

Come to the Table Sermon Series – Week 5

God's Radical Hospitality

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Sermon Preached: Sunday 13th July 2025

Preacher: Pastor Jason Sander

Location: St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton

Sermon Text: [Luke 14:1,7-24](#)

My friends, grace, mercy and peace to you in the name of our Lord and I say to Jesus Christ, let me pray. Loving Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for your word and we pray that as we gather around your word here this morning that your Holy Spirit would transform our hearts and our minds into the likeness of Jesus. Holy Spirit, come, man, rest on me.

May the words that I speak bring glory to your name and for the benefit of your people gathered here. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen. Perhaps you know the feeling of being invited or not being invited to something important.

Maybe like I said with the kids, not getting that invite to a birthday party when you expected it or a wedding, a dinner with people we admire. You know the feeling of being invited or not being invited to something important. See, these parties, they're not just about the food or the music, the decorations dressing up nicely, whatever.

It's really about belonging, being included, being seen. It's why it hurts so much when we are left out, when others get the nod and we don't, when it feels like everyone else has a seat at the table and we're standing on the outside. But in Jesus' day, the table meant more than just mealtime.

It's a place of status, of social climbing, of power. Where you sat at the table, dinner table, said something, said about how important you were. It reflected your honour or your shame.

And for the host, well, the dinner party was a public performance. The longer your guest list, the finer the food, the better the wine, the more significant that they appeared. And the invited guests, well, they had to read the room very carefully, sit in the wrong place and embarrass yourself and potentially shame your family.

But then Jesus comes along and in Luke 14, He's turning the world upside down yet again. He flips the tables. This is not how it is in God's kingdom.

So Jesus, He's eating at this high-ranking, prominent Pharisee, high on the honour list. He's been invited, He's just probably preached at the Sabbath in the synagogue. And so He comes seemingly as an honoured guest.

But He's being watched, we're told. You may remember He's just annoyed a bunch of Pharisees by telling them a whole bunch of what you're doing wrong. And Luke said, from that moment on, from that moment on, they've besieged Jesus with questions, trying to catch Him out.

So Jesus is here at this dinner table, He's being watched. The bit we just missed between 1 and 7 is about Jesus healing on the Sabbath, and He does heal a man who was in need. And then we come into this whole idea of, well, what is honour? And so Jesus, He sees people scrambling for the best seats.

Maybe He looked a bit like the moment at a wedding reception when the seating chart goes wrong. With a planned wedding, preparing that seating chart would be quite a stressful ordeal, knowing who's going to sit next to each other. You'd know that that's Sam and Christian, wouldn't you? Just recently.

Who sits closer to the bridal table? Who's going to be back in the back rowdy corner? The rowdy table. But then something can also go wrong. You could plan this chart out.

But then someone sits in the wrong spot. They think, oh, I belong up here by the bridal table. But then they get quietly ushered away.

Or perhaps someone proudly walks in, expecting a seat up the front only to realise that they actually aren't even on the list. I've seen that happen at a wedding before. Quite embarrassing.

So Jesus sees all this happening. So He goes on to tell a story. He says, when you invite someone to a wedding feast, don't take the place of honour.

But when you're invited, take the lowest place. Why? Because if you take the best scene and someone more distinguished rocks up, the host is going to ask you to move, and that's going to be humiliating. You go down a few pegs on that honour list, better take the lowest seat and then get invited up.

Some great wisdom, worldly wisdom. That's not what Jesus is offering here. He's revealing something about God's Kingdom, the way God does things.

I see the thing is, I think for us as humans, we're all tempted to exalt ourselves. There's a part of us that desires that recognition, even a little bit. We want to matter.

We want to be seen and celebrated. And so we work for it. We angle for it, sometimes subtly, sometimes more obviously.

We want to prove ourselves to God, to others, and maybe even to ourselves. What does Jesus say? All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. See, from the Garden of Eden, to the Tower of Babel, to the disciples arguing about who's the greatest, you see the heart of what sin does, of brokenness.

It's the desire to climb up, to be our own gods. And we all slip up with this, trying to earn our place, hoping our good works or church attendance or moral record will move us closer to the head of the table, up that list. Now we may even believe that humility earns us a place at God's table.

See, we're not invited because we've managed to be low enough or good enough. We're invited because Jesus was humbled for us, to the point of death, even death on the cross. That's the gospel in this.

True, humility is a result of seeing ourselves in light of that grace. It's a fruit of faith. It's not a ticket in.

See, even when we are proud and we exalt ourselves and we believe we don't really need God, He never gives up on us. In His mercy, He may reveal our brokenness and that sin and show us our emptiness and lead us to repentance too. And that's His gift.

That's life at His table, renewing us, restoring us, leading us. Back to the Pharisee in Jesus. So Jesus then, He turns to the host and offers him a challenge that would have absolutely turned heads in that day.

