

The Parable of the Ambitious Guests

Luke 14:1-14

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 14:11, “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

INTRODUCTION

LESSONS AT THE DINING TABLE ON THE SABBATH

Jesus attended a gathering in a prominent Pharisee’s home on the Sabbath afternoon. The Lord was on test, being closely scrutinized by these Pharisees. He met a sick man with swelling and disability. He sought to teach some important principles:

- About the Sabbath
- About the ministry to the sick
- About the seating arrangements
- About humility
- About hospitality in the neighbourhood
- About love for those who were the least in society; sick, disabled, maimed, blind, those least able to reciprocate (pay back), the down trodden, the overlooked, the poor and needy.
- About what to do at social events where the choice of seating and positioning is up to the guests.
- About avoiding embarrassing situations.
- About the sin of “Pharisaism.”
- About pride of position, discrimination, Spiritual egotism, self “aggrandisement,” cliques and partiality, racism, pride of person, pride of position, pride of race, pride of financial riches and desire for social climbing.

Jesus taught that social behaviour is important. This is part of our testimony to those around us. 1 Corinthians 10:31, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*” He taught correct etiquette at gatherings for meals, anniversaries, wedding receptions, fellowship meals, birthdays, as well as gatherings at work and play.

A. THE SETTING

He was invited to the house of one of the chief Pharisees for hospitality and to eat bread on the Sabbath. Jesus was not only present in the house of God, but in the house of His people – all the time! How would you respond if Jesus came to your house? They watched Him in order to find fault! He watched them also! He became aware of a chronically sick man with dropsy (too much fluid retained in the body causes congestive heart failure). Jesus, moved with compassion, healed him on the Sabbath which annoyed the Pharisees. They could not answer Jesus' questions about His right to heal on the Lord's day. They were critical and empty of the compassion or power of God. Jesus was watching the guests arrive and choose their seating, scrambling to get close to the 'chief table.'

B. LESSONS FROM THE PARABLE

V7, Jesus taught about the humility fit for the Kingdom. Jesus saw the activity in the home. He marked how they chose the best seats, vying for top positions. A real test of humility and grace is seen at this social event. Many scrambled for high positions. Jesus saw them. How we behave in the home reveals true character. Jesus sees it – HE MARKED their desire to be seated at or near the 'head table.'

V8, A parable of an earthly event with heavenly lessons. Advice to invited guests – don't assume in pride that you are the most important guest sitting in the highest room, assuming highest honour and dominating the gathering. *"When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;"*

V9, Embarrassment may be yours when you are asked to move away from the head tables to a lesser position in the lowest room. *"And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room."* A very humbling experience! The biblical principle of James 4:10 is applied, *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."*

V10, Go and sit at the lowest table when you arrive:- That way the host may invite you to 'go up higher' seating you in such a position you will be honoured. In this type of function it is rightful to accept and respect people who may be given honour due to the reason for the event. It may be a marriage, or civic reception, requiring respect for parents, ministers, elders, those who serve. Respect should be given to the host and their plans for the event. Don't disrespect but show your humility in a Christlike attitude.

V11, The principle of humility applies in the privacy of the home and in the public arena.

Jesus warned against placing oneself at the 'head table' unless invited to do so. Removal could result in dishonour. Contrary to man's natural inclinations, the lowly seat should be selected first. We want the best for ourselves! But Jesus would have humility before exaltation. We must be little in our own eyes before we can be large in His eyes!

James 1:9-10, *"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away."*

James 1:22, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."*

James 4:5-10, *"Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."*

- Christ's example; humble and seated upon an ass.
- Christ's self-emptying Philippians 2:3-11, *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*
- Christ's attitude is clearly seen, even here at this home, the Lord did not assume greatness, leadership, or place himself at the center of attention; or take the highest seat at the table in the highest room. Rather, He was a wise

gests, offering good advice to the guests. He, Himself served the sick and sought to help folk to humility.

