

Luke 14

Verse 12-14 Guess Who Is Coming to Dinner

19.02.2006

Luke 14 is a chapter of conflict at a Sabbath meal. It began with Jesus healing the man with dropsy, then moved onto talking about how guests jostle to get the better seats, rather than being humble. Then in verse 12, Jesus focused on the host of the meal.

Before we look at it, let me reassure you that Jesus did not accept the invitation to the meal just so he could attack the guests and the host. They had invited him to trap him. They wanted to discredit him by bringing the sick man in front of him near the start of the meal. Jesus had compassion and healed him, and then turned his attention onto those who had set him up. They were smugly assessing Jesus in the silence of their pride.

Jesus then set out to show that their pride was falsely based and that they lacked the compassion and humility of God's children.

The host of the meal was a prominent Pharisee. As a leading Pharisee, people looked to him for guidance, wisdom and example. He would have been thought of as being very close to God, and therefore his actions would be interpreted by many as being what God desired.

But Jesus showed that they were not. Apart from how he had treated Jesus, his actions with people were not godly.

The way he had treated the man with dropsy was also reflected in the attitudes he showed in selecting his guest list for the meal.

Apparently the host had invited the people that he thought would be more likely to return the favour and invite him back for a meal. In this way, the host wasn't too unlike modern people.

When you host a party, who do you invite?

Family? Friends? Acquaintances?

When someone in business hosts a party, what sort of people do they invite? Family? Friends? Acquaintances? Colleagues? Prospects?

What is the point of the business lunch with clients or prospects? Is it not to help them feel

good, so they will purchase the goods or services on offer? Is it not a form of marketing?

But as for the prominent Pharisee, who should he invite? Jesus said *"When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

We must take care not to interpret this saying with the full weight of modern English. For if we do, then we will think Jesus said "Never invite your family or friends." It was not a blanket ban on them. Rather he was saying "Do not invite your friends and family as much, rather invite these others."

The poor and the sick will not be able to repay his generosity, and he will truly be giving alms by doing this. He will not get a financial return on the investment, but there will be a spiritual one. As a prominent Pharisee, there would be a marvellous example to model for others, and it is similar to what Jesus did.

To our hearing, Jesus words affect our economics, but assure us of spiritual benefit. But how would the prominent Pharisee have interpreted these words?

For a start, remember the man with dropsy that Jesus had healed at the start of the meal in Luke 14? How had the prominent Pharisee treated him? The man had been let into the house, not as a guest to be given a seat, but as an on-looker, to stand just in front of Jesus. He was treated as a stooge in part of their trap. Once he was healed, he was gone.

To the Pharisees, sickness was a sign of God's judgement. Poverty was a long term pain coming from not being right with God. For God promised to bless his people if they were faithful. However they would be sick and poor if

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they were unfaithful.

For Jesus to tell a prominent Pharisee to host banquets for the poor and sick, it was the same as slapping him in the face and turning his whole view of God's world on its head. It was worse than telling George Bush that he personally will have to wash Saddam Hussein's feet and cook his meals, every day for the rest of his life.

Jesus came to die for all people, not just the wealthy, middle class or self righteous. God's love for people and his provision for them is no longer reflected in health, wealth or prosperity. Just as Jesus cared for the poor and sick, so we are to care for them as well.

So here are three things we can pick up from this passage.

1. That Jesus showed us repeatedly that we are to care for all people and not to judge their spiritual character simply on their outward appearance, health or finances.
2. That we are to be generous. We are not only to extend our hospitality to those who will be able to pay us back. Rather we are to trust in God's economy.
3. That we are to be wary of becoming so proud in our own goodness or abilities that we fall into the temptation of the Pharisees to overlook and belittle those who are not as fortunate as us.