He says, When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours. If you do, they may invite you back. So you will be repaid.

But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. That is absolutely radical. It's radical in Jesus' day and I think it's still pretty radical today as well.

It's the radical hospitality of God. See, in that culture, hospitality was transactional and we still see it in our Western culture too, but for them, in Jesus' day, hospitality was transactional. You invited people who could return the favour, who could increase your honour and help your status.

Everything was calculated. But Jesus says, Do something different. Invite those who cannot pay you back.

It really confronts our self-interest, doesn't it? Because we naturally love those who love us back. We're drawn to people who affirm us, who benefit us. We're kind when there's something in it for us, whether that's a favour, a feeling or some sort of reputation.

But Jesus exposes the deeper issue. That's that we love conditionally. Our human tendency is to put conditions on the love that we give.

We calculate the cost, we protect our time, our comfort, our resources, we extend hospitality to the deserving. But Jesus calls us to a love that expects nothing in return. So we go into God's heart.

Because, relationally speaking, before God, we are the poor, we are the crippled, we are the blinds and we have nothing to offer God. Nothing at all. And yet he invites us in.

He goes out into the alleyways and says, Come, come to my table. Not because of what we can repay, but because of who he is. God doesn't wait for us to clean up our acts.

He doesn't need us to be impressive. He just welcomes us in our need. And that's grace.

That's grace. Now the story continues because someone at the table, perhaps trying to steer the conversation back to safer ground, says, Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. Sounds pretty righteous and polite.

But what Jesus hears is beneath the surface. For Jesus hears beneath the surface of that comment. So he tells that parable.

Man, prepared, a great banquet, invitations have gone out, the feast is ready. He calls people in. That's what you did back in that day.

Feast took a lot of time to prepare. And this banquet was the hugest ever. Invitations were sent, then everything was ready.

So come now, my feast is ready. But when that time comes, the invited guests start making excuses, pretty poor excuses. One just bought land.

One just has some new oxen. Another just got married. None of these are emergencies.

They're just excuses. In fact, in Middle Eastern culture, as I said, they would have already RSVP'd. And backing out now, it just isn't rude.

It's a public insult. It brings dishonour to the host. To the host responds with grace and with urgency.

Go quickly into the alleyways and streets. Bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. Compel them.

Compel them to come in so that my house will be full. So we have a shift in this story because the honoured guests, those religious insiders, the ones who assume they had a place, they miss out. Not because they weren't invited, but because they didn't value that invitation.

And that's the painful truth of this banquet. Everyone is invited to the banquet. No one is excluded from God's gracious invitation.

But many refuse it. Not because they're unworthy. Because they believe they just don't need it.

That's what sin does. It blinds us. It convinces us that we're fine on our own.

It tells us that we don't need grace. It tells us we can do it on our own. We may say, I've got my career, my family, my plans, or I'll come to God later.

But in the meantime, we walk past the feast and we close the door behind us. And yet God never closes the door. There's always opportunities to come to God.

He doesn't rescind the invitation. Even if we do reject Him, He pursues us. He sends out messengers.

He sends His Spirit. He works repentance in our hearts, not to shame us, but to bring us to the joy of the table. It's not our humility that makes us worthy.

It's not our hunger or our spiritual desires. It's Christ, crucified and risen, that makes us worthy. He has made the way.

We don't belong at the table because we're good. We belong because Jesus gave Himself for us. So if you feel unworthy, if you're painfully aware of your pride, your failures, your messiness, hear this, you're invited.

You're exactly the kind of person God invites. He prepares the table. He sends the invitation.

He brings you to your seat, and He gives you life in the banquet. If you're unsure about God, if you feel unworthy, uncertain, not good enough, know this. You are invited.

No resume required. No spiritual record to polish up first. Jesus has already made everything ready.

And if you really accepted that invitation and you're part of the King, you're sitting at the table of grace, then we have that task to go out and invite others because that's the mission of the church, to extend the welcome of Jesus. We can ask ourselves, who's sitting at your table, who feels left out? Who is God calling you to reflect? He's welcome to. Could be a new person at church, the neighbour you don't know well, the family member who feels like a lost cause, the person who doesn't believe that they belong.

We don't need to create a perfect guest list. We just need to make room. Jesus gave His life so that we could be welcomed, secure in His love.

His invitation always stands, not because of who we are, because of who He is, not because we are humble, because He is gracious. And Jesus calls out, continually calls out, come for everything is now ready, a great invitation for us to draw near to God, to His love, His forgiveness and His grace. Let me pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank You that when we were outside, as You welcomed us, when we were broken, You honoured us, and You still do. But help us to live lives of humble love, to throw open the doors of grace to others. Lord, lead us to make our homes, our churches, our hearts places where Your radical hospitality is seen and shared.

We ask this in Your Name, Jesus. Amen.