



**Sunday School Lesson for August 28, 2005
Released on August 24, 2005**

"Bringing the Lost to Christ"

**Printed Text: Luke 14:7-11, 15-24
Devotional Reading: 1 Peter 5:3-10
Background Scripture: Luke 14:7-24**

Time: A.D. 30
Place: probably Persia

Luke 14:7-11, 15-24

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him;

9 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.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

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15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Today's Aim

Facts: to show through the illustration of a wedding feast that we must do all we can to bring people to Jesus.

Principle: to stress that as Christians we are obligated to bring others to Jesus.

Application: to urge students to do everything they can to bring others to Jesus.

Introduction

"I Must Be in the Front Row!"

You may remember the television commercial from the 1980s featuring sports celebrity Bob Uecker. He would enter a stadium and declare, "I must be in the front row!" Next, you saw him way up in the "cheap seats." In this spoof, Uecker thought

he was more of an honored celebrity than he actually was. He felt in his pretended arrogance that he deserved the place of honor.

Today's text will illustrate the importance of humility in a way that modern celebrities rarely do. Make no mistake: we, too, can be guilty of assuming that we are more important than others and deserve great recognition. Yet Jesus taught that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. As we learn humility, we may also learn discipleship.

Lesson Background

The events recorded in Luke 14 took place at a banquet on the Sabbath Day in the home of one of the chief Pharisees (vs. 1). Among those gathered was a man with dropsy. Jesus looked around at the lawyers and Pharisees and asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" (vs. 3).

Jesus' question put them on the spot, because it was allowable according to rabbinical interpretation to give medical treatment on a Sabbath if a life was endangered. Everyone kept silent. The man's life did not seem to be at stake, but the religious leaders did not want to appear indifferent to the man's suffering by insisting that he could not be healed on the Sabbath. In the face of their silence, Jesus healed the man and sent him away.

Jesus asked, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" (vs. 5). It was natural to rescue an animal that had fallen into a pit no matter what day it was. Certainly they should not object to His helping a suffering human being.

Attitudes (Luke 14:7-11)

1. What had Jesus observed as He watched the people coming in? (v. 7)

In today's text Jesus is in the house of one of the chief Pharisees at a banquet on the sabbath day. The people are selecting their seats for the banquet. What is going through the mind of Jesus as He observes them? The people are scrambling for the places of honor at the host's dinner table. In this culture the seats closest to the host were considered to be the most honorable. Those who were closest to the host were considered of the highest honor.

2. How did Jesus say they should act when attending such an event? (v. 8)

Jesus tells his audience that just being invited to the banquet was a sign of great honor. There were other individuals who never received such an invitation. Jesus tells them to sit at the lower seats. Humility is the key to this parable. This goes against fleshly nature, which desires to have honor at all times. The guest should be excited to attend the banquet; that indicated that the host held the guest in high regard.

The guest is not to believe that he or she is the most important or honored person in any situation. If a more honored guest shows up unexpectedly, then there would be great embarrassment for the haughty guest.

3. What principle did Jesus enumerate regarding being exalted? (v. 11)

This verse is one of the most quoted scriptures in the Bible. Jesus warns about self-exaltation. People who exalt themselves over others believe that they are more important and superior to others. They fail to see the fact that there are others who are more important than he or she. When that happens, the prideful person is setting himself or herself for humiliation.

In the parable Jesus tells of a more honorable person showing up at the feast. The less honorable guest is ordered to move from his seat, and move down to a lower seat (if one was available). It is important to remember that people were watching, and the less honorable guest would suffer tremendous embarrassment as he or she walked down into the lower rooms. That guest would feel very shameful.

4. What lesson about self-exaltation can we learn from this?

No matter who we are, and no matter what our credentials we hold, only God can exalt us. As Christians, God controls our destiny, and He decides if and when we are exalted. We must never get too focused on ourselves that we forget that God is in charge. If we get too high, God will bring us down, and we will suffer humiliation and look foolish. It is always better to serve the Lord as a humble person without seeking public acclaim.

Opportunities (Luke 14:15-20)

5. What was the understanding of one of the guests concerning the kingdom of heaven? (v. 15)

Jesus followed His teaching on humility with another teaching directed to those who host dinners (vss. 12-14). He told them that they should not limit their invitations to those who have the ability to reciprocate but should include those who are financially unable to do so. For this they would be blessed and rewarded by God Himself at the resurrection. It was upon hearing this instruction that someone present spoke up with a pronouncement of blessing of his own.

This guest did not understand how to get into the kingdom of heaven. He made pious statements to impress Jesus. This guest focused on the honor and blessing of the kingdom. There is a hint in his statement that all good Jews would be in the kingdom. He was focused on the Messiah's earthly kingdom, where there would be peace and prosperity without warfare. He believed that all Israelites would enjoy this kingdom.

Many people feel that they are owed salvation based on their skills and merit. Isaiah reminds us that our righteous acts are nothing more than filthy rags to God (64:6). It is a privilege to have the opportunity to receive salvation from the Lord because none of us deserves it. It is by God's grace that we receive salvation. It is a huge honor and blessing to be able to just escape the flames of an everlasting hell.

