

# Luke 14: 1-6 AM

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our Heavenly Father, in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have given yourself to us completely. And we ask that you would continue to help us to give ourselves to you, that we would enter by the narrow door, come under the protection of the Lord Jesus, and so enter the eternal feast with you and all the people who love you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. I got back late last night from the camp, the retreat.

It's out beyond hope. Camp Square. And it's full. 200 people. Kids in tents, people in caravans, and very happy.

And that's why we have a ringer as our musician this morning. A young man named Ed Norman. He's got a lot of potential. We took both of our other musicians to lead the singing around the campfire on Friday and Saturday nights.

But it was a wonderful time. And next time there's a retreat, you should get in early because you then get to choose which room you get to sleep in. So let me highly commend it. So let's turn to Luke 14.

[ 1 : 33 ] I have just loved coming back to Luke. The reality of the person of Jesus Christ.

He is so shocking. And he's different than the way you think he is all the time. So Luke 14 begins this way. One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of the ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

And behold, there was a man before him with dropsy. It is a very strange invitation. Pharisees don't like Jesus one little bit.

In fact, they have been constantly trying to trap him, not just to humiliate him, but so that they might even destroy him. And what makes it even stranger is that this invitation comes on a Sabbath.

And every interaction that Jesus has had with Pharisees on the Sabbath day ends up in trouble more for the Pharisees than for Jesus. Because Jesus will heal people and do sovereign works and expose their hypocrisy.

[ 2 : 44 ] And I think it's a little bit puzzling this late in the gospel that Jesus would even go bother going because he's walking into a very nasty trap. It's a set up, Jesus.

Don't go. Don't go.

Don't go. to pounce on him. And they even have a nasty surprise prepared. A man who needs healing suddenly appears, poof, out of nowhere, and they're daring Jesus to heal him.

And they said they can accuse him of breaking the Sabbath day. They're trying to trap him again, like trying to trap a hurricane in a teacup.

And this is the third and final Sabbath healing in Luke. And Jesus goes, which is lovely, not just for his concern for this man and his coterie of elite friends, but to demonstrate the madness of the mercy of God before it's too late for them.

[ 4 : 20 ] It's full of ironies. We won't look at all of them, but the invitation has come from them so that they can trap him, but he goes so that he can free them.

And this is the theme for chapter 13 to 17 that we have started this fall, that there are two completely opposing ways of relating to God, two different ways of salvation and religion, two radically different ways of understanding God and ourselves and each other and the world in which we live.

What I've called the madness of mercy and grace, and in that whole way of understanding life, salvation is God's doing.

Jesus is our saviour. He does the work of saving. He gives it to us as a free gift, and we receive it and take it in our hands as we enter in to the feast that God has prepared.

But there is a different view of salvation, and the Pharisees have honed this to a fine art. And this is the view of salvation that we all naturally believe until we come to meet Christ, and that is we basically do our own saving.

[ 5 : 38 ] And we save ourselves by not breaking the rules. And we make ourselves acceptable to God by our moral achievement. So we look at the world and we say, yeah, the world is divided into good people and bad people, and I'm one of the good people because I've got a bit of control in my life.

People call it a self-salvation strategy. And it may not be a specifically religious way of doing this. We all are very dedicated to some form of self-salvation.

We're all trying to prove ourselves by our moral goodness or by our achievements or by our families or by our careers, which is why we're so in despair when these things don't work out.

Not just because they give us a sense of achievement, but they give us a platform where we feel a little bit better about ourselves when we compare ourselves to others. But underneath it, it's hostility to Jesus.

We do not want to have him as our saviour. We want to hold him at a distance, and we want to put ourselves in the place of God. And the Pharisees, as I say, had developed this to a fine art.

[ 6 : 50 ] They were saving themselves by strictness. They were trying to live more strictly than the Old Testament law of God, thinking that God has to accept them and reward them if they succeed in doing this.

And that's why they keep Jesus at a distance. Years ago on holidays, when my boys were little, I was playing chess with my seven-year-old son, who was killing me at the time.

Tragic. And the three-year-old came running by and thankfully swept his arm across the board and put all the pieces on the floor.

And it's a great picture, I think, of what Jesus does to every self-salvation strategy. You see, because Jesus reveals that what's wrong with this, it's not good guys and bad guys.

