

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 14- Luke 14:12-14**

258- Inviting Those Who Cannot Repay Us to Our Table

October 05, 2014

Luke 14:12-14

12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "**When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment.**

13 "**But when you give a reception, invite *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,***

14 **and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."**

Now this sermon is about Humility and about our journey towards being a humble people. It is about where your Treasure is, and being a people who live in such a way that proves that our Treasure is in Heaven and not on this earth. It is about your dining room table and who you invite to eat with you, and how that is connected to both humility and treasure

Now we have gone over the concept of Humility in great detail over the last several weeks, and today I want to discuss something very sinful and very wicked called "The Law of Reciprocity".

Now the word "table" is found in the Bible 93 times from cover to cover. And the concept of having a table and of using the table to feed our families and entertain our friends is a common theme throughout Scripture. Just in the last two Chapters of Dr. Luke's Gospel Record- we have seen Jesus invited to a dinner, and we see Him reclining at the table to both eat and to teach.

Now in our modern age of smart phones and wireless Internet- one of the casualties has been the family dinner at the table. It is hard

today to put the machines and the devices aside to sit down and eat together as a family and discuss the important events of the day. Over two centuries ago- George Washington noted that,

“Democracy was born at the dinner table”

... and for well over 200 years- America has had a fondness for family dinners where friends and even strangers were invited to sit down with the family to eat and talk. Almost all young men who hoped to wed the daughter of another family made it a point to join the young lady's family for dinner to formally meet the family and to answer questions about himself, and for the father to determine if the young man was suitable for his daughter or not. Recently several major restaurant chains instituted a policy where they disallow phone use or texting during the lunch hour as a means of encouraging people to once again get to know one another and to communicate together while they eat.

It is very sad to watch people- who have ridden together to the restaurant in complete silence in the car while texting with other people- and then get out of the car and are barely able to walk across the parking lot without getting run over because they are paying such close attention to whoever they are communicating with on their phone- and then see them sit down at the table and continue to rudely ignore the folks sitting right next to them as they continue to text to other people who aren't even there.

One girl asked her friend who was sitting right next to her to text her a phone number so she could make a phone call to somebody else- all while ignoring everybody at the table.

26% of all automobile wrecks today are caused by the driver paying more attention to whoever they are communicating to on their phone than they are to the oncoming car or the bridge or a tree- but back to the table.

We remember the Norman Rockwell paintings of Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners, and even today- dinners at the table are used to celebrate weddings and graduations and other important events.

Now, what is not readily known today is that the concept of having formal dinners at the family dining room table- where all the guests would arrive at a scheduled time and sit in their Sunday best and behave in very rigid and strict manners- was very common in the

United States until just after WW II and that more colleges actually taught what they called polite and proper “dining etiquette” to the students than did not.

And this use of the table is also common with the people of God. For example- those who partake of the Communion Service or the Lord’s Supper are said to be invited to:

“The Lord’s Table” or “The Table of the Lord”

.. and so a proper respect and humility toward God is expected from all the wicked sinners who are so invited- so that we may:

1Corinthians 11:28b

... examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

In the previous Chapter- the Apostle Paul wrote this:

1Corinthians 10:16-22

16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

18 Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?

19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

So whereas I rejoice that one of the things that has been brought forth from the Protestant Reformation is the deliverance from the wicked and idolatrous teaching of “Transubstantiation” where Rome teaches that after the Bread and the Cup has been blessed that it

literally becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and thus has the Power to actually forgive sin and add to the salvation of the one who partakes of it- I weep that so many today- who say they are saved- abuse this gracious and glorious Ordinance and sit proudly at the Table of the Lord- eating and drinking- with little or no remorse, and with little or no conviction that just a few hours ago- they were sitting at the table of demons and drinking heartedly from the cup of demons, and plan to do so again.

Now **Matthew 28:18-20** is correctly called "The Great Commission", or as Dr. Krabbendom called it, "The Grand Command". And it is called this- not because it is better than all the other Commissions or Commands in the Bible- but because this one *includes* all the other ones. Here Jesus said,

Matthew 28:18-20

18 ... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

And back in the early 1970's The Campus Crusade for Christ boiled these glorious words down to be simply:

"Go and Tell"

... which actually became the mantra for the Southern Baptist Convention for a while.