6. How did Jesus portray salvation in His parable in response to the guest's statement? (v. 16)

Jesus told another parable involving a feast. In this parable, the host is preparing a feast for many to enjoy. He sent invitations to those he wanted at the feast. This was a feast of great magnitude, which would be very expensive and time consuming. It would typically take about a year to prepare. The invitations were sent out well in advance so that the guest could make proper arrangements to attend the feast.

Jesus portrays salvation as an invitation to many people. Keep in mind that salvation was first offered to the Jews and later to the Gentiles during this parable. Some people will accept His invitation, while others will reject it.

7. Why did some people make excuses as to why they could not attend the banquet? (vss. 18-20)

It was a great honor to receive an invitation to a banquet in those days. It was considered socially unacceptable to fail to show up after receiving an invitation. One said that he had to check out the land that he just purchased. Another wanted to examine his oxen to make sure that they were good. The last one just got married and wanted to spend time with his wife. They seem like they have more important things to do at that time.

Remember, that these people received the invitation about a year ago, so they had plenty of time to take care of their personal business. That is assuming that all the excuses were valid. However, there are problems with their excuses. No one would buy land without checking it out first. A person who just got married has the rest of his life to spend with his wife; surely this person could spend a little time at the banquet. Also, people do not buy oxen without checking them out in the first place. Therefore, their excuses were invalid. They just didn't want to go to the banquet. Their priorities were out of order.

How often do we put things before God? What are some of the things that we "can't give up"? Have you noticed that we will make time for things that are important to us? For example, if the boss at a job requires a person to report earlier or stay later, the employee somehow finds a way to fit that extra work into his or her schedule. Yet, many people can't find a way to "fit church" into their weekly schedule. We must remember that everything in this world is temporary. Only God is worthy of first place in our lives. We should examine our priorities and fix them if necessary.

Decisions (Luke 14:21-24)

8. What steps did the master take to fill his banquet with people, and who responded? (vss. 21-23)

The master became angry after learning about the excuses from those he invited. This left lots of empty space at the dinner room. He then instructs the servant to go throughout the city and bring in the poor, maimed, halt, and blind people. The scrumptious meal was ready to be eaten. The master decided to extend the

invitation to those individuals because of the excuses of the original invitees. The servant had to go everywhere until the room was full.

Likewise, the Lord wants everyone to receive salvation. However, some will foolishly reject this great invitation. In fact more people are on their way to hell than to heaven (cf. Mat. 7:13). This should not discourage us to keep reaching out to the lost souls; in fact it should create a sense of urgency to get those souls into the kingdom. Remember, every time a lost soul is saved, there is rejoicing in Heaven.

9. What caused Israel to reject Jesus, and what causes people today to do the same?

Many religious leaders in Israel rejected Jesus and eventually saw to his death. They had an opportunity to receive Him, but they refused. Jesus therefore turned to the common people with His invitation. Jesus went directly to the people with His teaching. The Gospels indicate that this is where He received his greatest response?

Today, people who do not accept Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior have rejected him. There is no room for middle ground. It is important for Christians to act as Christ's representatives. We should not do anything that would bring shame to Jesus. We must live the teachings of Jesus. If we fail to do so, then we are nothing but hypocrites, and people will reject our message of Jesus Christ, which will cause them to reject Christ's message.

10. Could the invitees who initially refused reconsider? What about those who reject Christ? (v. 24)

The master makes it clear that the invitees would never taste of his supper. They would not enjoy his meal or his company. They had their opportunity to attend the banquet, and they refused. Those invitees knew it was socially unacceptable to decline an invitation. The invitees only have themselves to blame for this.

We should never take for granted that a lost soul will live to see the next day. Sometimes, you may only have one chance to tell the person about Jesus Christ. If you pass up that opportunity, then you may not get another chance to talk to that person, and that person may not get another chance to hear the gospel. It is true that Jesus will accept all sinners who confess Him as Lord and Savior, even if they rejected him previously. But the sinners must make that profession while they are still alive. People die everyday, and unfortunately, a lot of people are going to hell everyday because they did not accept Jesus during their lifetime. We do not know when death will close a sinner's eyes, but when it happens, the gates of salvation will close with it. Let's rush to get them into that gate. Once the gate closes, it's closed for good.

Conclusion

Humility and Sacrifice

The answer to the songwriter's question, "Must Jesus bear the cross alone, And all the world go free?" is this: "No; there's a cross for ev'ryone, And there's a cross for me" (Thomas Shepherd, 1665-1739).

Those who are self-important and believe they deserve the very best have not made God their priority. Many reject the Lord's invitation to His kingdom because other things are more important. Humility and sacrifice are what the Lord seeks.

Prayer

Father, show us our crosses this week. Give us strength to carry them. In Jesus' name, amen.

Anticipating Next Week's Lesson

Our next lesson takes us to the book of Acts to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's church.

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