

Luke 14:7-24 Early Morning

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[0 : 00] Let's pray while standing. O Father, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, our strength and our Redeemer.

Amen. Please have a seat. Amen. Fear of loss, hope of gain.

According to one view of human nature, these two motivations guide every decision. It's as if there's a constantly running inner calculator in each of us.

I'm afraid I will lose. I hope I will gain. Fear, hope, loss, gain. Our passage in Luke today shows this fear and loss playing out while Jesus is at a dinner party.

Now the main problem with the dinner host and the dinner guests is their fears and hopes. Too afraid of losing their positions. Too hopeful of what they stand to gain in this world.

[1 : 16] Too focused on establishing themselves in their own kingdoms now instead of the kingdom to come. But Jesus in our passage engages in another great reversal and displays the madness of God's grace.

To borrow a phrase David Short has been using in this series. So we're going to look at two reversals and then the madness of God's grace. So let's get into our text and look at our first two reversals.

Now first, this is the third time Luke tells us that Jesus has gone to dine at the house of a Pharisee. But this is not a friendly invitation on their part.

The previous six verses tell us it's a setup. It's the Sabbath and behold, there's a man with dropsy.

Now this is an image for someone whose desire and thirst is insatiable.

As if he's a walking example of the very problem the Pharisees themselves suffer from spiritually.

Now remember, Jesus has already healed twice on the Sabbath.

[2 : 28] Without hesitation, Jesus takes this man with dropsy, heals him, and releases him. And the Pharisees are doubly silent.

They cannot reply. But in their silence, Jesus speaks and tells them what he observes. We encounter our first two reversals in verses 7 to 14.

Now notice there's two audiences here. The invitees in verses 8 to 11 and the person who invited them in 12 to 14. Now first, Jesus notices that those invited are seeking places of honor.

And he notices that the host expects to be repaid. Now in their world, raising your social capital was the biggest hope of gain.

You did this by craftily inserting yourself higher up on the seat of honor scale. Or if you were the host, of expecting favors in kind from influential people.

[3 : 33] Jesus reverses their entire value system. Their fears of loss. Their hopes of gain. Now first, for the invitees, they hope too much in their own efforts to climb the social ladder.

They fear too much the opinion of others. Here's Jesus' reversal. The only one whose opinion matters is that of the host.

And the host desires humility. So what is humility in God's kingdom? First, it's an utter dependence on God's mercy.

Later in Luke 18, Jesus illustrates this with the tax collector pleading with God to be merciful to him. A sinner.

And in Luke 18, Jesus repeats this same phrase as our passage today. The one who humbles himself will be exalted. Humbled through utter dependence on God's mercy.

[4 : 40] Second, humility is a lack of concern for power, prestige, and position in this world.

And our story today illustrates this and how the invitees were jockeying for all three. Power closer to the host meant closer to power. Prestige closer to the host meant more visibility and position in this world.

Hopefully leaving that dinner with a higher estimation of themselves in front of their peers. Now the reversal for this next person is the one who is giving the dinner.

He might have hoped he would get off scot-free with observation. But Jesus too points out he is hoping to gain too much in this life by inviting the right kind of people to his dinner parties.

Now here's his reversal. Notice the change in perspective Jesus says here. He's to place his hope in the life to come by inviting those who have no ability to repay him.

[5 : 49] Because his repayment will be at the resurrection of the just. It's a total change in time period that he's to be concerned about.

So these are our two reversals. It calls for a total reset of their hopes and fears. It's as if Jesus is asking them and us, Whose opinion do you care most about?

Now scripture tells us, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I think a lot about this.

I think I'm always constantly trying to unpack. What does this mean? And how do I live in light of this? And I think it's pointing to the fact that if we only fear the Lord, The host of the great banquet, Who came to seek and save the lost, Who is merciful and kind, It places all our other hopes and fears in perspective.

