

Parable #26 — Luke 14:7-14 — Lowest Seat at a Feast

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.”

¹² 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.”

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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.”

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.’ ”

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1. Before we start, consider: Are you eager to raise your social status? To be with the “right” people? To drive a cool car? Who do you try to impress?
2. In contrast to most other parables, this is a wisdom saying rather than an analogy, allegory, or fable. What’s the difference? Why should we care?
3. Why is humility so important to a Christian? The Bible has 106 stories emphasizing *humility*. *Faith* is featured in 104 stories, and *love* is featured only 47 times. Does this tell you something?
4. Consider these spiritual gifts: teaching, administration, healing, prophecy, knowledge, charity, humility. What makes humility different?
5. How can we humble ourselves? (14:11) Does humility mean putting yourself down? Is humility the same as self-degradation? What is real humility?
6. In Verses 12-14, Jesus advises his host to invite people who cannot repay him back. What do you think of this advice? Does this include people who are poor because they are lazy or poor by choice? Does this exclude family and friends?
7. There is another important point in the parable (14:14b). What is it?

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1. How do you feel when you plan a big event and it is poorly attended? What kind of excuses do you most resent others using?
2. In Jesus’ days, it was customary to send two invitations to a party—the first to announce it and the second to tell the guests that everything was ready. How does the parable of this party (banquet) fit into Israel’s history? How did the character of the banquet change given the new guest list?
3. There are many people in this parable: the master, his servant, those invited the first time, the crippled and blind, others on country roads. Who do you identify with and why?
4. What does this parable tell us is the main thing we should fear with respect to attending the banquet, i.e., entering heaven?

2. In most of Jesus' parables, he puts the burden on the listener to interpret it and figure out what it means in his life. However, in this parable, Jesus tells the listener how to behave. For Jesus to speak so plainly means he did not want anyone to miss the meaning, i.e., that humility really matters. Note though, that he presented his message in a very tactful way to his Pharisee listeners.

3. Humility may well be called the queen of the Christian graces. To know our own sinfulness and weakness, and to feel our need of Christ, is the very beginning of saving religion.

4. Humility is a grace within the reach of every true Christian. Not everyone has money to give away. Not everyone has time and opportunities for working directly for Christ. We don't all have gifts of speech and knowledge for preaching and teaching. We're not all good managers or administrators. We can't all heal. But everyone can demonstrate his commitment to Christ by his humility. If you can do nothing else, you can strive to be humble.

6. It is certain that Jesus did not intend to forbid men showing any hospitality to their relatives and friends. It is also certain that He did not mean to encourage a useless and profuse expenditure of money in giving to the poor.

However, we must not forget that the passage contains a deep and important lesson, namely that Jesus would have us care for our poorer brethren, and help them according to our power. He would have us know that it is a solemn duty never to neglect the poor, but to aid them in their time of need.

7. The second point in this parable is the great importance of looking forward to the resurrection of the dead. Jesus says to the Pharisee who entertained Him, "The poor cannot repay you—you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Do we have to fear death like the Pharisee? No. Believing in Christ, we have nothing to fear. Our sins will not appear against us. The demands of God's law were completely satisfied by his death on the cross.

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2. Effectively, the Jews were invited by Moses and the prophets to the banquet. Then, the second invitation came from Jesus. It was this second invitation that they rejected. Thus, gentiles (and the whole world) will be invited instead.

4. It is not sin or rejection of the Gospel which is so much to be feared. It is that procrastinating, excuse-making spirit, which is always ready with a reason why Christ cannot be served today. Let the words of Jesus on this subject sink down into our hearts. Theft, infidelity and immorality, no doubt, slay their thousands. But decent, plausible, smooth-spoken excuses slay tens of thousands. No excuse can justify a man in refusing God's invitation, and not coming to Christ. Moreover, this parable tells us that the time will come when God will withdraw his invitation and offer it to others—then it will be too late to get into the banquet.

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