

**Who's Coming to Dinner?**  
**by Rev. Frances Savill**  
**Sunday February 12, 2023**

**Luke 13:18-14:11**

I wanted to begin this morning with a video from the Bible Project about this section of Luke's gospel. It gives us a quick recap of where we are in the gospel, and I hope it keeps us from misunderstanding the Scriptures in this section.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-luke-3/>

Let's begin in Luke 13 verse 18 p. 104 in your Luke scripture journal.

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed and like leaven, which is surprising.

A mustard seed is a little tiny, insignificant looking seed, and it doesn't become a towering oak, or a tree like the cedars of Lebanon. But it does provide shelter and life.

Leaven in the Bible is rarely a good thing, and a woman hiding leaven is an unexpected example of what the kingdom is like. But there's no doubt that a little leaven is enough for a whole batch of flour.

The next section about the *narrow door* is one of the passages where it is important to read the whole section.

A person asks Jesus, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" (Verse 23)

Jesus begins his answer with "strive to enter through the narrow door." And then Jesus continues saying there are people who will say Jesus ate with them, and taught in the streets, but Jesus doesn't know where they came from.

And so it seems that it might only be a few who are saved.

But as you read the rest of the passage, Jesus goes on to say that people will come from the east and west, and from north and south, and be at the table in the kingdom of God.

The picture is of a great company of people from all over included. The prophets and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be there, but there will be some who will be weeping and gnashing their teeth.

And what do we see when Jesus is at the table with them?  
What or who is the narrow door that is the way in?

In Chapter 14 we see this teaching enacted. Jesus is at the table, dining at the house of the ruler of the Pharisees. This leader and others were watching Jesus carefully.

For us, as followers of Jesus, when Jesus is at a meal, we should be remembering communion, our meal at the table with Jesus.

There is a man there and he is healed. Jesus asks those at the table with him, "which of you, having a son or even an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out?"

Hopefully all of us would care enough about one of our children, and likely would care enough about something valuable like an ox that we rescue it immediately. But there is a man, a cripple, and they see one who is not as valuable as a son, or even as valuable as an ox.

How do you view the people around you?

John's gospel tells us that *Jesus is The Way, the Truth and the Life* and no one comes to the Father except through Him.

Jesus is the narrow door... that isn't so narrow.  
There is no one who comes to Jesus who is turned away.  
There is no one beyond Jesus' compassion, no one whose situation excludes or disqualifies them.

Those who are weeping and gnashing their teeth, are those who exclude themselves from Jesus' generosity and compassion.

And we see the truth of Jesus' words in Verse 30, "Behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

The crippled man, the one on the margins, the one excluded and considered of lesser value than a farm animal, one of the last, and he became one of the first to dine in the kingdom of God.

And some of the first, the leader of the Pharisees, and others, because they will not go through the narrow door, Jesus, find themselves as some of the last.

One comment about the Pharisees.

They are angry at Jesus because he is healing on the Sabbath, but I wonder if there is something more to their anger. The crippled man was at the low end of the social ladder - he was in every way seen as less than every other person in the room. Everyone else was more important and had greater status.

So what happens when the crippled man is lifted up and healed and shown favour by Jesus?

Carl Richards has written a wonderful book and he quotes a study from Harvard researchers. Harvard Researchers gave people two options:

1. Earn \$50,000 per year and everyone else earns \$25,000
2. Earn \$100,000 per year and everyone else earns \$200,000

People were told to assume that everything else stayed equal. So having more money meant that they had the ability to buy nicer things. Half the people in the study didn't want more money... they just wanted to have more than everybody else, even if it mean they had less. (Half the people chose option 1).

Richards concludes that we'll sacrifice our own well-being just to do better than someone else.

I wonder if some of that wanting to be better than other people, wanting higher status, wanting to be more special, is what also made the Pharisees angry?

To think that is to misunderstand how the kingdom of God works.

We are invited, all of us from north and south and east and west, to sit at the table in the kingdom of God.

All of us invited, all of us included, all of us unique, wonderful, beloved, a son or daughter of the King, all healed, all forgiven, all lifted up in Jesus, who is the door and way in which we all enter.

**Thanks be to God.**