It's not that we've broken certain rules. I mean, you can keep a whole bunch of rules. The problem is we're lost. We need finding. We need Jesus to put us on his shoulders and carry us home.

[ 7 : 54 ] We're corrupt. We need healing. We're enslaved. We're enslaved by our pride and our desires and we need liberating. We need a new life and a new record and a new saviour, all of which only Christ can do and all of which he came to do.

So here is the reason why Jesus goes to the Sabbath meal. And the Sabbath meal, we're going to look at it for three weeks.

It's a very long passage in Luke and it goes right down to 24, verse 24. But today the reason he comes to the meal and goes to the meal is he gives us two pictures of the madness of mercy, if you like, two pictures of salvation that he alone can give because he wants to hold out salvation to these Pharisees and to us.

And here are the two pictures. The first one, the first picture, is salvation as release, as release. So verse 2, Behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.

Out of nowhere he appears. And dropsy is a stunning picture of need. In those days, it was an incurable and fatal disease.

[ 9 : 10 ] And what happens is that your body retains fluid and builds up fluid and different parts of the body, your limbs and your stomach, painfully get bloated and more bloated and more bloated.

And the key symptom of dropsy is an insatiable thirst for more and more water. It's an uncontrollable desire for more drinking. And the more you drink, the more you kill yourself.

The more you store your fluid, the more thirsty you become. It's a great picture of how our desires control us. You know, the more we give into our desires, the less satisfied we are until we end up in that fatal cycle of addiction and diminishing returns.

And in Jesus' day, dropsy was a common metaphor for gluttony and consuming and desire and greed and money and all those kinds of things.

And here it shows how utterly ineffective the self-salvation strategy really is. Because the self-salvation strategy steals away compassion.

[ 10 : 19 ] If we're really committed to our own self-salvation, people are there to be used for my own self-salvation. True love only comes from the free forgiveness that comes in Jesus Christ.

So here is this man that they produce. He's literally drowning before their eyes in front of this polite and polished dinner. And they've produced him as a nasty experiment to see if Jesus will heal him

and break their rules so that they can show they're better students of the Sabbath than Jesus is. And you see, straight through their trap, in verse 3, Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees. He knows they've put this guy up to it. And although they haven't said anything, he knows what they're thinking.

And so he responds to them saying, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? It's a good question, isn't it? What are they going to say? We don't like you.

Don't heal him. What does he do? In the face of their painful passivity, in verse 4, he acts. And there are four little phrases there, full of meaning in verse 4.

[11:32] The first is, then he took him, and he reached out his hand, and he lifts him to his feet. He's not going to do this in a corner. He's going to do it so everyone sees. And he healed him.

This is a great word. Jesus, the friend of sinners, forever changes this guy's life. The guy didn't ask for it, but Jesus gives it out of love and grace, and he's completely and instantly renewed and transformed.

And then we read in our version, sent him away. And that's not what the word means. It's literally, he freed him. He released him. Let me show you. Go back into chapter 13.

Look down at verse 12. When Jesus saw this woman, here is another Sabbath in the synagogue, he called her over and said, woman, you are freed from your disability.

She'd had a disability for 18 years. It's the same word. And the rabbi in charge is infuriated. And he says, go away, Jesus. Go away, woman.

[12:37] There are six days you can heal someone. Don't do it on the Sabbath. In verse 15, Jesus answered, you hypocrites, do not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it.

Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, who Satan bound for 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day. Just so, it is exactly the same word here.

It's not that Jesus suddenly said, go away, send him away. He releases him. He frees him. He gives him the liberty of new life. The liberty that all the rule keeping in the world and the universe can't do. Rule keeping can't quench our desires. So in front of his enemies, Jesus shows himself to be not only the only one who can quench our desires and satisfy our desires, but at the same time, he's the only one who can heal us from those desires by his kingly saving grace.

That's a great picture. And this is the first picture. Salvation is release and it comes from Jesus alone. And the second picture is so obvious. His salvation is rest.

[13:53] Also comes from Christ alone. Why does Jesus insist on doing these kinds of things on the Sabbath day? I mean, he could have healed this guy on Sunday, right?

