

So there's so many different things that I love about scripture. It is incredibly relevant and applicable in our lives today. It's not just something, this old ancient relic. It is still working and alive and active in our lives today. We can live it out not just in this place, but we can live it out in our homes.

We can live it out in work. We can live it out in the highways and byways of life. It meets us in those places. And there are times when I'm in the word where I feel like God is just preparing me for something that is coming ahead, that the Lord is trying to teach me something. He wants me to see something in a way that is going to influence how I choose to live at some point in my life.

Sometimes living out scripture feels like a test that I have studied for. I have read scripture. God has used it to shape and speak to me. And, and sometime there is going to come a moment where I will choose which direction am I going to go. Am I gonna go the way of the world?

Am I gonna go the way of my flesh? Or am I gonna go the way of God's word, the way of, of wisdom? And so sometimes I feel like I'm preparing for that test and when I get there, man, I'm studied and I'm ready to go. And then there are moments where living out scripture feels a little bit more like a pop quiz. Like the moment just pops up.

I wasn't expecting it. It is just right here in front of me. Which one are you going to choose? And sometimes I pass and sometimes I crash and burn. Our text last week that we ended with, Luke 14:11, it says this, for all those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Would you say this with me? For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. And for many of us, leaving church last Sunday morning gave us an opportunity to live out this passage. I don't know what it was like for you. I heard later in the week that our parking lot was crazy.

And so it's not every Sunday that you get like a pop quiz hotshot. Are you going to live out some of the things that we talked about? And you can grade yourself on how you did as you left church last week. But it's not all the time that we get to immediately live out these things. And we know our parking lot was a little bit crazy if you were here last week, maybe as you were leaving with Roar Road being closed and the sign that indicates like that road is closed.

Our Sarah Road and Roger Road exits or entrances are still open. You can use either one of those. But I find it funny how sometimes there's just this little God wink of Sean, are you paying attention to what I'm teaching you? Are you listening to some of what I say?

These words, I find the Lord kind of giving me opportunities to live

them out because my natural inclination is that I want to exalt myself. I want to take the spot. I want to kind of push everything away and get my way. Like in my flesh, that's what I lean to. Probably what all of us lean to.

And Jesus, in this text that we're looking at last week and then again this week, he challenges me in this. He, he challenges us to live differently. If you were here last week, or maybe you missed, I just want to kind of catch us up on, on where we are. Uh, Jesus is in the home of a prominent Pharisee, a prominent religious leader, and he's there for a Sabbath meal. And this would've been a very kind of special meal that people would have on the Sabbath day.

They would gather friends and families and they would get together and they would recreate and retell the story of God. They would remember what he has done and be in this home of a prominent Pharisee. This is probably a room that would've been filled with a lot of really important people. It would have been filled with important religious leaders. It would have been filled with the movers and shakers of the community.

And Luke tells us in the beginning of chapter 14 that Jesus is being carefully watched. He's being watched to be scrutinized. They're looking for a way to catch him doing something that would discredit him and kind of quiet the whispers of him being the Messiah. Messiah. And so Jesus is being watched closely, but what we see in verse 7 is that Jesus is also watching his watchers closely, and he notices that the guests are all jockeying for position.

They are trying to cut in front of others so that they can get the best seat, or they are trying to elbow others out of the way to keep them from getting the place that they want. And so Jesus challenges their obsession with position and sitting in the place of honor. He says, instead of exalting yourselves, fall back in humility.

Humility- when we walk in that posture, humility frees us from worrying about our seat at the table and allows us to focus on inviting others in.

Humility keeps us from being just absorbed with self, and it allows us to create room for someone else. And after telling this story that exposes the heart of his guests and kind of criticizes them, Jesus now turns his attention to the host of this party because he doesn't want to leave anyone out. He's what my dad would call an equal opportunity offender. Jesus is just offending everybody at this dinner party. So we read in verse 12, Jesus said to his host now, Hey, when you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers, your sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors.

Because if you do, they might invite you back, and so you will be

repaid. And what Jesus isn't saying here is that, hey, you can't have meals, you can't have lunch or dinner with your family or with your friends anymore. It's only gotta be with people that you don't know. That's not what Jesus is saying. I think what he is doing is he is critiquing their culture of social reciprocity that like, if you do for me, I will do for you.

