

“There’s Room at MY Table for You” // Luke 14:12–14 // Come to the Table: Luke 14

Summit family, rejoice with me over last week! 129 baptisms. And more happening right now...

Luke 14 if you have your Bible... We’re in **Luke 14 in our 2nd week** in a series called *Come to the Table*, in which we see how Jesus used the occasion of a banquet—a party—to teach people about his Kingdom.

Here’s something many of you will be excited to know: **Meals were central to the life and ministry of Jesus**, especially in Luke’s Gospel. One scholar points out that at just about every point in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is either coming from a meal, going to a meal, or at a meal.¹ Now that’s a Savior worth following, Amen! You can literally **eat your way through Luke’s Gospel—so much so that Jesus’s** critics label him “a drunkard or a glutton.” **This is an area of Christlikeness I’ve already mastered.** I’m like, “**Lord, make me more like you**” and then I order that extra side of cheese fries. *(BTW, I should also point out however that he seems to have gotten in an extraordinary number of steps in every day—I mean, when his disciples took the boat across the water he chose to walk across the waters because he hadn’t gotten his steps in. So master both sides.)* You’re like, “**You’re the worst Bible interpreter eve.**”

¹ Robert Karris, *Eating Your Way through Luke’s Gospel*

Works consulted:

The Gospel Comes with a House Key, Rosaria Butterfield

“Kingdom Hospitality,” Tony Merida

“What Is a Disciple?” Greg Laurie

“Who Should We Invite to Thanksgiving Dinner?” John Piper

Last week we saw how Jesus had invited us to the party of his kingdom and what keeps people from it. Today, we’re going to see how he uses us to extend that invitation to others.

Let me remind you where we left off last week: [25] Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned to them and said,) and says, [26] “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

- **And we talked about how tough a statement that was.** Compared to how committed you are to Jesus, every other relationship—even your most intimate ones—should look like hate.
- **Can you honestly say that compared to your commitment to Jesus**, your commitment to your friends, family, and desires for your life look like hate?

Today, Jesus is going to give us a picture of what that looks like in action.

- **Now, let me give you a warning:** *Today is going to be difficult* for some of you—it is going to challenge some of you at **some pretty fundamental levels**, to rethink your whole approach to life—but Jesus’s message today also has the power to set you free onto a journey which is going bring so much more joy and purpose into your life than what you are currently experiencing.
- Let me ask: Don’t you **ever wonder, sometimes**, if anything about your life matters? Like, ‘Is it **making any real difference?**’ Or, ‘Does it have **any eternal significance?**’

- Let me ask: Aren't you tired of feeling like you just **get up every day**, try to make ends meet, watch a little TV, look forward to vacation and just **go through this process year after year?**
- God **created you to crave** eternal significance with your life, and today Jesus will show you how to get it.
- **Here's the thing:** Living in a way that has eternal significance may not look like you expect, and **what Jesus teaches here** may surprise you. It's **both less glamorous and more rewarding** than you expect.

Luke 14:12–14

Again, the context: Jesus is at this rich dude's party, and **at some point, Jesus looks around and notices** that the guy throwing the party has invited only his other rich, popular friends to be at the party. (Now, Jesus wasn't himself rich, of course, but he was pretty well-known and he could do some killer party-tricks, so he got invited. "Hey Jesus, we're out of Chex Mix—can you do that thing where you multiply it so there's 12 baskets left over?" So, he always got invited.)

*12 But he said to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

- **I have to imagine this may have been a tad awkward.** He looks around and says, "When you have a party, don't invite these people. The only reason you invite these people is because you hope they will invite you back to their parties.
- **Instead, invite people who nothing you are really interested in—** who can't invite you to their parties because they don't even own houses.

- Listen: **What Jesus was telling them here would have been economic suicide.** Parties in those days were the places business took place. It's where **relationships were formed**, networking happened, and deals were done.
- So, **inviting rich, influential people** to your party was a shrewd economic decision, because **they would feel obligated** to invite you back to theirs, where you could **get to know all their rich friends** and do business with them.
- **To invite the poor, the crippled**, the lame and the blind meant that you were spending your resources on those who couldn't add financial benefit to your life.

Now, things haven't changed that much in business today, of course. **But remember what we saw last week**—when Jesus invited people to his party, he didn't invite people who could add value to his life. **He invited the poor, the blind, the lame, the crippled.**

In a word, US.

And if he **hadn't done that**, we **would be excluded** from his eternal party. And that should **fundamentally re-orient** how we approach life.

2 questions I want us to consider from this 'parable': 1 metaphorical; 1 literal.

Metaphorical: **1. If your life were depicted as a party, who would be the "invited guests"?**

- **Imagine we chose to depict your life in the metaphor of a party.** If so, who would you be throwing the party for?
- Is your life a series of calculated relationships and decisions that can add value to your life? Is it a party you are throwing for you? Or is your party you are throwing for those who can't necessarily pay you back?

- **Following Jesus means that you look at your life, your talents, your resources, as resources given to you to bless people who can't necessarily pay you back—at least in this life.*

Let me apply this to how you think about your career. (Later in the message, I'll talk about your *personal life*, but for now let's think about your career.

- **For whose benefit do you primarily see your career?**
- If we thought of your **career as a big party** you are throwing, who is that party being thrown for?

