

Luke 14: 1-6 PM

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] Folks, while you're standing, I'll just, I'll pray for us. Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening? In Christ's name, amen. Please be seated, everyone. Please be seated.

Hello, it's nice to see you all. As Jacob said, we had a parish retreat this weekend, and there was like, I don't know how many, 200 and something people went away on a parish retreat.

And it was absolutely wonderful. It was a wonderful time. If you are new with us, we are in a series looking at a few chapters in Luke. This week, we're at the beginning of chapter 14.

The key, the key to understanding this chapter is context. It's context. And the context of Luke 14 is Luke 13, obviously. And in Luke 13, Jesus was asked this very important question by some of the religious leaders.

They said to Jesus, will only a very few people be saved? It was a question asked by people who thought God was a bit miserly, I think, when it came to salvation.

[1 : 02] It was also asked, it was also a question asked by people who assumed that they were the few. They believed only a few people would be saved, and it was them as it turned out.

Because they were super religious and did super religious stuff. Jesus responds to them by saying, the way to heaven is through a narrow door.

And the narrow door was Jesus. So we're still in 13, remember. This is context. Jesus goes on to say that one day, the door, this narrow door, will be closed. And there's going to be lots of people on the other side of the door.

And I read a little snippet of Luke 13 to you. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes his door, you'll be standing outside knocking and pleading, Sir, open the door for us.

But he will answer, I don't know you, or where you came from. Then you will say, we ate and drank with you. But he will reply, I don't know you. So that's the context.

[1 : 59] Yes. Luke 14 today, Luke 14, our chapter 4 today, Jesus is invited to a party to eat and drink. Remember chapter 13.

We ate and we drank with you. And he replied, I don't know you. Jesus is invited by these religious leaders to a dinner. Religious leaders who assume they're on the inn with God.

But actually, they're on the wrong side of the door at this point. And Luke 14, this first bit here, is all about why these people will find themselves on the wrong side of that door unless they change.

The question is, how can these religious experts, like these were the religious experts back in the day, how can they be on the wrong side of the door when it comes to salvation? And we're going to see it's because of their self-righteousness.

And it's because they just don't understand grace. So, let's get into this. Jesus is invited to this very important lunch. Verse 14, I'll read it to you.

[3 : 02] One Sabbath, he went out to dine at a house, that's Jesus, of a ruler of the Pharisees. They were watching him carefully. Very, very important.

So why did they invite Jesus over? Because we know that the Pharisees generally did not like Jesus. Why would they invite him over for dinner? Well, it was a bit of a custom. It's not a crazy thing to happen. And it was a bit of a custom if you had the itinerant preacher, you know, coming through your town.

The Pharisees would invite them over to kind of hang out and share some ideas and theological banter and stuff. But that's not what is happening here. They don't want to learn from Jesus. And we know that because verse 14 says, they were watching him carefully.

And every time that word watch or watching is used in Luke, it's always malicious. It's always malicious watching. They were watching him. Watching for what? They were watching for Jesus to

break the rules so they could say, look, you see?

Do you see? He's all wrong, Jesus. Look at him. You can't trust him. He's not taking this whole religion thing very seriously. Verse 2.

[4 : 06] And behold, there was a man before him, Jesus, who had drop seed. So, all of a sudden, they're in lunch, and there's just this guy. There's just this guy.

There's just this guy, right? Jesus. And there's this guy just sort of standing there in the middle of lunch. Like, wow, that's so bizarre.

What's going on? Well, this was, of course, a trap. It was a set-up. They'd set a trap to show everyone Jesus is wrong. So, how was it a trap?

Well, they knew Jesus loved to heal and release people and make people whole. Jesus loved to do that. He did it. It was part of his thing of showing people, here's what the new creation will look like. Here's what it looks like when the kingdom of God comes. But it was the Sabbath, and you're not sort of under their new rules. You're not supposed to work on the Sabbath. And according to their new rules, healing was regarded as a work.

[5 : 03] So, the whole thing was a set-up. Let's put this super, super sick guy in front of Jesus. Jesus will heal him and will show everyone that Jesus is just, well, he's just not serious about the rules, is he?

Now, you may be thinking to yourself, I don't claim to know much about God. But surely God wouldn't mind healing on the Sabbath. And you're right. Of course he wouldn't. So, what's going on? What's some background here?

Well, we know in the Bible that God gave laws. And a great summary of those is the Ten Commandments. And one of those is that we are to keep the Sabbath holy.

And they're wonderful laws. They're good things. But over the years, there are all these man-made rules added. These kind of layers.

They're trying to sort of make practical what that meant to honor the Sabbath. But it all got a bit crazy. They went a bit crazy.

[6 : 04] For example, you couldn't carry something more than six feet in public. So, there's all these really little rules. All these convoluted lists of prohibitions.

Which including healing. You're not supposed to pray for healing on the Sabbath. According to the new man-made addendums. Okay, back to the story. Where are we?

Jesus is invited for dinner. Fancy restaurant. It's a trap. One of the Pharisees has just found some dude with this terrible disease. And arranged for him to make an appearance at the lunch.

And put him right in front of Jesus. And they're sort of going, what's he going to do? What's he going to do? What's he going to do? Will he break their rule about healing on the Sabbath? So, before we answer that question.

There's a few more questions. Why all these extra rules? Like, why would the Pharisees do this to themselves? Because they turn the Sabbath into this legalistic nightmare of, you know, policies and regulation.

[7 : 09] Like, why would you do that to yourself? Because in their minds, the more rules you keep, the more obviously devoted you are. So, let's keep adding rules. Let's keep okaying these rules.