And while it is certainly good and correct to "go and tell"- upon close examination- we can see that The Great Commission involves more than that. Here Jesus tells us to:

1. Go into all the earth
2. Make Disciples of all nations
3. Baptize them
4. Teach them to observe all that Jesus Commanded the Apostles

... and we are to do all four of those things in full faith and confidence because of the two facts that Jesus said, which act as bookends to this Grand Command:

A. All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18b)

B. lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20b)

So if we just go and tell, and yet we neglect to baptize and teach- then we have failed in what Jesus told us to do.

So “going and making disciples” of all nations includes the whole of our duty once we understand what “making a disciple” means. Making disciples meant three things to Jesus. It meant:

1. Bringing people to Christ through the faithful and ongoing preaching and teaching of the Gospel to them- which God uses to produce saving faith in the unsaved elect
2. Baptizing them as the public profession of having already trusted in Jesus Christ for Salvation
3. Teaching them and shepherding them to understand and then struggle to obey all that Jesus commanded the Apostles.

So the Great Commission is all-inclusive because it demands that we do all that Jesus commanded. Therefore, we are engaged in fulfilling the Great Commission- not only in sowing the seeds of the Gospel to the lost- but also whenever we help others who are already saved to obey Jesus Christ.

And so in that sense- we will never be finished with the Great Commission until we do everything Christ has told us to do- which is the same thing as saying until Jesus comes back to this earth in great Power and Glory.

So it is obvious to me that, as a Pastor, my agenda is set for me already for the rest of my life. My sole task and solemn duty before God is to faithfully and energetically call people to Salvation in Jesus Christ by preaching and teaching the Gospel as often as I can to as many people as I can using any means at my disposal.

And then my further duty is to engage with all passion and perseverance to reprove, rebuke, encourage exhort and help these

already saved people to struggle to keep all of Jesus' Commandments- including being baptized and following Jesus into an obedient and submitted life- until death takes them home or until Jesus comes back.

Okay, that is all great, Brother Blair- but what does eating at our dining room table and The Great Commission have to do with each other? We, I'm so glad you asked. Jesus says here in **Luke 14** to pay attention to who we invite to eat with us at our table and that doing this- proves where our Treasure is.

Now we just turned a corner this week in the year of our Lord AD 2014 or about 2,014 years since The Resurrection. Another way of looking at this is that we are about 13 years into the third millennia of what is called "The Church Age" or "The Time of the Gentiles" or "The Last Days". And we just turned a corner this past week as we ended the first nine months of the year and we are now coming into the last quarter of the year 2014 with two great feasts awaiting us- Thanksgiving and however you choose to celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

But most of you will probably have some type of major family gathering along with a beautiful dinner- at least two times before the end of this year, and that is why I want to obey The Great Commission and encourage and help all of us to be found submitted and obedient to what Jesus tells us to do here in **Luke 14:12-14**- where he said:

Luke 14:12-14

12 ...When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment.

13 "But when you give a reception, invite *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,*

14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

So as sons and daughters of the Lord Christ- in order to fulfill The Great Commission- we need to make sure that we observe everything Jesus commanded- and so we need to know whom Jesus wants us to invite to the feasts that we plan on having during this time of the year. So I want to talk about this while there is still time.

Now, Dr. Luke tells us here in this text- that it is Saturday afternoon- the Jewish Sabbath. And in verse 1- Jesus has been invited

to dinner by one of the leaders among the Pharisees- who as we have discovered were the most zealous of all law-keepers among the Jews.

Now what is interesting is that I know of no evidence at all where Jesus was ever invited back a second time to anyone's house. And as we have already seen in studying this Passage- it is not hard to see why. It seems like every time Jesus opens His mouth- He undresses somebody's hypocrisy. There never was another man in all of human history- whose mouth was more closely tied to the human heart than Jesus. Was there ever a word that came out of Jesus' mouth that did not touch the ultimate issues of the soul? No man ever spoke like this man. Jesus Himself said in **John 18:37**:

John 18:37b

... You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

So when Jesus spoke out at that Saturday dinner and when we hear him through the Gospels today- there is a division that is always created. Those who are "of the truth" listen and obey Jesus. Jesus said in **John 10:27**

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

And while that is absolutely true- the opposite is also true. Those who are not of the truth do not have ears to hear or eyes to see, and Jesus says to them,

John 8:43-47

43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word.