And if I do for you, then I expect that you better do for me. It's this idea that I give you a gift, you give me a gift, I give you a compliment, you give me a compliment. It most likely the people that were at this this Sabbath dinner, we're probably already trying to think, how can they have a Sabbath dinner where they invite their host over? Because that's what you do.

And it's all a way to reinforce people's social position. And what it does is it keeps anyone else from being able to crack into the room, anyone else from being able to find their seat at the table. And Jesus watches it all play out in front of him.

He's like, for people who claim to be closest to God, for people who claim to know the most about him, and you're really missing his heart.

You're missing his heart of humility. You're missing his heart for people. You see, Jesus knows that God's table operates under completely different rules. And it's a rule that doesn't make any sense to anybody who is only using people to try to get ahead in life. God invites people to the table who have nothing to offer him in return.

God operates under the rule of grace, and he invites people to his table who have nothing to offer him in return. People that these religious folks probably would have been offended to be seen around, let alone to have in their home.

So he says in verse 13, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection. Of the righteous.

Jesus' invite list is made up of people who would have never been able to reciprocate. It's the poor, it's the blind, it's the beggars. They didn't have the social status and they certainly didn't have the means to be able to host great elaborate banquets and invite people over. But Jesus knows what he is doing. He is challenging them and he is challenging us to shift our mindset of doing for others who can do for us to what can I do for others without expecting anything in return?

It's one of the reasons why I love the furniture giveaway. I've said for, for years, that the furniture— when I think about the church that I long for us to be, that I think that Jesus is creating us to be,

Furniture Giveaway is a model of that. It is people who come together, who serve and give sacrificially, who lead others and give ministry away and serve people who can never do anything to repay. It is the heart of the gospel lived out. In this event.

And Jesus is saying that when we live like this, we will be blessed. Not, not because we're going to be rewarded and given something by those that we have served, not because we're going to receive something immediately from the Father. The reason why we are blessed when we live this way is because it aligns to the way that we have been created to live. It aligns with the heart of God and we are made in his image. And so when we live out the image of God, it is a blessing in our lives.

It is where true joy is found. Jesus knows that the true joy that we long for is not in sitting in the best seat. It is not in having the prominent position. Jesus knows that joy is found in doing for others who can never do for us, doing for others without any expectation of them doing for us.

As this party has gone on, I don't want us to miss this. Jesus has systematically dismantled the entire social hierarchy that is at play in that room. He's tearing it all down. He's burning the place. He manages to offend everyone that is there in the room with him.

He exposes the hypocrisy of these religious leaders. He confronts the guest obsession with status, and then he turns his focus to the host and criticizes him for the people that he invited to his party. And then someone at the table who I imagine is getting a little bit uncomfortable by all of the tension in the room just blurts out something like, boy, isn't heaven going to be great?

Look at verse 15.

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. Of God. I love this verse so much. When I read this account all the way through, I just feel like this guy, like this is the most relatable part of the passage. This guy is like, can we just please change the subject now and talk about something else?

You can cut the tension and awkwardness in the room with a knife. And so he's like, here, here's a softball. Let's talk about how great heaven is going to be.

And Jesus doesn't take the bait. Instead, he uses it to double down on his criticism.

It's no wonder they wanted to kill him.

And the statement that this guy makes, I think the reason why Jesus attached to it is because the statement that he makes assumes that of course they are going to be at this banquet. Of course they were going to be invited. Then when God gathers up his people once and for all, remember last week we talked about when we read a parable that includes a banquet, it's pointing to that moment, kind of the culmination of all things. When God gathers up his people, of course they are going to be at the table. And not only are they going to be at the table, but they probably assumed that they were going to have the best seats.

Seats. They were the righteous ones. They were the ones who lived a good life, who did the right thing and avoided the wrong things. They were the devout ones who kept the rules. And so of course they, of anyone, had earned their place.

Jesus tells another story.

It's a story about this man who hosts a banquet at his home. Again, kind of future culmination language. And the host sends out a message, kind of like an invite to people in the neighborhood. And they reply back with their RSVP. No, sorry, I can't make it.

