

LOOKING AT LUKE
LESSON IN BROKENNESS

Friday, August 28

Reading: Luke 13-14

Luke 14:17 "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... **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 compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.'

In his book The Unchurched Next Door, author Thom S. Rainer encourages Christians to get to know the unsaved around them and invite them to Christ. In his research he discovered that one of the main reasons unchurched people don't come to church is because they have never been invited.

On this particular Sabbath, Jesus is invited for dinner at the home of an important Pharisee. This was not a friendly invitation. He was being "carefully watched" to see if He would break their Sabbath rules. They even "set Him up" by having a diseased man there.

During the meal Jesus sets them straight. He criticizes them for making rules and traditions more important than people (14:1-6). He also chided them for jostling for the seats of honor at the table. Jesus reminds them that those who seek honor for themselves will be disgraced. Honor cannot be taken; it must be given by God (14:7-11).

His final parable would have upset all the religious Jews at the table. They believed that they already had a seat in the kingdom of God simply because they were His chosen people. But the parable implies that they had rejected His invitation and so those who the pious Pharisees despised would be invited instead.

In the parable, God is represented by the host of the banquet. The servants who are sent out represent believers. We are the ones God has sent with the invitation to enter the kingdom of God through faith in Christ. And the call is not just for "good people." It is for everyone. The Jewish leaders had received God's invitation, but they rejected Jesus. Thus, He would reject them and the kingdom would be filled by those who would listen.

The parable presents some of the silliest excuses for not accepting the host's invitation. Who buys property without seeing it first? Who buys oxen without making sure their getting their money's worth? The last excuse is the worst of all! Why not take your wife with you to the banquet? Or maybe his excuse is "My wife won't let me!" The excuses people give today for rejecting Christ are just as foolish. Love of possessions (field), the busyness of work (oxen), or even putting family before God (wife) are all bad reasons for missing out on salvation. We are called to share the gospel. It is the Spirit's job to convict the heart.

Are we doing a good job of going out into the "highways and hedges" (NKJV) to invite people to Christ? Do we reach out to the hurting with the love of Christ?