44 "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

45 "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

46 "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

47 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

So let's take heed how we hear the words of Jesus, lest we be found indifferent or antagonistic to His Teaching, and thereby prove ourselves to be deceived and outside of His fold. I pray that the way we hear today will prove that we are all among the number of whom Jesus said,

John 17:14-17

14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

Now as we have studied- the first thing Jesus does at this Saturday dinner is heal a man of dropsy. And Jesus asked these law-experts and Pharisees if they thought healing on the Sabbath was lawful. Luke tells us that they did not answer- but their silence clearly meant "No it is not lawful".

Now we have already seen that Jesus was not in opposition to God's Law as recorded in the OT at all- but He absolutely had no regard whatsoever for the man-made rules and regulations that these religious hypocrites had fabricated. So that was the "law" that Jesus was in violation of- not God's law.

Back in **Luke 13:14**, the synagogue ruler had said,

There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.

... and so Jesus asks here at this dinner the same thing He asked back there in the synagogue:

Luke 14:5

Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?"

... again- no answer.

And so Jesus leaves it for them to chew on and He leaves it for us to draw the inference- which is- You law-experts and Pharisees have a keen interest in your own welfare. When the law seems to stand between you and the safety of your valuable ox- you have no difficulty relativizing the law. The preservation of your own comfort is clearly a higher commitment than rigorous Sabbath keeping you brag about. But when it comes to another person's need- whose illness is no skin off your nose- then the law suddenly becomes conveniently rigid to protect you from any involvement that might inconvenience you.

Can't you see the wickedness of religious people whose highest love, whose "god", is not the Lord- but rather a selfish convenience, and for whom the holy Law of God is either rigid or robbery- depending on whether it protects or threatens that convenience?

I talked to a woman recently who has made a policy of lying to an institution in this city in order to gain a certain convenience. I said, *"That's wrong and it will not square with your claim to be a follower of Christ."* She said, *"I think the Lord understands."* In other words, the Commands of Jesus are like rubber and can be bent as long as we benefit from bending them. But if you ask what she wants from her husband and what she thinks the Scriptures require of him- how he should treat her- then the Commands of Christ are not rubber anymore. They are suddenly very rigid and something that should bind his heart to obey.

Now if you think this is being inconsistent- that's really not the case. This is actually a very consistent effort that many, many people utilize today- to manipulate God for the sake of their own convenience. It is simply another manifestation of human beings using God to get what they want out of Him.

So it is clear, isn't it? No one will go out of here today without understanding this, I hope, that because we are fallen creature- we can be at our furthest ebb away from God in the very exercise of our religious activities. Mankind at his worst- is very religious. And people use religion all the time to protect themselves from the inconvenience and disturbance of getting involved with those they deem to be unworthy of their efforts.

But that is the first thing Jesus does when He comes to dinner. Now that's not the most ingratiating thing to do to your host- but it is,

perhaps, the most loving. The second thing Jesus does is to undress the pride of the dinner host- right there in front of everybody. No wonder they hated Him!

So Jesus has been sitting there watching all these people come in. And what does He look for? How they are dressed? Where they are from? What are their jobs? No, none of that. He looks for what they love. And Jesus always watches until He knows where our treasure is. Because where your treasure is- there your heart will be also. And Jesus wants the human heart above all things! So Jesus watches and He sees what their treasure is: these men love the praises of other men. They love to be seen and to be esteemed for occupying the seats of honor. And Jesus watches how they move in and out of conversations- weaving their way unnoticed to the very best seats. But nobody fools Jesus. He is Master- the absolute Sovereign of every situation!

So what does Jesus think about the guest's whose treasure is the praise of men? In short, He thinks they will go to hell if their values don't change. Listen to what Jesus said in two other places about this particular form of idolatry.

Luke 11:43

Woe to you Pharisees! for you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places.

Luke 20:46&47

Beware of the scribes who like to go about in long robes and love salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at the feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.

So these two things go hand in hand with loving the places of honor at the feast:

- Exploitation of the weak
- Condemnation

So one sign post along our journey with God toward progressive Sanctification that we could all use to determine if we are truly born again and not simply deceived is:

If your treasure is the praise of men and a widow's house stands in your way- you will just destroy the widow's house. But in the end, your own house will collapse in the flood of God's Judgment.

