

**14:1 It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely.**

**14:2 And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy.**

**14:3 And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"**

**14:4 But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away.**

**14:5 And He said to them, "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?"**

**14:6 And they could make no reply to this.**

14:1-6 provides another instance where the leaders are unable to discern the time (12:56-57). In spite of Jesus' many miracles and incessant warnings, the religious leadership refused to hear, see, and believe.

Jesus was asked to join one of the leaders of the Pharisees for a meal on the Sabbath. The meal was probably the midday meal, since bread was the main course (14:1) – a food which could be prepared the day before to avoid breaking the Sabbath.

The mood is clear from the beginning: the Pharisees were watching Jesus carefully to find a reason to accuse Him.

There, in front of Jesus, stood a man with dropsy. Dropsy is a condition where the limbs and tissues swell due to excess body fluids. Jewish documents dated after the time of Christ viewed the condition as God's judgment, a result of either sin or uncleanness.

The man may have entered the house seeking help from Jesus. Uninvited guests were part of this culture. However, considering that the Pharisees tried to set Him up after a previous meal He had with them (Lk. 11:53-54), it's possible that the man was brought to the dinner as a trap (Bock, 1256, 1257).

Jesus' question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" shows that He knew what the Pharisees were thinking. In fact, Luke says that Jesus "answered," indicating that He was in dialogue with their suspicion (Bock, 1257).

The question was difficult to answer for healing on the Sabbath was not condemned in the OT. Furthermore, there were no formal rabbinic regulations that forbade healing on that day. In fact, some help was allowed even on the Sabbath; for example, if someone's life was in danger, there was a Sabbath provision that allowed someone to do what was necessary to stabilize the person. Therefore, if the leaders were to say that healing was illegal, they would be seen as being indifferent to human suffering. If they allowed it, they would be seen as being soft on the law. In addition, if they invited the man to the meal but then condemned Jesus for acting, it would raise questions as to their motives in the first place.

Even though the Pharisees did not respond, Jesus defended His action. If people could show compassion toward animals on the Sabbath, how much more should they be compassionate toward people? If they could help an ox out of a well, they could surely help a son out of a well.

“The passage closes in reflective silence” (Bock, 1255).

**14:7 And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them,**

**14:8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him,**

**14:9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.**

**14:10 "But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.**

**14:11 "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

The meaning of the parable is summed up in verse 11: “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Many probably assumed that the religious leaders reflected true spirituality; but the healing of the man with dropsy showed that this was not the case; God was compassionate toward those who suffered, the Pharisees were not. The parable in verses 7 to 11 showed that they lacked humility as well. The parable was given because Jesus “noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table.”

Jesus often condemned the leaders for their love of attention and desire to be honored. In Matthew 23:5-7 Jesus said of them, “they do all their deeds to be noticed by men. . . They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.” Then in Luke 20:46 He warned, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets.”

Although seating customs at banquets varied between Romans, Greeks, and Jews, the typical furniture at a Jewish banquet was a couch that sat three. The couches were arranged in a U-shaped configuration around a low table. The guests then reclined around the table on their left elbows. The place of highest honor was the central position of the couch at the base of the U. This was where the host sat and the seats of honor were to the right and the left of him and were normally given to those of rank or age.

A wedding feast was probably more formal than most banquets. When it came time to sit down at the table those who quickly secured the place of honor ran the risk of being asked to move if a more eminent person showed up. If that were to happen, the presumptuous guest would have to get up in front of everybody and move to whatever seat was left, which would no doubt be the seat of least honor. The implication is that it would be humiliating. However, if someone sat in the position of humility first, he may be asked to move to a more honorable seat. In that scenario the person would be honored before all who sat at the table. Proverbs 25:6-7 makes the same point: “Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of great men; For it is better that it be said to you, ‘Come up here’ Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince.”

Some people dislike this teaching because they think it suggests that the motive for sitting in the less honorable place is the desire for honor. But the main point is that it is better for others to honor you than to assume that you deserve honor.

But Jesus is not simply teaching about proper manners at banquets, rather, He is pointing out that the genuinely humble will be honored by God. The real issue is humility which God honors with exaltation.

- Psalm 138:6: "For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar."
- Proverbs 3:34: "Toward the scorers he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor."
- I Peter 5:5: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- Proverbs 16:5: "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD. . .
- Luke 1:51-52: ". . . He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble."
- James 4:10: "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."

Humility is the best course of action in all spheres of life, and it is an essential character trait of the godly.

***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.***

***14:13 "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,***

***14:14 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."***

This leads to another expectation. Not only should those who claim to know God be compassionate and humble, they should also display graciousness and hospitality toward those who are not able to give anything in return.

Jesus advised His host that he should not simply invite those who are able to repay him for his generosity, but he should also invite those who could never repay him, for in doing so he would demonstrate true generosity.

Although the main point of the comment is the need to show hospitality without reciprocity, the spirit of the passage is also directed toward showing love for the downcast – in this case, the people who were normally excluded from the temple. This will not be forgotten by God; those who are truly generous will be counted among the righteous, and recompensed at the resurrection.

***14:15 When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"***

***14:16 But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;***

***14:17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'***

**14:18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'**

**14:19 "Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.'**

**14:20 "Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'**

The parable of the great supper concludes the section that began with the healing of the man with dropsy on the Sabbath. The parable teaches that many in the nation will miss the great banquet of God because they do not respond to the host's (Christ's) current offer. However, regardless of the invitees' response, the celebration will come, although it will go to others. Ironically, those who sought the best seats would have no seats at all.

