

Missing the Kingdom Banquet

Luke 14:15-24 (All Campuses, 6.19.2023)

the gospel according to

LUKE

Reconnecting

- *Are you an introvert or an extravert? How does that impact your experience of community?*

Create a Sacred Space

Spend a few moments in quiet, or sing a song. Then pray together: *God of compassion, you are slow to anger and full of mercy, welcoming sinners who return to you with penitent hearts. Receive in your loving embrace all who come home to you. Seat them at your bountiful table of grace, that, with all your children, they may feast with delight on all that satisfies the hungry heart. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

Worship Sourcebook, J.2.2.6

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

When Jesus came, preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15), people responded in a variety of ways. Surprisingly, those who should have known what that meant were often the least open to Jesus' message. Waiting for God's kingdom yet to come, they had become entangled with the trappings of the worldly kingdoms around them, and their hearts were hard to the King when he came. What if we are equally in danger of missing the kingdom? What are the distractions and entanglements that keep people who know the right "answers" from accepting his invitations? What could we be missing by allowing these distractions to rule our lives instead of Jesus? Here in Luke 14, Jesus tells a parable to expose their hypocrisy. "Parables are Jesus' means of communicating truth through a narrative analogy in order to teach a moral or spiritual lesson" (*ESV Study Bible*, note on Matthew 13:3). Let's listen to Jesus' story, heed his warnings, and discover the freedom of simplicity!

Small Group Discussion

- Who (living or dead, *not* Jesus) would you most like to be invited to have dinner with, and why?

Read Luke 14:15-24 (read v 12-14 for context).

- What stands out to you in this passage as a whole? What theme would you associate with it?
- Considering what Jesus has just taught in v 12-14, why do you think Jesus' fellow guest makes his comment in v 15? What assumptions might he be expressing?
- *Two invitations were customary: the initial invitation, sent well in advance, and the day-of announcement that all was ready, sent to those who had said they intended to be there. Consider these initial "invitations": **Isaiah 25:6-9, Isaiah 35:3-8, Isaiah 55:1-7.** Compare with **Matthew 4:17, Luke 7:18-23, 8:1.** How do Jesus' invitations relate to these earlier prophetic messages?*

- What do you notice about the excuses that keep people from coming to the banquet?
- What excuses or distractions tempt you to not fully embrace a life of apprenticeship to Jesus?
- What beliefs or assumptions about the present world are underneath the excuses we make?
- *The master of the parable widens his party invitation, first to include Israelite outsiders (those in the streets and lanes of the city), then Gentiles (outside the city on the highways and behind hedges) (v 21-23). What does this tell us about the heart of the Master (God/Jesus) with regard to his kingdom?*
- What risks are people taking by declining Jesus' invitation to the banquet of his kingdom (v 24)?
- *Jesus was speaking to people who knew the Law, the prophecies about Messiah, and the descriptions of what the kingdom would be like. What warning or comfort should we take for ourselves as we see how people responded to Jesus when he arrived?*
- What excuses do you need to set aside so you can take steps of obedience as King Jesus' apprentice?

Practice 1: Celebrate the Banquet

Celebrate the Lord's Supper together as a Life Group. Prior to your meeting, prepare bread and juice. Sing 1-2 songs of musical worship. Use **Luke 22:14-20** as your guide, eating and drinking at the appropriate moments. Discuss what it means to be welcomed to Jesus' table, regardless of wealth, status, success, etc.

Practice 2: Simplicity

According to Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, the discipline of simplicity "cultivates the great art of letting go... aims and loosens inordinate attachment to owning and having... [and] brings freedom and with it generosity" (*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, "Simplicity," p 84). She continues, "Throughout church history followers of Jesus have intentionally vowed to live simply. Following the example of the Lord, they have given up comfort and possessions and the clutter of life to leave larger spaces for loving God and neighbour" (p 85). Richard Foster states, "Simplicity is the only thing that sufficiently reorients our lives so that possessions can be genuinely enjoyed without destroying us" (*Celebration of Discipline*, p 84). However, James Wilhoit reminds us, "The setting aside of false attachments is really the work of a lifetime" (*Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, p 196).

Reflection: This week, journal or talk with a friend about these questions; discern steps of obedience:

1. How has the culture's "more is better" mentality shaped you?
2. What things or activities keep your life convoluted, complicated and confusing, interfering with your experience of the reign of God?
3. What "simple pleasures" could you learn to be satisfied with (they don't require money, maintenance, or travel), that would "leave larger spaces for loving God and neighbour"?
4. How have you complicated your relationship with God? What could be simplified in order to relax in God's presence?

Memorize: Matthew 6:19-21, Mark 10:21, or Philippians 4:11-12.

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.