But then a lot of them are like, yeah, I'll be there. We've got it on our calendar. And so the servant, after delivering those invitations, goes back, lets the host know who's gonna be there. Preparations are made. The host sends his servant back out and he says, okay, go let them know that the dinner is ready.

It's time to party. And so the servant goes back out to those who had received the invitation and one by one they start making an excuse and like, nah, we can't be there now. I'm so sorry.

And their invitation or their excuses would be kind of the modern day equivalent of one person saying, ah, I just bought a house.

And now I need to go and see where we live. He wouldn't do that. I just bought a new car and so now I need to go take it for a test drive. One guy said, I just got married and my wife doesn't want me to go. That one might be like the most relatable of them, but still, he probably didn't get married like on a whim.

He knew when the dinner was going, he had already accepted it and now he is like, ah, I can't go.

They all rejected the host when the servant came.

So the host said, well, all right, but like dinner's ready, my table is going to be full. And so he sends his servant out to a similar guest list. Read in this passage as he says, go out quickly, to the

poor, to the blind, to the lame, to the crippled. Invite them to the dinner party. And the servant says, we've already done that.

And there's still room.

Verse 23, the master told his servant, go out to the roads and the country lanes and compel them to come in so that my house will be full. He tells them, go out even farther. Go out to the places that nobody goes on purpose. Go out to the people that nobody wants to be around. And he says, compel them to come in.

Not coerce, not force them, compel them. Because this invitation is going to people who feel like they do not belong at that table. It's going out to people who have maybe never received an invitation like this, people who think, I am not wanted. People like me don't belong there. Boy, if I walked into that banquet, it might burn down.

It's going out to people who probably just thought, oh, this invitation was meant for somebody else, not for me. They just got the wrong person.

Person. What I love about this is that the servant says, no, seriously, there is a place for you at the table.

God invites people to the table who have nothing to offer him in return. That is why it is grace. It is receiving something that we do not deserve and we have not earned, and yet the Heavenly Father has given it to us freely anyway.

And God's grace is a gift that is available to anyone to receive. But the thing about gifts is that you have to open them. The thing about invitations is that you have to accept them, to not make excuses, to not get the invitation and think, well, it's about time. I'm invited to this party to not get it and think, ah, this must be for somebody else, but to receive the invitation as a gift and accept it to find your place at the table.

And Jesus knows that some will accept it and some won't, even those who feel like they deserve it. So he ends the story in verse 24. I tell you, Not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet. And these first guests weren't excluded because the host was like, well, fine, I didn't want them anyway. They're not excluded because he didn't want them there.

They excluded themselves by rejecting the invitation. They were too caught up in themselves. They were too busy doing their own thing. Doing their own thing.

Jesus, who is the servant in this story, who the host God had sent out to tell all the world that they are invited, Jesus knows that there

are some people in this room that he's in that will not have the humility to accept that invitation because they They don't feel like they need it. They've earned their place there. They deserve to be there. Jesus says in John 14:6, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

And that seems so exclusive in our world today, but it felt that way then too, that the only way to the Father is through Jesus. Through Jesus, and he knew that most of the people in this room would be unwilling to humble themselves before him and declare him Lord.

They thought that they were guaranteed a place based on their righteousness, but it was their self-righteousness that excluded them from the table.

But Jesus knows that God's table is large. And so what he does later after his death, after his resurrection, Jesus sends his disciples. He descends us out into all the world to continue to tell people who feel like they don't belong, continue to tell people who feel like the invitation has to be for someone else that no, there is a seat for you at God's table. Table, not because you've earned it, not because you deserve it, but because God makes room at his table for people who can do nothing for him. People like me and people like you.

In July 2015, Amber and I were invited to a surprise proposal. Our friend Tyler, uh, been dating Lauren for a while. We kind of all seen it coming. It was just more of a question of when rather than if. And so he sent out a message to a bunch of people and said, hey, I'm going to propose to her.

This is the time, this is the date, this is the place. And so we all got together and we went to this beautiful park in Narragansett, Rhode Island, close to where we lived at the time. And Tyler was there welcoming everybody. He's like, okay, go down here and kind of sent us down this path a little bit into the secluded little place in the woods that was set up so that when Lauren came in, Tyler would be able to propose to her right there and we could all kind of celebrate with them. And as the guests arrived and the kind of time came, music started and some of the people that were sitting with us got up and went and took their place.