The parable makes three main points (from Bock, 1268-1269):

First, the leadership of Israel risked missing God's blessing entirely.

Second, the kingdom would not miss the original invitees; instead, a new invitation would be extended to others.

Thirdly, if those who follow Jesus are not those whom one would have expected, it is not because Jesus excluded some. Rather, it is because some excluded themselves.

Jesus' mention of the resurrection prompted someone at the table to reflect on the greatest banquet of all, the eschatological fellowship that comes in God's future, glorious kingdom (Isa. 25:6; Psa. 22:26; 23:5; Lk. 22:16; Rev. 19:9). "Blessed are those who eat bread in the kingdom of God." The underlying assumption of this remark is that he will be one of those blessed to sit at that table.

Jesus responded with a parable about a man who is giving a great dinner and invited many to it. Since there was much more effort needed in meal preparation than there is today, it was typical for an initial announcement to be made, and then once the feast was ready, to go back and inform the guests. It appears that at the time of the invitation everyone responded positively - at least there is no mention of anyone not being able to go. So the food was then prepared, the animals slaughtered, cleaned and roasted, the vegetables cooked, the bread made, and the wine set on the table. The dinner hour had come so the man sent his slaves back out to inform the guests that the feast was ready. In those days, a lavish banquet was the most fulfilling and joyful event that people could imagine; this is also why it became such an apt image for the joy of the kingdom of God. To be honored by being invited to a great feast prepared by a wealthy man would be the pinnacle of Jewish social life. However, when the slaves went out to make the announcement, the invited guests began to excuse themselves from attending.

The excuses vary, but the basic reasons are similar; all are dealing with either financial or family matters. Other concerns get in the way of sharing in God's table in the new age. Such excuses are extremely insulting in light of the occasion.

The first man said that he had purchased a piece of land and needed to go out to look at it (14:18). This appears to be just an excuse to avoid going; if the land was already purchased it would still be there the next day. There was no need to refuse to attend the dinner based on the land purchase. This man saw his property as more important than the banquet.

The second man also had a lame reason for not attending. He said that he bought five pairs of oxen and needed to try them (14:19). Once again, this was not a pressing matter. The second man placed business priorities over attending the banquet.

The third man's excuse is better than the other two; he had just gotten married and was going to spend time with his wife (14:20). He had family priorities. However, it is hard to see how being newly married would disqualify one from attending a social meal, especially one of such grandeur and importance as this one.

**14:21 "And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'**

**14:22 "And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'**

**14:23 "And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.'**

**14:24 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"**

This type of response to a man who had graciously prepared a massive feast was a horrible breach of social ethics. The master of the house was infuriated when the slaves came back and reported to him that all who were invited had excuses for not going to the feast.

The table was already prepared for visitors so the master needed to act quickly. Instead of canceling the celebration or withdrawing the meal, the master sought a new audience. He told the servants to go out into the streets and invite the lame, poor, crippled, and blind - the four classes of people in Luke 14:13 that Jesus had just told them to invite to dinner. The inclusion of these people is significant for they were banned from full participation in Jewish worship (Lev. 21:17–23).

The slaves did as they were instructed, but even then there were not enough guests. So the master sent them out again and told them to go into the highways and hedges to find people who would come. The highways were the main, well-traveled roads; the hedges were probably the borders of the vineyards where there wasn't much foot traffic; the slaves were to go everywhere, far and wide, to find anyone who might come.

The command to "compel" people to come in (14:23) does not mean "make people attend contrary to their will," but means "strongly urge them to attend." The master's goal is to have a full house.

The application of the parable is fairly straightforward. The host represents God who longs for His house to be full of people to share with Him in joyous celebration. He is generous and kind and has gone out of His way to invite Israel through His prophets. But the invitation was refused. Therefore, God will invite anyone who will come (the Gentiles) to His great feast.

Verse 24 is crucial. The entire story is given in the third person. It's about a man giving a dinner, sending his slave, and people making excuses. Then suddenly in verse 24, it turns into the first and second person. "You" is plural and can't be referring to the slave (singular) in verse 23; rather, Jesus is addressing the audience. He is applying the parable to them. He says, "none of those who were invited shall taste of *My dinner*." The dinner that He has been talking about is in reality *His* dinner. The invitation to the banquet comes through Jesus. He is the host, the One inviting people to the heavenly celebration in the presence of God. Yet God has been dishonored. God has been scorned. God has been affronted. His goodness and His generosity and His kindness have been treated with disdain by those who were invited.

The parable makes clear that the exclusion of Israel is not God's desire. Absence at the table will be because the invitation was rejected; the invitees refused to attend (Bock, 1278). They missed the opportunity to sit at God's table of blessing even though it appeared that they were at the head of the line. No man remains outside by necessity but by deliberate choice. Man cannot save himself; but he can damn himself.

Secondly, in spite of Israel's rejection the celebration would occur; the table would be filled by the Gentiles.

Lastly, the parable teaches that no man can enter the kingdom of God without the invitation of God, and that invitation is communicated through Christ.

#### IN SUM:

In rejecting Jesus, the leaders reject God's greatest gift: the opportunity to sit at the table of eternal fellowship with God. They also miss the chance to share in the blessings He gives. But the kingdom's bounty is not lost because of their rejection, for many others will be invited and will attend. . . . In fact, many who attend will be among those who were least expected to attend. God makes Himself available even to those whom many reject. Often it is the rejected who responded favorably to God. Disciples should seek such people (Bock, 1278).