

The Way of Humility (PM)

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, while the kids are doing that, I'm going to talk for 10 minutes, 10 minutes about Luke 14.

Now, the key to understanding Luke 14 is context, context, context. And the context for Luke 14 is what? Can anyone guess?

It's Luke 13, alright? It's Luke 13. In Luke 13, Jesus was asked a very important question. The question was, will only a very few people be saved?

It was a question asked by people who assumed they were part of that very few. And Jesus responds to them by saying, the way to heaven is through a narrow door.

So, Jesus says that one day that door will be closed and there's going to be lots of people on the other side. And I'll read a little snippet of Luke 13 to you now. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, Sir, open the door for us.

[1 : 0 7] But he will answer, I do not know you and I do not know where you came from. And they will say, we ate and drank with you. But he will reply, I don't know you.

That's the context. In Luke 14, Jesus is invited to a party to eat and drink. And he's invited to a party of very important people who assume they're in with God, but actually at this point they're on the wrong side of the door.

And Luke 14 is about why they're on the outside. And we'll see, it's because of self-righteous pride. So let's take a closer look.

So Jesus is invited to this very, very important lunch with these very, very important religious people. The question is, were they keen to learn from Jesus? Is that why they invited him to the party?

No. Verse 14 says they were watching him carefully. They were watching Jesus carefully. So something funny is going on. All of a sudden, in the middle of lunch, there was a man there with dropsy, which is a terrible disease.

[2 : 1 2] This, of course, was a trap. One of the Pharisees had found this man with a terrible disease and had arranged for him to make an appearance at this nice lunch.

He was just a puppet. Can you do your drawing, sweetie? Thank you, babe. He was just a puppet in their plan to trap Jesus. The religious elite wanted to see what Jesus would do with this man.

Would he break the Sabbath rules and heal him? You see, the Pharisees had turned the Sabbath, which is this wonderful thing, this beautiful thing, into a legalistic nightmare of rules and restrictions.

And they loved the rules because it fueled their pride. And before we get to how Jesus responded to the trap, let's stop for a moment. The disease the man had was dropsy.

We call it edema now. This is not an irrelevant detail. It's a disease that presents as bloating. Your body bloats.

- [3 : 11] It swells up because you're retaining too much fluid. And one of the problems of dropsy, it's very cruel, one of the problems of dropsy is that you have this insatiable thirst whilst retaining water.
- And I spoke to a doctor at church this morning about this, and he said it's cruel because this thirst you're continually drinking actually makes the problem much worse. Ultimately, the reason behind it is organ failure.
- So here's the irony, and here's why it's important. The Pharisees had ironically picked a man with a disease, a disease that mirrored their own spiritual state.
- They were bloated with pride. Thirsty for more. Thirsty for more attention. Thirsty for more status. But unable to be satiated.
- Constantly wanting more. And it was killing them. And behind it all was heart failure. Okay, back to the story. So the Pharisees let this man with dropsy pop by.
- [4 : 16] He's just standing there. They're all sitting around with heartless grins on their faces thinking, what's Jesus going to do? What's he going to do? What's he going to do? How's this going to pan out? Jesus, of course, knows exactly what's going on and throws a spanner in the works by asking a question.
- Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? And for the Pharisees, this is not how this was meant to play out.
- Not how the plan was meant to go. The Pharisees don't know what to say. They don't know what to say. If they say, yes, it's lawful, then they're kind of soft on the law.
- If they say no, then they're cruel. So what happens? Well, first, Jesus heals the man and sends him away. And again, nothing from the Pharisees. No, wow, this is amazing.
- Praise God. No repentance. Nothing. Then Jesus asks him another question. Which of you, having a son, daughter, having a farm animal that has fallen into a well on the Sabbath, would not immediately pull them out?
- [5 : 21] And of course, this is a no-brainer. Of course, if one of their kids fell into a well, of course they're going to pull them out straight away. But the Pharisees, again, remain silent. They don't say, oh, that's a great question.
- It makes perfect sense. We're frauds. Help us. None of that. But don't do that. Spiritual dropsy.
- Bloated with pride. They're never going to admit that they're wrong. Jesus sees this man in this terrible state and heals him. He sees him as a man treading water at the bottom of a well and rescues him.
- The Pharisees, to them, this man is just a prop. He is a prop in their plan to discredit Christ and ultimately have him killed. That's the first paragraph.
- And what do we see? It's about contrast, isn't it? A contrast between the great love of Christ and the ugly hypocrisy and self-righteousness of the religious elite.
- [6 : 23] Now, Jesus doesn't leave it there. He wants to diagnose the problem with these Pharisees. What's wrong with them? So let's go to the second half of the passage for the diagnosis.
- That's verse 7. Now, he told a parable to those who were invited when he noticed how they chose the places of honor. So again, irony. In verse 1, we hear that they were watching Jesus closely, but here we realize that a much keener eye was watching them.
- And then Jesus says the parable here. And let me summarize. When you're invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit in a place of honor. Lest someone more distinguished than you be invited.