And then we look over and we see Lauren coming in being escorted by her dad wearing a wedding dress and we realized, oh, we're not here for a surprise engagement, we're here for a surprise wedding. It was so much fun. And as cool as that was, after the ceremony was over, we all kind of got up and the bride and groom were like, okay, follow us. And they started leading us through this path that cut through this beautiful field of wildflowers. We came to a tree line and we made a turn and there in front of us was this table that stretched, I mean, almost as like far as you could see.

One table that we were all going to sit at for the reception. It was a table that was like yelling, "You belong here. There's a place for you." And looking around as we shared a meal, that table was filled with dear friends. It was filled with their family. It was filled with people that I have never met or seen before in my life, but Everyone sat around the same table and shared a meal with the bride and groom.

I think we all felt blessed to be a part of something so special.

And I remember thinking that night, man, I'm so glad that we said yes. I'm so glad that we didn't miss this.

I think that table is a glimpse of heaven, but I think it's also a picture of what we read in this story that Jesus tells. Like last week, Jesus is not giving dinner etiquette tips. He is not restructuring social, you know, etiquette. He's not telling us a different way to live with each other. What he's trying to do is teach us what God is like.

He's revealing gospel truths. He is helping us see ourselves clearly. He's helping us see him clearly.

And the Pharisees weren't willing to see it. They missed it. Man, let's not miss it.

Just a couple of things as we close. Number one, We are the people who cannot repay the host.

We cannot repay the host. We come to this banquet undeserving of the invitation with absolutely nothing to offer. We come to the Father with no good of our own, and yet God graciously invites us.

Anyway, grace does not keep record of what we have to offer because it's not even on God's radar. His table will be filled. And so he keeps inviting, he keeps pursuing our hearts, he keeps compelling us to turn to him, to stop chasing pursuits that keep us from him, to come home to him. And find our seat at the table.

And here's the beautiful part of the good news of the gospel, is that you do not have to earn your seat at the table.

You've already been invited.

It doesn't matter where you've been. It doesn't matter what you've done. It does not matter where you are when the invitation comes to you.

Jesus made a way through his life, death, and resurrection for there to be a place at God's table for you.

And maybe you've spent years believing that there is no way that God's grace could come for someone like you, that your failures are too big, your shame is too heavy.

I think Jesus is saying to you this morning, no, seriously, There's a place for you at God's table.

So the question as we close this morning is, what will you do with your invitation?

Will you reject it? Too much going on. I don't need the invitation. I've just got to earn my way. I've got to be good enough.

Will you ignore it? That this is for somebody else, but it's not for me.

Will you accept it?

Will you accept his invitation to find grace and mercy, to join what will be the greatest block party for all of eternity? And you can do that by leaving behind the old and finding new life, by confessing and admitting, no, I need a savior, but I also need a Lord. Lord, I need to lay down my life to find new life in Christ. And you can do that today.

There's last thing that we can do with our invitation. We can share it.

We can share it with our family. We can share it with our friends. We can share it with our one.

We can expand God's table and invite more to find his His grace more by telling them, no, there is still room for you.

God invites people to the table who have nothing to offer him in return, and may we accept that invitation and share it with others.

And right now we're going to come to the table of communion.

We proclaim and remember that it is not by good that we have done—that we are saved. It is by what Jesus did for us in his death, his burial, and his resurrection. And so we remember that as we take the bread, his body that was given, and the cup, his blood that was shed, that gave us the grace to find our seat at the table. Just thank him for that this morning as you share in communion. And if you're ready to leave behind your old life and find new life, we'll have some people around the room that would love to to help you take that step, pray with you.

So God, thank you for inviting us and making a way for us to be invited. Thank you for sending Jesus to fling wide the gates to welcome us in.

Lord, may we just know that it is not by good that we have done, but what you have done for us that has given us our seat at that table.

So may we walk in humility knowing we've done nothing to earn it or deserve it. And may we help more people come to know love and follow you and find their seat with us.

Meet us in this moment, Lord, as we commune with you. In Jesus' name, amen.