The next day. But he escalates the problem. Look at verse five. He said to 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? He couldn't reply to these things. This is a brilliant use of the Old Testament. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 22, 4. And he shows that they are being stricter than God is.

And the irony of this is that they have turned the Sabbath rest into a thing of work. And the brilliance is that Jesus adds to the quote of Deuteronomy 22 two things.

It's not just about an ox. He puts your precious boy in there, your son. And secondly, it's not just falling off the road. It's falling into a well. You see what he's doing?

[14:59] I mean, you imagine your little boy falls into a well. How long would it take before he drowns? Seconds? Minutes? Jesus reframes this verse to show the urgency of love.

If your child falls into a well, you lift heaven and earth to get him out. And here is a man before their eyes who was fatally filling with fluid. And he says, You couldn't care less.

You're just using him to exalt yourselves. And this is what happens when we resist the grace of God and live out of a self-salvation strategy. So long as I'm trying to be my own saviour, anything I do for others will be a carefully measured calculation so that I can play God and hold Jesus at arm's length.

But Jesus insists on pushing these people back to the purpose of the Sabbath. The great irony here is the Sabbath was the gift of God, where God would bring us into his own rest.

It's an invitation from God to cease working and to rest on his blessing and to rest in his joy. But you know, we keep on holding on to our burdens.

[16:15] We keep on holding back from God. We carry it all ourselves. But right there in the creation, right there at the beginning, when God made man and woman, he created them on day

six.

And then he rested. So the first full day, man and woman are on this planet, was a day of rest. We're made for rest. And God gave his people the Sabbath day to heal us from the sickness of our frantic busyness so that we could put down our restlessness and find meaning in him and not everything else.

We could put down our sinful perfectionism and all our attempts to be our own saviour and remind ourselves, I'm not in control. God is.

I think we ought to put that in our liturgy somewhere. We are not in control. God is. That we're creatures, not of clock time, but of God's time. To step away from our self-saving strategies and recognise that Jesus has done all the work to save me and what I really need to learn how to do is how to rest in him.

And here is Jesus. I mean, already in chapter six in Luke's gospel, he's shown he's Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is about him. It's made for him. I am the one the Sabbath is all about, which is why he can show compassion to this man and why he says, come to me, all you are heavy, burdened, and you will find rest for your souls.

[ 17 : 50 ] And in verse six, they cannot answer him. And this is a pivotal moment.

I just, I don't know how to emphasise this strongly enough. I want you to see how good Jesus is. He doesn't blast them.

He could have, but he doesn't. They richly deserve it. But as always, he doesn't give us what we deserve. He gives us what they don't deserve. He holds out to them again, release and rest.

And he's done this in a beautiful way. He's got, he's shown them in a beautiful way that he alone can give release to this man with dropsy. And here he is in a group of men who are frantically rule keeping and their spiritual lives are filling up with their own bloated self-righteousness and they've got spiritual dropsy and it's killing them.

And the only true release for them is the only true release from us. It's going to come from the forgiveness of Jesus Christ on the cross from his saving death. But you see, the more we try and save ourselves, the more we just don't have time for forgiveness.

[ 19 : 09 ] We resist forgiveness. Jesus alone brings freedom and release. Don't hold on to your sin. We don't need to. It'll kill you if you keep doing that.

And he's shown them in a beautiful way that he alone can bring rest on the Sabbath day. Because the rest that we're talking about here is more than rest for our bodies, but rest, inner rest for our souls.

And we so need this rest. I mean, rest from anxiety and the strain of overwork and the rest from trying to justify ourselves by our status or our money or our reputation or our goodness doesn't really matter.

All comes from Jesus alone. And he can give us the rest that no one else can give us. And he does it by holding nothing back from us but gives himself utterly and now calls on us not to hold back from him but to give ourselves to him utterly.

And we don't know exactly how these men responded to what Jesus was saying but we will come back for the next two weeks as Jesus takes us deeper into their hearts. But for us here this morning, Jesus again holds out afresh to us himself as our saviour, willing to free us from all that will bind us, willing to give us rest and give us a taste of the eternal rest in the weekly rhythm of a day where we remember whose we are and who we belong to.

[ 20 : 40 ] So let's kneel and pray to that saviour together. the promise of the truth of the truth of the truth and will the love etc we will continue to konklu360