbath. Of course, the underlying point is that it would not violate the Sabbath because you cannot violate God’s law in order to obey it; that would mean God’s law is non-sensical, and it is not. His opponents predictably have no idea how to answer Him (Lk. 14:6).

Parables

In verses 7 through 24, Jesus tells three parables, all of which illustrate different things. Below is a breakdown of each of them.

THE WEDDING FEAST

In the first parable (vs.7-11), Jesus warns His listeners who attend a banquet to “not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.” (Lk. 14:8-9). On the contrary: “But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Lk. 14:10-11). Looking for public exaltation was common in the ancient world (and still is!), and thus one would desire to sit in a place of honor at a public gathering. Jesus’ warning is counterintuitive to what most people would think. However the warning is important for at least two reasons. For one, this is very practical advice. If one wants to avoid public humiliation by thinking more of himself than he really is and then being humiliated by being asked to sit in a less honorable place. If you consistently place yourself lower in stature, you will likely be honored more. However, there is another aspect of this parable as well. If there are dire consequences of humiliation and shame for self-exaltation in the physical world, how much more will one have to give an account in the kingdom of God?

THE GREAT BANQUET

The second parable Jesus tells is told to the man who invited Jesus to dinner: “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 415.

you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just” (Lk. 14:12-14). This parable highlights the value in doing things for people because it is a good thing to do and not in expectation that the same level of good will be done to you in return. The golden rule is often confused with something it is not. Jesus said in Luke 6:31: “And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” We like to think He said: “Do to others nice things so that they will do nice things in return to you.” To throw a banquet for the dregs of society would all but insure that no banquet would be thrown for you in return. Therefore, if you do it anyway, it will be because you wanted to bless them, not earn blessing for yourself.

THE BANQUET AND GUESTS

The final parable can be confusing because it also utilizes banquet terminology, but the point of the third parable has nothing to do with the second one. Jesus here is making allusion to the kingdom of God. There are those invited to a feast who refuse to come for various reasons, and so in anger the king invites outsiders to come and dine instead. In the parable, Christ is the king, the unbelieving Jews are those invited to the banquet who reject the king’s invitation, and the Gentiles, sinners, and anyone who humbles themselves in submission before the king and graciously accepts his invitation are those outsiders who are welcomed in to feast.

Recall that this chapter began by Jesus challenging the Pharisees for His healing on the Sabbath, and questioning them in a manner that revealed they did not understand how God’s economy is meant to operate. These three parables go further in proving that to be true. They do not understand that in the kingdom of God, humility reigns. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first (Lk. 13:30). They do not understand that good things done for reciprocal blessing are not really all that good. They do not understand because they have made no attempt to understand. They have taken their place of privilege as the people of God for granted, and many of them will not figure this out until it is too late.

What About Now?

The takeaways are as practical as the parables. One is remembering to lead with humility. Another takeaway is to evaluate why you do nice things for other people. Is it to bless them? Or is it to obligate them to bless you? The kingdom demands you bless people for their sake, not yours. Another takeaway is to rejoice that the Lord has invited you to dine with Him. God has honored you to be at His table. Revel in that.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 14:1-3. What day was it? Where was Jesus? What did a man ask Him to do?

2. Read Luke 14:4-6. How did Jesus respond to the man? What did He say to the Pharisees?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 14:7-11. What parable did Jesus tell, and what was the significance of it?

2. Read Luke 14:12-14. What parable did Jesus tell, and what was the significance of it?

Day Three

1. Read Luke 14:15-17. What did someone at the table say? How did Jesus respond to him?

2. Read Luke 14:18-20. Did the people invited to the banquet attend? Why not?

Day Four

1. Read Luke 14:21-22. What did the king order the servant to do in response to his declined invitations?

2. Read Luke 14:23-24. Who all did the king invite? Who do the people in the parable represent in real life?

Week 54 Discussion: Humility

The major theme in many of these parables is humility. To not give into self-exaltation and to not do nice things for other people so they will do nice things for you in return. Talk as a group about the need for humility in your life and how you might encourage one another to be more humble as you grow into maturity in Christ.

1. Icebreaker: Do you consider yourself a humble person? (I realize the answer to this might make you feel *less* humble, but for the sake of the exercise, answer it honestly)
2. Would other people say you are humble? Why or why not?
3. Who is the humblest person you know? Why do you think that about them?
4. How can humility help you when you are in conflict with another person?
5. Are there any negative effects of humility?
6. What is one thing that would help you become more humble? How this group help you begin working towards that?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus heals a leper on the Sabbath, and then justifies it.
2. Jesus tells parables concerning what is required out of us in the kingdom of God.