The disciples asked who was the greatest and vied for positions close to the Saviour. Matthew 18:1-5, *“1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.”* Jesus taught that in His kingdom humility is necessary. The church and kingdom are to be typified by humility and even childlike faith. Thus, the Saviour was speaking to the Pharisees; their proud ways and “pecking orders” were wrong. Blessed are the meek, poor in spirit, mourners, righteous, merciful, pure. Humility and submission are attitudes which should be seen at any function, public or private; in the home or in the church.

C.ADVICE REGARDING THE GUEST LIST

The Pharisees had fallen into traditions that supported their proud and legalistic religion. The name Pharisee means “separated” or “separating” referring to their group identity, their political position and doctrinal identity. They avoided all contact with the heathen lest they should thereby be defiled. So did the Pharisee avoid, as far as possible, contact with the non-Pharisee because the latter was to him unclean (Amharez). Hence, the Pharisees found fault with the Saviour because of His open interaction with Publicans and sinners, even Gentiles! Our Lord’s teaching about who to invite cuts deeply into the bad attitudes of the Pharisees to these type of people. The Pharisees were divided among other Pharisees. They would associate with other Pharisees who were of the same ilk.

D.WHO TO INVITE

“12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

This is the type of people that the Pharisees would not invite. It was public, spiritual elitism and pride! Jesus taught that such attitudes toward others were wrong. Jesus advocated against this view of society, and the dividing of society into different casts or regarding people beyond redemption, and unworthy to grace your table. Jesus’ model for hospitality speaks to our multicultural, multilingual and caste divided societies. He envisioned a social system that favours generosity without reciprocity (return favour) such a social system would

include giving from the top to the bottom. Underlying such an approach to giving is the philosophy that status is a privilege that brings with it the responsibility to be compassionate and generous. His words were as challenging in His cultural setting as they are in ours.

V12, Jesus was teaching the equality of all men and women and that one should reach out to those who are less advantaged and who are unable to ‘pay back’ with a meal are equal at a social gathering.

V13, Jesus suggest that rather than inviting your “group,” you should invite poor, maimed, lame and blind. Question: Would you welcome those types from the “other side of the tracks” as it were? Would Jesus and these types be welcomed in? Many of our churches are not designed to include these special needs people. You might want to tell them they just need to be saved and all these disabilities would fall away. The concept of a healing atonement is not biblical. Look at Paul with his thorn in the flesh, through it he discovered God’s grace. Would you invite ones who are feeble minded or widows in their affliction? Would you invite people who need to be converted of a different colour or religion and health? Jesus wants us to love these folk and reach out to them.

E. THE HOME BLESSED BY THE LORD

The generous home, hospitable, compassionate, giving, loving even the enemies will be blessed. The home where Christ is honoured as the head and unseen guest at every meal; The home where the whole scope of family activity is pleasing to the Lord; The home where children are reared according to God’s Word and will; where people are welcomed and introduced to Christ; where all things are in order; neat and tidy inside and out; a safe environment where friendliness and Christlikeness is seen. Not seeing a “Keep out! Trespassers prosecuted!” sign.

F. THE PROMISE OF RECOMPENSE FOR SUCH WORK IN THE HOME AND COMMUNITY

Luke 14:14, *“And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”*

John 5:28-29, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Revelation 20:4-6, “4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The judgement seat. Bema seat of Christ will be a place for rewarding the saved for eternity. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

1 Peter 5:6-11 “6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. 10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. 11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Proverbs 25:6-7, Our highest place is lying low at our Redeemer’s feet! “Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: 7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.”

Then to rise up and serve the Lord. Get involved in humble foot washing! Take the towel and serve!!

This poem has been around for many years and poses some challenging questions about our home life.

IF JESUS CAME TO YOUR HOUSE

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two
If he came unexpectedly, I wonder what you’d do.

Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honoured Guest,
And all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best,
And you keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there
That serving Him in your own home is joy beyond compare.

But when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door
With arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly Visitor?
Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in?
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?
Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard?
And wish you hadn't uttered that last, loud, hasty word?

Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?
And I wonder if the Savior spent a day or two with you,
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?
Would you go right on saying the things you always say?
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?
Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace?
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
Would you sing the songs you always sing, and read the books you read,
And let him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go?
Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?

Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends?
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on?
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do?
If Jesus Christ in person came to spend some time with you.