And that's why Jesus said here in **Luke 14:11**,

Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

In other words- if you pursue the seats of honor on this earth- you will have no seat at all in Heaven (cf. **Matthew 18:3; 5:20**).

Now you would think Jesus has ruffled enough feathers at one dinner, exposing the legalist's ability to twist the law in order to protect their selfish convenience, and exposing the pride of those who crave the praise of men. And you would think that surely the party is over. But He is not done yet.

Jesus also said to the man who had invited him,

"Whenever you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers, or your relatives or your rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and it be a repayment for you. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For it will be repaid to you in the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:12–14)

Now up until now- Jesus has talked to the guests. But now He turns to the host and says. *"Don't touch that snake, lest it bite you and you die."* *"Don't climb that rope, lest it break and you fall."* *"Don't invite your friends and brothers and relatives and rich neighbors to dinner, lest you be repaid in kind."*

What an utterly unearthly argument! "Danger! Repayment ahead!" "Warning! This repayment may be dangerous to your health!" So Who on earth would talk like this? Probably:

- ✓ Somebody Whose Kingdom is not of this world (**John 18:36**)
- ✓ Somebody Who knows that 1,000 years on this earth are like yesterday when it is gone (**Psalms 90:4**)

- ✓ Probably Somebody Who knows that our life is but a mist that appears and in a moment vanishes away (**James 4:14**)
- ✓ Somebody Who knows that the one who saves his life now will lose it later, and the one who loses it now in love for Jesus will save it later (**Mark 8:35**)
- ✓ Probably Somebody Who knows that there will be a Resurrection unto eternal life, a resurrection of the just to live with God a million millennia of eons- if only He was our God on this earth.

And Jesus is that kind of Somebody. No man ever spoke like this Man. And the people who call this Man "Lord" ought not to be like any other people.

So take heed *how* you hear. There are some whose first and only reaction to Jesus' words will be: *"Well, surely He can't mean that we should actually do this, does He? I mean this is all figurative right?"*

And then- having completely twisted the text and bent the Sword of the Spirit- and absolved ourselves of any obedience- we can then just move on to the next passage and continue right on through the New Testament- justifying ourselves just like the Pharisees- while all the while ignoring and disobeying and manipulating the Words of Jesus Christ to preserve our own unruffled tradition and convenience.

You know- there is no better defense against the Truth than a half-truth. And the half-truth is- Jesus does not intend to end all family meals and gatherings of friends. But that truth has nothing to do with what Jesus was talking about here. The Truth is: there is in every human heart a terrible and powerful tendency to live by the law of earthly repayment, the law of reciprocity. There is a subtle and relentless inclination in our flesh to do what will make life as comfortable as possible for ourselves, and to avoid what will inconvenience us or agitate our placid routine, or add the least bit of tension to our table at dinner. The most sanctified people among us must do battle every day so as not to be enslaved by the universal tendency to always act for the greatest earthly payoff.

And so the people who will lightly dismiss this text as simply a rhetorical overstatement about Humility are probably blind to the impossibility of overstating the corruption of their own heart and its deceptive power to make us think all is well when we are actually enslaved to the "Law of Reciprocity"- the law which says: always do

what will pay off in convenience, undisturbed pleasures, domestic comfort, and social tranquility. In other words- the Law of Reciprocity says that we should only do good for those who have the power to do something good back to us. And evidently this is a big deal to God because even Jude described false teachers like this:

Jude 16

These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their *own* lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of *gaining an* advantage.

Jesus' Words here are utterly radical only because our sin is utterly radical. And He waves a red flag in front of us because there is destruction ahead for people governed by the law of reciprocity.

And so I stress the danger of living for earthly repayment (for ease, convenience, comfort, tranquility) this morning- not because I have a bone to pick with anybody or because this is a hot issue with me. I stand as convicted this morning as anyone here, and because I am convicted this morning- I tremble.

No, I deal with this subject this morning for only one reason- it is the next passage in our journey through Luke, and it is just as inspired, just as inerrant, just as infallible, and just as true as any other verse in the Bible. And as children of the King- we have a duty and an obligation and a joy to look at the hard and the difficult parts of the Bible and deal with them to the same degree and with as much love as we look at the easy and soft parts of the Bible and deal with them.

