

Luke 14

John Karmelich

Title: Wrap a meal around it!

Something I learned in church life is the expression: If you want people to show up to your event, wrap a meal around it! The stories in Chapter 14 take place around or near meals. Jesus used these occasions to give a series of parables on salvation and for us to grasp what He desires of Christians. He gives us a series of lectures about what's desired for people to be saved and to be used for His glory. Hopefully, it gives us reminders of what Jesus expects us as His followers.

The first involved healing of a man on the Sabbath. What's obvious is Jesus was setup, with the hurting man being used as a prop! There is nothing in the Old Testament against doing good things on "church day". The religious leaders were so offended by Jesus' teaching of faith alone it led them to do this "set up" at a meal. Jesus did cure the man who didn't even ask for help, then lectured those with Him about doing good no matter the time or place!

Jesus then discusses an event most bible students know, there will be a big banquet in heaven for those who are saved. As many of you know I ponder questions like how do we all sit close to Jesus and how do we digest food? Jesus ignores those types of issues to focus on "seating". In essence he states if we are invited to an event and there's no names next to plates, we are to pick the very back and if He wants us to sit closer, He will invite us closer. The underlying issue is about humility: Jesus desires our lives be used to glorify Him and illustrates that by saying at events pick a lowly place in society. God knows all things, so tooting our horns solves nothing! Jesus then discusses those who make excuses other than living as He desires. Jesus implies who won't be invited in the first place because many people refuse to come to God by faith alone.

The final section doesn't involve a meal, and most likely took place right after the meal with the Jewish religious hosts. It's tough section, but in essence Jesus says unless we are willing to forsake everything including our own families and lives, we're not good enough to be saved. Obviously, Jesus isn't telling us to forsake our loved ones. I realize no one is perfect! As I was taught many years ago, "Jesus wants to be #1 on a list of 1, not a list of 100!" Think of this as if a moment comes if we are asked to stand up for Jesus or turn from Him, when the pressure is on, the Christians will stand for Him no matter what'll how long we get to live! I've met adults who had to forsake their family to commit to Jesus!

OK there's a chapter summary in a few paragraphs! What next? Think about being invited to a meal if you don't know anyone there. Are you going to raise a fuss to be the center of attention for free food? I am reminded of the saying when you've been invited you are either the honored guest, an extra guest or you're the main course! It is like the old saying about being invited to a poker game: If you don't know who's the "patsy", you're it! At this meal a man was there who obviously wasn't well. The disease that he had caused excess fluids to form in the body. This guy never asked Jesus to heal him, and Jesus did not ask him if he wanted to be healed. The religious leaders hosting the meal wanted Jesus to perform a miracle so they could accuse Him of violating the Sabbath. God forbade work on the Sabbath and to do a good deed on that day was not forbidden. The religious leaders were looking for an excuse to accuse Jesus of not keeping the Sabbath. It's almost as if Jesus is saying, "Let Me tell you who decides what is a violation of the Sabbath." Jesus somehow instantly cures the man. I get the impression the healed guy didn't want to be part of the debate and Jesus excused him there on the spot. That's when Jesus went off

on doing good on the Sabbath! Since Jesus was there to be the "main course" he went off on those who were there to insult him for doing good on the Sabbath.

Speaking of how to behave at a dinner function: Someone says one of those things "one says when one doesn't know what to say". The idea of a big banquet in heaven for those who are saved. Putting aside my usual questions of the practicality of such an event, Jesus states something that frankly I would not think twice about. I'd be so shocked I made it into heaven, my first thought would be to sit in a corner. I would just want to watch and see what happens. Unfortunately, lots of people think because they are something special in this life, they deserve top honors in the next one! Personally, if Jesus was looking at me and say move up, my first thought would be to look behind me and ask are you talking to me?

There are two key points Jesus is making about the fact there will be a great banquet in heaven. First is the key fact we must come there humbly. The correct answer if asked why we deserve to be here is the words, "only by Your grace" as opposed to some great deed(s) we have done. The second great thing's the fact that it's not just a Jewish thing! God said His house will be a place of prayer for all nations. (It is from Isaiah 56:7). It was wrongly thought by many Jewish scholars then, that heaven was strictly for Jewish people. Jesus makes it clear that people from all over the world will be part of that banquet!

Then Jesus probably still at the meal discussed excuses why people wouldn't want to be at that banquet that God gives. Obviously if people said they want to be saved for eternity, they'd say "name the place and time and I'll be there!" So, what's the deal with excuses with examples listed in Verses 18-20? The point Jesus is making is lots of people refuse to come to Jesus on His terms!

The final section can be hard to interpret. Jesus makes the claim that unless you forsake your family or your life, you are not one of His disciples. Let me state there's a difference between being a disciple as opposed to being saved. Salvation is admitting that Jesus is God and Lord of your life. A disciple is to describe any person willing to forsake his or her own life to follow Jesus and live accordingly. It could be a short or long life. Christian martyrs fall under this category. The issue is NOT being perfect. It is a willingness to put Jesus before everyone and everything.

Let me give an illustration about putting Jesus above one's parents. One of the 10 Commandments is to honor one's father and mother. Jesus is not saying to avoid them! If you're a grown adult and desire to be a Christian but your parents forbid it, that's an example of choosing Jesus over one's parents. I have watched most reasonable parents eventually accept our choice especially if they watch you live the rest of your life as a good person. I felt a little of that as my family was Roman Catholic. Over time, what I chose became accepted by my parents! I realize that it's harder for some from a different religion when a conversion takes place. Sometimes one must be quiet to family or face death! That's an example of a rejection of one's parents (but not hating them) as a price to be a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus announced to be a follower of Him we must take up our cross and follow Him! He's not literal in the sense of getting some lumber and walking around with it all day. The idea is a willingness to let go of how we live before we gave our lives to Jesus and be a witness for Him, no matter the situation. I'm not saying we must pass out Jesus tracks wherever we go! I'm saying we're always "on the clock" to be a witness for Him. That's what I meant when I said Jesus wants to be #1 on a list of 1, not a list of 100!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on the link for the detailed study. It's still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for everyone who reads this.