

Compassion & the Seat of Humility

Luke 14:1-14 (All Campuses, 6.12.2023)

the gospel according to

LUKE

Reconnecting

- *Is June a time of preparation, transition, celebration, or something else for you? How is it going?*

Create a Sacred Space

Spend a few moments in quiet, or sing a song. Then pray together: *Living God, help us to hear your holy Word with open hearts so that we may truly understand; and, understanding, that we may believe; and, believing, that we may follow in all faithfulness and obedience, seeking your honor and glory in all that we do. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

Worship Sourcebook, 3.1.15

Introduction

Our goal is to be a people apprenticed to the life of Jesus. His life and teaching are our example and our source of truth. Remember the commitments we make to each other to foster safety and freedom as we pursue spiritual growth together:

- Whenever possible, please listen to the sermon prior to gathering (Sunday or online).
- While we are meeting, commit to focussing rather than multitasking. Be all here.
- Give everyone an opportunity to share, even if it takes time to form or finish their thoughts.
- Be respectful and non-judgmental.
- Honour sharing boundaries (only what you have permission to share, no gossip) and guard confidentiality (what we share here stays here).
- Don't try to fix, problem-solve or rescue; point one another to the truths of the gospel.

Listening to God's Word

In every culture or environment selfishness has provoked people to posture and battle for status and power. You can see it in the layout of our workplaces, the organization of our cities, and online in the world of social media, among other places. Influential people are closely watched, not only to celebrate them for what they do right, but to tear them down for what they might do wrong. People work long hours to be the most popular "influencer," scheme for the corner office, or aspire to have the paparazzi want their picture on the red carpet. Unfortunately, these selfish dynamics often shape religious culture too. The result is a dearth of compassion for those on the margins. Jesus refused to play that self-serving game, and counseled his disciples to follow his lead. Let's discover how the gospel inspires us to unselfishly seek and share the seat of humility.

Small Group Discussion

- How does it feel when the dynamics described in the paragraph above are happening around you?

Read Luke 14:1-14.

- What stands out to you in this passage as a whole? What theme would you associate with it?
- **Re-read Luke 14:1-6.** What is the Pharisees' primary concern in this environment? How does it compare with Jesus' concern?
- This is the third time that Jesus has rebuked the Pharisees about their rigid Sabbath regulations (compare with **Luke 6:6-11** and **13:10-17**). What are some reasons why the Pharisees may not really hear Jesus after all this time? Why do you think the Pharisees are silent now?
- If you can, share a time when you sensed your behaviour or influence being scrutinized by others. How does Jesus model a different response to the pressure to fight for status or influence?
- **Re-read Luke 14:7-11.** How do people "pick the places of honour" (v 7) in your contexts?

- If you can, give an example of a time when you experienced either side of what Jesus described (v 8-9, v 10). What did it feel like to be treated in this way?
- How might a Christian seeking the seat of humility impact a workplace or other environment?
- What spiritual practice(s) could help you to be the kind of person who is free to act like this?
- **Re-read Luke 14:12-14** (see also **James 2:1-7**). Who are the marginalized people in our church or neighbourhood? Why are they important to Jesus?
- What keeps us from showing compassion by inviting marginalized people to the table with us?
- How does Jesus' own life, death, and resurrection exemplify the teachings in this passage (see **Luke 5:29-32, Philippians 2:6-11, Ephesians 2:6-7**)?
- How could the church improve the way it includes marginalized people in the community?
- What role could you or this Life Group play in such a change?

Practice: Secrecy

According to Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, the discipline of *secrecy* is "*practicing the spirit of Christ reflected in hiddenness, anonymity, lack of display and the holding of confidences.*" (*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, "Secrecy," p 118). Dallas Willard expands, "*We abstain from causing our good deeds and qualities to be known.... Secrecy rightly practiced enables us to place our public relations department entirely in the hands of God*" (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 172). Calhoun reminds us, *Deeds designed to create an image or support an appearance can certainly bring about good – but they are not free gifts. They are deeds bound to 'what I can get out of it.' God knows the heart of your deeds. The Holy One understands motivations and intentions. This being the case, admitting what is inside seems like the only sensible thing to do*" (119).

Reflection: This week, take time to journal on the following questions, and discern steps of obedience:

1. What are you doing that looks good or holy on the outside, but has been infected by a desire (or even addiction) to be noticed or "liked" by others? Confess these motives to God.
2. Do you use secrets you share with others to manipulate circumstances in your favour? Confess these motives to God, and resolve to honour God by keeping confidences.
3. Calhoun reminds us, "*We often plan special and intimate things for those we love, things we don't share with others*" (119). What special, intimate act of goodness could you incorporate into your relationship with God that would be done out of pure love for God and with God, unnoticed by others? (For example, give a gift, clean up a mess, practice a spiritual discipline. Just you and God enjoying the fun of it together.)
4. Willard writes, "*If you want to experience the flow of love as never before, the next time you are in a competitive situation, pray that the others around you will be more outstanding, more praised, and more used of God than yourself. Really pull for them and enjoy their successes*" (173). Talk to God about how you feel about this idea.

Memorize: Matthew 6:6, John 3:30, or Philippians 2:3.

Caring for One Another

- ***Do you or your family have a need that the Life Group can help meet?***

Using **the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)** as a guide, based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.