We have all heard the message about the rich young ruler and nearly every time I hear somebody preach that part of God's Word- almost invariably- they say something like this:

“Now God would never require of us what He required of this rich man here in this Passage. God would never want all that you have.”

And I find statements like that to be very odd. First of all God absolutely *did* require this from this man on that day. God absolutely required that rich young ruler to give everything he owned in this world away in order to be saved. And that man went away sorrowful because he loved what he had more than he loved Jesus.

And so what makes me think I am not steeped in the same idolatry as that rich young ruler? What makes me think that I am not subject to turning away from Jesus just as fast as he did? Am I to believe that it is impossible for me to love money more than I love Jesus? Am I to believe that I am somehow exempt from this sin? And so what makes me think that God would never require all from me?

Likewise- I see this Passage here in **Luke 14** in the very same light. Am I to believe for one second that I would never embrace the sin of reciprocity the way these Pharisees did? Am I somehow exempt from engaging in this sin? Do I really believe that having a smart phone and going to Church and praying and Studying the Bible would somehow cause me to not be guilty of the very same sin as these men were on that day? I think not.

I think we would all do well to understand that no matter how saved you are and no matter how hard you are sincerely trying to love and serve God- there is one single difference between us and these wicked men here in this Passage:

Grace

...and so I say to you very tenderly this morning: It matters who you invite to your table to eat with you. And while this issue may not even be a blip on the radar of some of the most famous preachers of our day- I am telling you- it does matter. And it matters because Jesus stressed it.

Now listen to these other sayings of Jesus.

Luke 6:24:

Woe to you that are rich, for you have received back your consolation.

The rich are here condemned because the use of their money shows where their heart is; they used it to secure their lives and pad themselves with comfort and luxury and consolation, instead of using it to meet the needs of the suffering.

So Jesus takes this saying from **Luke 6:24** and makes a parable out of it in **Luke 16:19ff.**:

There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; and the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame." But Abraham said, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received back your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things. But now he is comforted here and you are in anguish."

Now why didn't the rich man give Lazarus the crumbs from his table? Because Lazarus was in no position to pay back any good thing to the rich man. And the rich man's life was governed by the "Law of Reciprocity"- by the earthly benefits he could receive back from his dealings. He wore the finest clothes and feasted sumptuously and did not inconvenience himself with this poor, sick man- who was at his very door.

And so Jesus says this man went to hell- the hell where everybody will go who loves money and who uses money to feast sumptuously with comfortable, respectable guests instead of using their God-given blessings to alleviate suffering.

And so Jesus says that when we give a feast- we are to invite the poor, and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind- and Jesus says here that you will be blessed, because these people cannot ever repay you. And so you will be repaid at the Resurrection of the Righteous.

What a radical, dangerous thought- You will be blessed because the people you extend out to cannot repay you! You will be *blessed* precisely because they *cannot* repay you! What an amazing thing for Jesus to say!

Talk like this goes against every instinct in our bodies. This is just some good, solid, self-denial here. This is pure death to the effort to build up self-esteem and self-righteousness. This looks like a lot of hard work with little or no personal benefit- which is exactly the point.

And yet Jesus turns around and says: Your self-denial for those who can never repay you will bring you great blessings. Your

benevolence is not, nor ever could be, disinterested. Indeed, your eternal interest is at stake.

The Acts 20:35

It is more blessed to give than to receive

Mark 8:36

If you lose your life (in love) for my sake, you will save it

So in the end- for those who seek to fully obey Jesus and thus fulfill the Great Commission- there really is no self-sacrifice. Who wouldn't count everything as rubbish in order to gain Christ? Only those who are not truly saved.

But why does it make such an eternal difference who we invite to Thanksgiving dinner? It is not so much that this one afternoon is all-determining- because this needs to be a way of life- not a once a year deal.

The reason it makes an eternal difference is that it, along with many other occasions, reveals where our treasure really is. Is Jesus, with His Commands and Promises, more valuable to us than tradition and convenience and earthly comfort? Is Jesus really our Treasure or is the world? And the answer to that question is not decided during an invitation at Church. It is decided at our table- and hour by hour every day- by whether we are willing to inconvenience ourselves for those who can't repay, or whether we purposely avoid them and so preserve our placid routine.

So it matters who we invite to eat at our table because it matters where our treasure is.

Amen. Let's pray.