

# Upside-Down Kingdom (6)- Feast in the Kingdom of God

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(Luke 14:15-24)

## I. Introduction

- A. We have several variations of programs to encourage more table fellowship
  - 1. “*Supper Club*” and “*Fellowship Mates*” were teams who hosted meals
    - a. Each month, they’d invite several guests or people they didn’t know
    - b. These were was to encourage us to fellowship and show hospitality
  - 2. They failed in time due to same problem—guests wouldn’t come eat!
    - a. Meals would be cooked and guests would cancel (*we were fill-ins*)
      - 1) One couple followed my parents home (*again, we were fill-ins*)
      - 2) We were behind when they turned the other way (*no explanation*)
    - b. It is probably true that we don’t invite others for meals as in past
    - c. But it’s also true people don’t accept invitations (*I’m always available*)
  - 3. Failure to accept hospitality is basis of parable of great banquet (**Lk 14**)
- B. **Luke 15** begins with Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners (**15:1-2**)
  - 1. **Luke 14** begins with Jesus eating at the house of a prominent Pharisee
    - a. Also present is a man with dropsy (*edema, swelling of joints or tissue*)
    - b. Luke says that the people present were watching him closely
      - 1) One has to wonder if this man was there as a plant to trap Jesus
      - 2) That is likely why Jesus asks if it was lawful to heal him (**14:3**)
    - c. No one says a word, either before the healing or after Jesus’ question
  - 2. Jesus uses banquet speak against **self-importance** and **pride** (**7:7-14**)
    - a. Small group study will focus on these two teachings—
      - 1) Jesus warns guests whose pride leads them to choose **best seats**
      - 2) He also warns host whose pride leads him to invite **best people**
    - b. Luke calls it “*parable*” (**v7**). It’s not about banquet etiquette but **pride**
  - 3. Jesus is in effect criticizing both **guests and host**—*rather awkward*
    - a. Someone breaks the awkward silence with a pious platitude (**14:15**)
      - 1) Sometimes my family would get into heated discussions at table
      - 2) Grandmother would break in with, “*Lovely weather we’re having*”
    - b. This statement broken the tension and brought up the kingdom of God
  - 4. Jesus tells them a parable is about the upside-down kingdom of God

## II. The Great Banquet: The Parable (Reading- [Luke 14:16-24](#))

- A. Jewish banquets were announced with two different formal invitations
  - 1. **First**, there was an **initial invitation** that went out to all the invites
    - a. If there was a special guest to be honored, this was announced
    - b. Guests would then RSVP, which was a commitment they would come
  - 2. **Second**, there was an **announcement** once everything was ready
    - a. Banquets were complicated events to plan, and timing was imprecise
    - b. So there was a second invitation, “*All things are ready come to feast*”
    - c. **Example:** We see this double invitation in the story of Esther
      - 1) Queen Esther gives the initial invitation to King Xerxes ([5:8](#))
      - 2) A 2<sup>nd</sup> invite comes later while Haman is talking to his wife ([6:14](#))
- B. Jesus’ parable revolves around 2<sup>nd</sup> invitation, “*Everything is now ready*” ([17](#))
  - 1. These guests had already sent their RSVP; they had committed to come
    - a. But they “*all alike*” or “*all at once*” made excuses for not coming
    - b. All of these excuses were just that—excuses and transparently false
      - 1) “*I just bought a field and must go see it*” (no one would do that)
      - 2) “*I just bought some oxen and must try them out*” (same thing”
      - 3) “*I just got married*” (and new wife wouldn’t want to eat out?)
    - c. Someone has said that an excuse is a lie dressed up in its Sunday best
  - 2. Host is same position we were in our *Supper Club* or *Fellowship Mates*
    - a. The food was ready but no guest were coming— *he needs substitutes*
    - b. He sends slaves into city streets and alleys (lit- *wide & narrow street*)
      - 1) They are to invite “*the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame*”
      - 2) This is exactly who Jesus tells them to invite back in [verse 13](#).
    - c. He then sends invitations into the country (“*roads and country lanes*”)
  - 3. This was a favorite preaching text back at height of bus ministry
    - a. We are to go into the “*streets and lanes*” and compel them to come
    - b. So you need a joy bus! (*Maybe that interpretation is a bit creative*)
  - 4. **Point:** The ones initially invited to banquet will not be at the banquet
    - a. The very one that you wouldn’t expect to be there—they will be there
    - b. The proud and respectable would not feast in upside-down kingdom
    - c. God was calling the outcast— *the poor, crippled, blind and lame*

