

# Luke 14

## Verse 1-6

## On Call After Hours

5.02.2006

This week we begin a series of sermons looking at chapter 14 of Luke's gospel. It is a chapter which concentrates on the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.

That conflict had been there from the start. It was there because the Pharisees had understood God's word in a very harsh way, insisting on strict behaviour codes. It was not wrong to have moral discipline, but their main error came in that they had constricted many of the freedoms God had allowed, had enforced their own tighter codes of behaviour on people.

And when the people could not obey, then the Pharisees rejected them, elevated their own standing by pushing down others. This naturally meant that they concentrated on Bible passages that seemed to say "only those who obey are right with God".

Jesus came from His Father with the message that only those who trust in Him, which flows through to obedience, are right with God. He was critical of the Pharisees' attitudes which had become so hypocritical. For as long as they kept fastidious man-made rules, they believed God was impressed with them. Whereas, Jesus knew that God is not impressed by pride in our feeble efforts. We need to be humble before God, trust Jesus.

Today we'll concentrate on the first six verses of Luke 14. Jesus had been invited to a prominent Pharisee's house for a Sabbath meal. This was the second time Luke records Jesus being invited to a Pharisee's house to eat. In 7:36, the prostitute had washed his feet.

It seems like Jesus had progressed from eating at a lower ranked Pharisee's place, to a very prominent one. Maybe it was a trap. Certainly they were watching his every move, trying to catch him out.

It was the Sabbath, on at least four occasions before this in Luke's Gospel, Jesus had broken the Pharisee's fastidious rules about how to keep the Sabbath commandment.

We are told that in front of Jesus was a man suffering from dropsy. It looked like a classic set-up. A good lawyer could probably argue a case for entrapment now.

However Jesus needed no lawyer, for he knew God's Word immaculately.

But before I go on, I should check that you know what dropsy is. For it is not a servant who keeps spilling things off his tray as he goes near Jesus, as if he would say "Oopsy, I have a case of dropsy today!"

Rather, it is when your body swells with fluid. It makes a person look very bloated in their face, legs, arms, as the tissue under the skin swells with fluid. As the skin stretches, it gets very painful.

And that is where the sadness in this event occurs. If the prominent Pharisee had really cared for this man, and knew that Jesus could heal him, it would have been a marvellous time of faith and hope and rejoicing. Instead, because it was a Sabbath, the man was just a stooge. Jesus is being toyed with to see if he will break their Sabbath laws. If he does, then he can be easily dismissed.

But Jesus took charge of the entrapment and turned the tables on them. He asked "*Is it lawful to heal on a Sabbath or not?*" They remained silent. They did not want to tell him, because that was their trap. They did not want Jesus to skirt it, or step through it. He had to fall!

It must have been very tempting for Jesus to get upleave in disgust. Later, in his trial, when Herod asked for a miracle, he refused. Jesus did not perform for the curious. Nor did he heal just to start a fight, or to prove a point to the sceptics.

But there in front of him was a man that the Pharisees did not care for. This person had dropsy! To the Pharisees sickness was God's direct punishment on sinners. That man, or his parents, had obviously sinned. To them, he deserved the disease. So the man would not

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normally have been a regular guest in the house. More than likely, either he had been forced to come in, or else he had wanted Jesus to heal him and he had been let in for their test.

Jesus, full of compassion, took hold of him, healed him and let him go. Then Jesus turned his attention to the Pharisees.

*“If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, won’t you immediately pull him out?”*

They would “work” on a Sabbath to have compassion on their own son or ox. Their hearts would go out whether due to family ties or due to their pockets being affected.

Yet when it came to another person, who was in obvious need of help, they would wait for another day, and not help.

But all they could do was sit in silence. They refused to respond verbally. Their silence was the silence of stubborn wilfulness. They were not going to agree with him! So silence was their passive form of rebellion, but rebellion it was.

However, that was not the end of the conversation. Jesus stayed. He chatted more.

Come back next week to see what else he said.

But while you wait for that, have the same compassion that God has for you. Help where you can. Do not use the law to cover up a heart which does not care.

Blaze with compassion as your faith shines out in love.