We're awesome. We're killing it. Because we're not moving things six feet. We're not what you know. But obviously, at some point, when you keep adding all these rules, it stops becoming about honoring God.

And it becomes more about yourself. These rules, they love them because it fueled their pride. The Sabbath stopped becoming about rest.

And it was just this rigorous test of just how spiritual you could appear. By obeying all these layers and layers of religious policy.

And the stricter the rules were, the more brownie points you earned. That's how they kind of thought of it. Okay, so. There's one more thing I need to get to before we unpack the rest of it here.

[8 : 14] Before we get to how Jesus, sort of, what he did about this situation. I want you to notice in verse 2. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. So why throw in that detail?

Why not just throw in, there's this really sick guy. He's like super sick. Why tell us about the disease? Folks, this is not an irrelevant detail.

It's a disease which presents as bloating. So your body swells up because you're a retaining fluid.

And it was a disease that was cruel because one of the problems of dropsy was that whilst you're retaining water, you also had this insatiable thirst.

Behind it was this kind of organ failure, probably behind it all. So in summary, this man had too much water in his body. It's killing him. And all he wanted was more water.

[9 : 19] So why is this a relevant detail? Well, there's a great irony here, isn't there? The Pharisees had picked a man with a disease that had mirrored their own spiritual state.

Here's what I mean. Their sort of officious rule keeping was actually keeping them from God. It was ruining them spiritually.

They had this bloated sense of religious status. It was destroying them spiritually. And what did they want? All they wanted was more rules.

Back to the story. So the Pharisees let this man with dropsy pop by. He's just standing there.

They're all sitting around, big grins on their faces. What's Jesus going to do? And of course Jesus knows exactly what's going on.

But instead of healing him first, he throws a spanner into the works. He says in verse 3, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? Just throws it out there.

[10 : 18] Is this lawful? Verse 4, the Pharisees says, They remained silent. Because this is not quite how the trap was supposed to work.

Jesus just throws this thing out there. This really obvious question. Should this be illegal? Should this be illegal to heal on the Sabbath or not? And of course they're thinking. And they're silent because if they say, Yes, it should be okay to do this.

Well then they're softer on the law. You know, and they'll lose kind of, They'll lose face in front of their mates. But if they say, No, you shouldn't do it.

There's still this dude who's like dying there. And they're just going to look really cruel by saying, No, no, no, no, you shouldn't do that. What happens next? Verse 4, Jesus heals the man. It says he took him, he healed him, and he sent him away.

So he heals the man and sends him away. How do the Pharisees respond to that? They say nothing, nothing, nothing. There's no like, That's incredible.

[11 : 22] Wow. There's no repentance on their part. There's no praise God for this. They don't do anything. Jesus throws another question at them.

Again, this is not how things are supposed to go, right? Jesus says, Which of you, having a son or an ox, that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, would not immediately pull them out? Of course, it's a no-brainer. Of course, you're going to pull your son out of a well.

But the Pharisees, again, remain silent. They don't say, That's a great question. I need to think about this. Maybe we've got this all wrong. No, they don't do that. It's a great contrast, isn't it, between the two responses.

Jesus sees a man with dropsy. He loves him. He heals him. He rescues him. And it's this wonderful picture of what Jesus wants to do to all the other people in the room.

For the Pharisees, though, this guy, he's just like a prop, right? He's just a prop to discredit Jesus.

So how would you summarize all this? Jesus shows them, through a couple of great questions, that these man-made rules, these religious rules, have just stopped making sense.

[12 : 33] They like the rules. It's awful. They like the rules more than they wanted this man out of his pain. This framework of rules they had made made them feel so good.

They had built a door that only they could enter. It was a door of regulations, virtue signaling. So they're sticking with it.

We're going to finish with this. A few ideas here. The Pharisees, despite centuries of God's goodness, knew nothing about grace.

They would rather this man suffer than be healed. They knew nothing about grace. For them, this was just a self-salvation project, through the rules.

And the whole thing's crazy, because the rules they added were stricter than what God demanded of them. It was all just pride.

[13 : 40] You know, God calls us to reassess how we think, doesn't he? He calls us to have a posture before him of humility.

And pride, which is what these Pharisees had, pride is one of the most dangerous sins in the Bible. Pride person looks down on others, is okay using others, like the Pharisees did.

Pride is a killer, especially religious pride. And the Pharisees, because of their pride, were not prepared to give up on their imagined spiritual excellence.

Because these practices, and these regulations, and these rules, it fed their ego. And they were in real spiritual danger. They were on the wrong side of the door. Even after Jesus does this incredible, miraculous healing, they just refuse to budge.

Every now and then, it's good for us just to stop and bring our hearts to God and ask ourselves, is there Pharisee-like pride in our hearts?

[14 : 52] Am I trusting in a pattern of doing things that makes me feel good, that makes me feel like, yeah, God must like me because I'm kind of, I've got these practices, doing these things.

Or am I trusting in God's grace? What Jesus did for the man with dropsy, he wants to do for all of us. He wants to heal us from what is killing us spiritually.

Spiritual pride. So we can be free. So we can be free. So friends, do the hard work of examining your heart before the Lord. Is there pride? Root it out.

It's hard work, it's tricky, and you need the Holy Spirit to do it. Remember the Pharisees were extremely confident of their position. And yet so lost.

We must all of us continually ask the Holy Spirit to root out sources of pride and where there are self-salvation projects happening in our hearts.

[15 : 57] Amen.

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