### III. The Great Banquet: The Application

- A. Go back to the circumstance that prompted Jesus to tell the parable—
1. Jesus had just criticized the guests for their pride in grabbing best seats
    - a. He had also in effect criticized his Pharisee host for who he inviting
    - b. Guest fills silence, “*It’ll be great to feast in kingdom of God*” (**v. 15**)
  2. But that **assumes** that those present will all be at that feast as well!
    - a. Jesus won’t concede that; God’s kingdom is upside down kingdom
    - b. Jesus just said, “*The one who exalts himself will be humbled*” (**14:11**)
  3. The guest list of God’s banquet was different that Pharisees imagined
- B. **Quirk:** Those see themselves as holy tend to look down on others as not
1. The Pharisee of **Luke 18** believed he was “*not like other men*” (**18:11**)
    - a. He fasted & gave (*thou shalt*) and wasn’t thief or adultery (*thou shalt not*)
    - b. So that made him better than the tax collector, right? Jesus, “*Wrong*”
  2. Paul points to tendency to compare ourselves with selves (**2 Cor 10:12**)
    - a. It’s easy to see myself as holy because I am so much holier than thou!
    - b. It’s like 2 guys being chased by a bear... “*I just have to outrun you!*”
  3. Jesus condemns this holier-than-thou self-righteousness (**Luke 16:15**)
    - a. To justify ourselves in the eyes of others, we must stress externals
      - 1) Why did they stress “acts of righteousness” (praying-almes-fasting)
      - 2) Because those are what people saw; those could be quantified
    - b. If we are deciding who is in and out, those are the things we see
- C. But this parable reminds us we don’t make up guest list of God’s banquet!
1. The ones we think may be first in line might not get invited
  2. Someone has suggested that 3 things will surprise us in heaven—
    - a. **First**, we’ll be surprised by folks who ARE there we thought wouldn’t
    - b. **Second**, by those folks who ARE NOT there that we thought would be
    - c. **Third**, and most of all, we will be surprised that WE are there!
  3. That’s the point Jesus is making in the parable—who is at the banquet?
    - a. Those from “*highways and byways*” represent those on the outside
    - b. They are the last people the Pharisees would invite—poor, lame, blind
  4. The very ones prideful of their place/status will be left on the outside.

## IV. Conclusion

- A. I have to think that this message should be more disturbing to us than it is
  - 1. We see Pharisees as wild-eyed, sanctimonious, judgmental hypocrites
    - a. In reality, they looked a lot more like good church folks... like us?
    - b. They were conservative, Bible-believing, sincere, moral people
    - c. They loved the truth; they just thought they'd cornered the market
  - 2. They were respectable people with good reputation—part of the problem
    - a. They were so focused on their reputation, that became the focus
      - 1) Billy Crystal— *“It’s more important to look good than to be good”*
      - 2) Pharisees looked down their noses at those who didn’t look good
    - b. Jesus looks over the respectability of banquet and turns it upside down
  - 3. He says that those who feast at God’s table wouldn’t be so respectable
- B. But the warnings to the Pharisees aren’t just warning THEM—warning US!
  - 1. We are the Bible-believing, sincere, moral people... and that’s good!
    - a. What is not good is if we believe if we therefore deserve God’s favor
    - b. What’s not good seeing ourselves as somehow better than others
    - c. Has the church gotten so respectable we forget who God invites?
  - 2. We need to hear Paul’s warning to a respectable church ([1 Cor 1:26-31](#))
    - a. We weren’t very respectable when God called us—mutts-n-mongrels
      - 1) Parable says God calls the poor, crippled, blind and lame, right?
      - 2) Well, he called you and me, right? So what does that say about us
    - b. In the past, some denominations voted on accepting new members
      - 1) Well, we don’t vote, but God does! (It’s called *“divine election”*)
      - 2) He says, *“Congratulations, you’re messed up enough to meet standards”*
    - c. So all the boasting is in God; the only respectability is what He gives
- C. What is the point we should take away from the Parable of Great Banquet?
  - 1. There are no proud, respectable people in **upside-down kingdom** of God
    - a. We’re invited to his table because we’re poor, crippled, blind, lame
    - b. We must not judge or look down on anyone else called to the table
  - 2. We must not take pride in our respectability—doctrine, obedience, works
    - a. God has called us to His table, along with all others who will come
    - b. Jesus invites us today— *“All things are ready, come to the feast!”*