And he who invited you both will come and say, sorry, you've got to do the walk of shame. Got to go walk to the back of the room now. But when you're invited, go and sit in the lowest place so that when your host comes, he may say to you, friend, move higher up.

Then you'll be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. Thank you. So this is an aside. I officiate a few weddings. And when I get invited to receptions, I'll say to the couple, I'll say to the couple, listen, you don't need to put me at a great table.

[7 : 38] Just put me at a table with all the people you don't know what to do with. Right? Anyone you don't know what to do with, just put me at that table. I'll be happy with those guys. All the people that don't quite fit in, just put me there. So if I've ever sat at a wedding table with you, at a reception, well, there's a story there, isn't there?

We're laughing because I sat with my friend down here at a wedding just on the weekend. It was brilliant. It was a slightly odd table though, wasn't it? Yeah, it was a bit odd. Okay, back to the parable.

Jesus had watched how these Pharisees were chosen. Jesus watched how the Pharisees had chosen where to sit at lunch, right? At these meals. The way it worked is there were these three couches.

It was called a tricillium. Tricillium. Three couches, right? And they were shaped in a U like this. And the best place to sit was right in the middle at the bottom.

So that's where the host sat. Next place was either side of the host. And then it just kind of got lamer the more you went up the sides there. So remember verse 7. Now he told a parable to those who were invited when he noticed how they chose the places of honor.

[8 : 48] Jesus had noticed at the start of the meal this sort of undignified scramble to try and get the best seats in order to assert status.

And Jesus sees this and he tells the parable of the wedding seating. Now a flat reading of this would be, you know, when you go to some fancy place, always take a low seat hoping to get moved up.

Otherwise you might get embarrassed, right? Jesus hot tips on, you know, social etiquette at parties. No, so obviously that's not what's going on here, right? The parable is not about social graces.

It's not about pretending to be humble because you might get, you know, promoted. What Jesus is doing is he is trying to impart an eternal spiritual principle.

He's trying to impart an eternal spiritual principle, which is summarized in verse 11. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

[9 : 57] See, the Pharisees, they craved significance. They craved attention and status. They were one of the best seats. It's pride and it had poisoned their hearts. And it had fooled them into thinking that they're in control of the seating.

That they could hustle their way into the best seats. Where in fact, the parable tells us that where you sit ultimately comes down to the host. Now I think you, I don't have to tell you this, but the parable is talking about eternity with God.

It's talking about the principle behind salvation. And using the sort of the imagery of the parable, if we humbly come to the host and say, look, we don't belong here.

Perhaps we could sit at the back. God, the host, his friend, come and sit with me. That's what salvation looks like. That's the eternal spiritual principle that Jesus wants them to understand.

That is the beauty and genius of the gospel. The Pharisees thought they could hustle their way into heaven by meeting standards they had set for themselves.

[11 : 11] And the fruit of that was not salvation. It was pride. And it was ruining them. And it made them indifferent to the suffering of others.

I think this is a tricky thing for us to get our heads around. No matter how long you've been a Christian for, this concept is hard to get our heads around. Because we want to own our salvation.

We want to feel like we participate in it. We want to feel like it's up to us. And that's pride. Jonathan Edwards doesn't mince words here. He says this, and it's very helpful.

He says, you contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary. I'll say it again.

You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary. And we have to arrive at that humbling realization in order to be saved.

[12 : 13] That is the only way through the narrow door. And on the other side of that door, we will meet Jesus. And it will be wonderful.

And the Bible doesn't know how to describe it. So it says like, it's going to be like a banquet. And we'll feel like we belong in the kids' table at the back. In some corner.

And he will see us. And he will welcome us to him. Or if we prefer the imagery of the kids' story. It will be like a prince spotting his secret best friend from childhood.

Suddenly stopping the banquet. And saying, my dear friend, my dear, dear friend. Come up here and sit with me. This is an impossibly beautiful story.

But it is only beautiful to the ears of the humble. So folks, do everything you can to rid yourself of pride.

[13 : 20] Because it steals the beauty of the gospel from you. Amen. Amen.

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