

September 18, 2022

Day 1: Luke 14:16

Then Jesus said to him, 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many.'

In Jesus' time a great dinner would be for those with power and money. For those few who were very wealthy there was not a lot to spend their money on so they gave great dinners. A host would not go to that expense for just anybody. The dinner would be a chance to "showoff" to others of your similar social standing, your wealth and influence. If the number was large (as Jesus is implying) then the house had to be large. This dinner is not a cocktail party where guests are walking around but a meal at a table or a number of tables in a large room. Eating and drinking to excess would be normal. Pious Jews and Christians were very critical of the custom of excessive dinners.

Question: Why do you think the early Christians disapproved of great dinners?

Challenge: Who would you invite (in general) to your wedding or anniversary?

Scripture: James 2:1-7

Day 2: Luke 14:17

At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now."

People invited to the dinner would have been told ahead of time when it was to take place. The slave going out to those invited was just telling them now was the time to come. It can be assumed that the guests, being told ahead of time and called upon now, had agreed to come when they were first invited. The prophets and sages in the Old Testament have told us to get ready for the "great banquet" that is coming. When Jesus announced that now was the time to come, they had excuses. We today are told in the Bible, come the dinner is ready.

Question: Is it polite to ask what is being served before accepting the invitation?

Challenge: Do you think God is inviting you to do something or go someplace?

Scripture: Hebrews 4

Day 3: Luke 14:18-20

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come."

The people the host was trying to show off for turned their noses up at him. From the perspective of the host it must have felt like the guests turned him down because they got a better offer for entertainment. The guests may not have wanted to come because they thought they would owe the host some favor in the future. The excuses are very lame, especially for the first century. Jesus uses these excuses to show that the guests do not value the host or the host's hospitality. The guests do not take the host seriously.

Question: Which of the excuses above make sense?

Challenge: Look at your behavior this week and see if you have made excuses.

Scripture: Romans 1:15-25

Day 4: Luke 14:21-22

So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." And the slave said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room."

It interesting that even a person's anger can work to help them do what is right. Many years ago a teen told me he got into memorizing scripture out of anger. He was in a Bible memory contest and performed badly because he did not work at memorizing very well. He was so mad at himself that he vowed to win the next contest - and he did. Jesus seems to be saying that instead of inviting those who can pay you back, invite those who need to eat.

Question: Why invite the poor, crippled, and blind?

Challenge: How do you explain why Jesus did not say invite everybody and see who comes?

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Day 5: Luke 14:23-24

Then the master said to the slave, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner."

The host is learning the meaning of hospitality and is beginning to feel the joy of serving. He wants everybody to come and fill his house. He has had a change of heart. He was no different than those who he first invited. He was just as self-centered and concerned with his own enjoyment and pleasure. Now the host realizes that it is better and feels better to be one who gives rather than a consumer. His house now is full and everybody is eating and drinking together without concern for wealth or social status.

Question: Would you have come to dinner without knowing the host or the guests but knowing it was great food and drink?

Challenge: Compel and invite seem like opposite ways of having guests. Why did Jesus change the terms from invite to compel?

Scripture: Isaiah 25:6-10

Day 6: Luke 14:13

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.'

Jesus ends this story by giving the order in which people will respond to the Gospel. Everybody is invited to the great feast of salvation in Christ. However those who are hurting will see the hope, offered by Jesus, and respond first. Then as others see those who were once hopeless filled with hope and joy they will come to see. Jesus said a few times in his ministry that he came to call sinners and he came to heal the sick. Not because everybody else does not need Jesus but those hurting will most likely come first.

Question: Why is it hard for a rich person to respond to the Gospel?

Challenge: How would you define rich in our country? Think about it in terms of more than money.

Scripture: Psalm 1