

11. Taking the Lowest Place (Lk 14:7-11) and the Great Banquet (Lk 14:15-24)

These two parables—*Taking the Lowest Place* and *The Great Banquet*—occur when Jesus went to the house of a prominent Pharisee to eat. Jesus had tested them twice: once regarding the healing of a man with dropsy on the Sabbath and the other regarding the pulling of one's ox out of the ditch on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees had no answer either time. Jesus tells the first parable, beginning in Luke 14:7.

Taking the Lowest Place

Luke 14:7-11: *7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8 "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Jesus noticed how the guests picked places of honor at the table. One would think that this is the natural thing to do. Jesus seized upon the event to tell the first parable. The parable tells how it is better to take the lowest place, thus avoiding the humiliation of the host asking you to move in order to make way for a more important guest. Of course, if the host asks you to move up, you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. The first lesson of this parable is "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus taught this same lesson in principle in Luke 9:46-48:

46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all — he is the greatest."

Luke 14:12-15: *Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

15 *When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."*

Jesus concluded the parable with a teaching directed to the host, and by inference, directed to all of us. We get nothing from inviting those with whom we associate or are related. They will pay us back with an invitation of their own. Rather, we should invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. You will be repaid, not by these guests, but by our Father in heaven at the resurrection of the righteous.

This principle is often reiterated. In Matt 5:46-48, Jesus taught, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." James repeated the Lord's teaching, relating it to the assembly of the church in James 2:1-7:

2:1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

The reward for our behavior toward the least comes with the resurrection of the righteous. Jesus said in Rev 22:12-13, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

The Great Banquet

Luke 14:16-24: 16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

22 "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

At the dinner, Jesus told another parable using the analogy of a dinner to make his point. In this parable, the man sent for guests, and they each had an excuse why they could not come. In the kingdom of heaven we are invited to feast in the kingdom. Our excuses are the same; worldly affairs are more important than feasting with the Lord. Our Lord will find others to eat at his banquet, and not one of those who gave excuse will get a taste. Everyone should think about this parable when they allow earthly affairs to interfere with our service in the kingdom.

Conclusion

The lessons in these parables are simple and straight forward.

- Do not seek the high place.
- To not relegate the poor, lame, and blind to the low places.
- Do not turn down the Lord's invitation.

Study Questions

1. Who will be exalted in the kingdom of heaven?
2. How does one get exalted?
3. When will our reward be?
4. Why should we not turn down the Lord's invitation?
5. How should we treat poor people who come into the assembly?
6. When will we eat at the Lord's table?
7. What are some of the excuses we use to stay away from the Lord's banquet?