And we might pray out of this. Jesus, make your great reversal true in our hearts. Set our hopes and fears aright.

[7 : 03] Give us the wisdom to only fear your opinion. So those are our two reversals. And now we encounter the madness of God's grace in our final verses.

This begins in verse 15 through 24. Now this is a beautiful picture of an abundant feast, And a generous host, With an urgent warning about excuses, And who will be left out.

So in verse 15 we learn that someone who is reclining at table with Jesus, Says to Jesus, Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. Now we don't quite know what motivates this comment to Jesus.

Perhaps this person expects to be among the resurrection of the just. As Jesus mentioned in the previous verse. Regardless, Jesus responds to the whole group.

With another lesson that displays the madness of God's grace, And the urgency of responding to the invitation now. Now notice in verses 16 and 17, Tells us that the banquet is great, And the invitations are many.

[8 : 14] The servant then goes to gather the invited, When all is prepared. This means that everyone who was invited knew about this in advance.

They had RSVP'd even. So what do we make of their excuses? And the host's anger. So first we see their excuses are rather ordinary, aren't they?

There's no emergency situation here. Nothing unexpected. In fact, what's interesting is that all of them would have required advanced planning.

You don't buy a field spur of the moment. You don't buy five oxen. Hopefully you don't choose to get married last minute. So all of these would have required some degree of forethought of planning. Quite strange. Secondly, their excuses are absurd. The first person bought a field and now needs to go and see it. Not before you buy it.

[9 : 16] The five oxen have to be inspected like right this moment. You didn't have a good look at the oxen before you put in an offer. And for the newlywed, Being just married in the scriptures does give you an excuse to avoid war, But not a banquet.

So these point to the true nature of their excuses. It's subtle. But these excuses are perfectly calculated to insult and shame the host.

These are not honest excuses. They're intended to bring humiliation to the person they invited. By showing that their priorities in this world are far more important.

It's as if they knew all along about the priority of the banquet. But went ahead and made other plans. So that they would be no-shows and humiliate their host. But we see here the heart of the host.

Twice, he tells his servant, Go out quickly. First to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. The very group he earlier said should be invited by the dinner host.

[10 : 27] And yet, the servant says, There is still room. Then he says, Go out with more intensity. Compel those in the highways and byways.

That his house may be filled. Now this is the madness of God's grace. It's a large banquet. Many are invited. He desires his house to be full.

He sends his servant out twice. To those who could do nothing to deserve an invitation. And could never repay this wanton generosity. And here's our urgent warning.

The time comes to respond. And the opportunity to taste it. Is once in a lifetime. That's the nature of a banquet, isn't it? The tables are set.

The food is ready. It's warm. But only for one moment in time. And never again. Now J.C. Ryle, an Anglican bishop from the 19th century.

[11 : 31] Reflected on this passage. He said, More grace is given than there are hearts to receive it. More grace is given than hearts to receive it.

Friends, there will be no excuse. Those who sought to humiliate the host are left out. And those who were left out are now in.

Jesus turns their world topsy-turvy. He reverses their values. Points out misplaced hopes and fears. And displays the madness of his grace.

In an abundant banquet. With this beautiful image of a great banquet. And a generous host. Let's close in prayer.

O Lord, Our generous host at the great banquet to come. Thank you for the madness of your grace.

[12 : 32] You so generously send invitations far and wide. Because you desire your house to be full. You even invited me.

Deserving not even the crumbs under your table. Let alone a spot. Feasting by your side. Increase our appetites for the feast to come.

May our hope be so firmly placed in the resurrection of the just. That we fear no loss of status now. Grant us a compelling imagination.

For the kingdom to come. So that it turns the tables here and now. To humbly seek the lowest seat. To generously invite those who cannot repay.

And to make no excuse when your banquet is ready. So that the goodness and generosity of your kingdom come. Will be glimpsed even now. And draw many into the far more abundant reality of your grace.

[13 : 34] We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.