

Luke

The Gospel for Everyone

Study 22 | Luke 14:12-24

“A New Guest List”

News and Needs

Upcoming Events:

- **A PRIMER ON PRAYER: A FOUR-SESSION CLASS ON DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**

“Lord, teach us to pray,” the disciples asked of Jesus. This question implies that we need to be taught how to pray—it does not come naturally—but it also implies that prayer can be taught. The common assumption among Christians is that one either has the “gift” of prayer, or one does not, and that prayer is not something you can just decide to do. This class will challenge that assumption. While we will begin (and continue, and end!) with the premise that only God can teach us to pray, we will also see that prayer is a discipline that can be learned, and that the more we practice, the better we will get at it.

To that end, this class might more aptly be called a lab: that is to say, we will be putting in to practice some of what we learn each week in the class. Also, we will be facilitating ways for the people who participate to keep in touch in the weeks between classes so that we can learn from another what is working, and to encourage one another.

This class will meet once per month, in the sanctuary 10 minutes after the worship service and will last for approximately 50 minutes.

Save the Dates:

February 21: Times for Prayer

March 14: Texts for Prayer

April 11: Tasks for Prayer

May 9: Notes from the Field

1. Why is Jesus telling this man (a ruler of the Pharisees) how to give a dinner party in verses 12-14? What is significant about who Jesus tells him to invite? About who Jesus tells him not to invite? How would Jesus’ comments have challenged this man?

In the first part of chapter 14, Luke describes the situation that led up to Jesus’ comments to the man. This ruler of the Pharisees hosted a dinner party on the Sabbath that Jesus attended. Jesus healed a man and thus quickly challenged and redefined how the Pharisees understood the Sabbath (14:2-6). Then, Jesus noticed that those who were invited chose the places of honor at the dinner, so he illustrates the importance of humility (14:7-11).

“The imagery of a meal as a symbol for the end-time celebration of God’s people was standard in Jewish thought” (Craig Blomberg). The dinner party on the Sabbath demonstrated how the man understood the long-awaited kingdom of God. Jesus told the man how to give a dinner party because he wanted to challenge how the man understood the kingdom of God.

Jesus tells the man to invite those who cannot repay him rather than inviting those who can repay him. Giving a dinner party without the expectation of repayment was an act of grace and mercy. Jesus confronted this man’s belief that the kingdom of God was about repayment by showing him that God’s kingdom is one of grace and mercy.

2. How does the statement in verse 15 help us to understand Jesus’ response in verses 16-24? What does Jesus want to communicate through the parable of the Great Banquet? What does Jesus want his hearers to understand about his kingdom through this parable? About the banquet giver? The invitees who made excuses? The replacement guests?

Remember that the man in verse 15 was one of those invited to the dinner party who sought a place of honor. “That man, probably a Pharisee, no doubt shared the exclusivist attitude of his fellow sectarians, limiting entrance into God’s kingdom to pious Jews” (Blomberg). Once again, Jesus challenged the Pharisaic understanding of the kingdom of God, but this time he used the parable of the Great Banquet.

Opportunities to Serve:

- Our team left February 12th for Ethiopia and will return February 27th. Please pray for the Project in Addis Ababa, Andy and Bev Warren the project managers, and our team going over this year - Pastor Chris Hildebrand, Audrey Morrison, and Jerod Huggins.
- The Custodial Ministry needs volunteers to help clean bathrooms before the worship service. Please contact Rob Zeller, zellere@yahoo.com if you would like to help.

In verse 24, Jesus summarized the point he wanted to communicate in response to this statement (verse 15). He emphasized that this man along with his fellow Pharisees would not be eating bread in the kingdom of God because they had rejected God's kingdom of mercy offered in Jesus himself. Jesus wanted his hearers to know that the kingdom of God had come and was present among them (verse 17).

Jesus used the image of the banquet giver to represent God. Jesus wanted them to see the graciousness of God through his invitation to all kinds of people into his kingdom. The excuses of those invited are all lame. "They are meant to strike the hearer as ridiculous and to point out the absurdity of any excuse for rejecting God's call into his kingdom" (Blomberg). The replacement guests fit into the same category of people that Jesus told the man to invite in verses 12-14. The kingdom of God belongs to the weak, the helpless, and those outside the exclusive lines of the Pharisees; it is one of mercy for those who cannot offer repayment.

3. What sorts of persons do you tend to pursue and spend time with? How are we exclusive about whom we invite into our lives and our community of faith? How are the excuses given today when people are invited to bountiful life with Christ similar or different than those given in this parable? Name some specific ways we can celebrate the kingdom of God so that we include those on the "hedges" of our own social circles?

We naturally pursue and spend time with people that are most like us whether ethnically, socio-economically, emotionally, or spiritually. These are people who can "repay" us for what we offer them. They can reciprocate what we offer in the categories above. Can most of the people you spend time with give back to you what you give to them? Do they fit into the same categories as you? For example, most people we invite into our lives and our community of faith have the same educational background. We prefer people who can reciprocate the intellectual stimulus we offer. In what other ways are we exclusive?

We are challenged to receive the kingdom of God into our lives. Yet, excuses still abound. Do you think the excuses given today are just as lame, ridiculous, and absurd as the ones given in the parable? Is there any excuse that is reasonable?

The kingdom of God forms us into people of mercy and diversity. Brooklyn is full of opportunity for diversity and mercy in the church. In what ways can we invite our neighbors into our lives? How can we serve them and include them?

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