Here are 4 questions you can ask about your job:

***A. Do you look at your job primarily as a way of serving others, or as a way of enriching yourself?**

- This is **something we haven't taught enough about** in the church—but God gave us our talents and our careers primarily as a way of serving others.
- **One of the primary ways God cares for his creation** is through the skills he gives to people.
- **Martin Luther** says this: *'When we pray the Lord's Prayer we ask God to give us this day our daily bread. How does he do this? He does it by means of the farmer who planted and harvested the grain, the baker who made the flour into bread, the person who prepared our meal.'*¹ **Martin Luther**
 - We can add to that the truck drivers who hauled the produce, the factory workers in the food processing plant, the warehouse workers, the whole sale distributors, the stock boys, and the lady at the checkout counter. Also playing their part are the bankers, development investors, advertisers, lawyers, agricultural scientists, mechanical engineers, government officials, and every other player in the nation's

economic system. **All of these were instrumental in enabling you to eat your morning "everything bagel."**

- **God could have given the bread to us directly**, of course, through a **miraculous provision like manna**—but typically he provides us our morning bagel through the skills and careers of human beings, *"who in their different capacities and according to their different talents,"* Gene Veith says, *serve each other.*²
- **The point is, whatever your job is, you should see it as a gifting by God to meet the needs of others, and we should see our jobs as gifts by God to bless others.**
 - You say, "Well, I'm just a **stay-at-home mom**." Well, your job is the most important—raising godly kids to serve the world. I know a pastor's wife who graduated from a top college and got sick of hearing her friends give off a vibe of disappointment when her friends asked her what she was doing and she said she was staying at home with the kids. **So, she started saying, "I am socializing four homo sapiens into the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition in order that they might be instruments for the transformation of the social order into the kind of eschatological utopia that God willed from the beginning of creation... What do you do?"**
- **Whatever task or job God has assigned you to, you should see it as a gifting by God to serve others.** It doesn't mean you don't also make a profit from it; just that 1st and foremost we see it as a way to love and serve others.
 - **The architect** helps provide beautiful, safe buildings for people to live in. The **lawyer** helps craft and implement laws that make our society fairer and more equitable. The **pharmacist** deals drugs that help us avoid sickness. The **actor provides entertainment** that adds joy to our lives, or in the case of Nicolas Cage, gives us a hero to model our lives after. The

² Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work*, 13–14

barista at Starbucks provides caffeine hits that make us feel like life is worth living.

- **And all God's people said, "Amen?"**

The second question you need to ask, based on Jesus' teaching here, is...

***B. Are there ways your job (or skill set) can benefit the poor?**

- You **ought to ask** if there are ways that your job can benefit those who are the "poor, crippled, blind and lame."
- I **want to be careful here**, because I don't want to imply that all good business is **non-profit or charity work**. Good, for-profit businesses are absolutely critical to eliminating poverty long-term.
- But for **some of you, there are aspects of your career** that you can use to bless others that go beyond profit.
 - It could be the **lawyer, of course, who dedicates** a certain amount of their *pro bono*,
 - or the **dentist who engages** in free community clinics.
 - But I **know an entrepreneur in our church** who has dedicated his services expertise now that he is approaching retirement to **helping get businesses off the ground** in low-income areas.
 - I know **local business owners** who work with our prison ministry to help provide jobs for some of our prison brothers and sisters when they are released.
- **Some of you have skills that can benefit the poor overseas.**
 - In pioneer missions areas there is an almost endless need for **English teachers** and **builders** (construction, disaster relief, etc.).
 - Honestly, **any job that makes a viable wage in the U.S.** is something that can benefit the poor *somewhere*. The need for good **lawyers, doctors, accountants**, in developing countries is massive. And broad experience in **business** leadership might be the most needed.

- **I'd put it this way:** If it's even crossing your mind that you can climb the ladder in your workplace, then you *already* have skills that could transform entire communities in the poorer parts of the world.

- Listen, **according to the Theology of Work project**—1.4 billion live in poverty; another 1.1 in basic subsistence
 - 100,000 kids a week die of starvation and hunger related diseases
 - Jesus's parable has to mean something in light of that: *Undoubtedly, I've heard it said, there is a connection between empty stomachs on one side of the Atlantic and empty lives on the other!*
- The skills and resources to end most poverty, I believe, are already in the church.
- **Forbes: 75% believe...** Not true, but why not aspire to see if you can go?

C. How can you leverage your job for the Great Commission?

- One of the myths we believe is that the **call to leverage your life for the Great Commission** is this mystical moment, a sacred experience that only a select few ever experience.
 - I refer to it now as the "Cheerios method"....
- **That's not true.** The call of God. The call to leverage your life for the GC was included...
 - **Matt 4:19**
 - No longer *if*, only where and how.
- Listen:
 - We live in a world where there are still over **6500 unreached people groups**. No witness.
 - If you lined up all the people in those groups up into a single file line they would circle the earth 25x. *Can you imagine a line of people as long as the earth, 25 people wide, treading hopelessly to destruction?*
 - **Surely that requires something from us.** Over the years I've used the example of walking beside a railroad track...

- **You don't need a call, you have the call.** 2 Peter 3:9. **You don't need to hear a voice; you have a vers.—**
- It seems to me that the burden of proof lies upon us who stay, not those who go...
- **Some of you might be able to expand your company (or take your skill) to places in the world with no gospel witness.**
- Historically, this is always how the gospel has traveled best.
 - Stephen Neill...
 - Acts 11: "the brothers"
 - My dad
 - 2 years for students and seniors...

Which leads to question #4...

***D. What do you see as the primary use for the money you make from your job?**

- The **money you get from your job is certainly how you take care of and bless your family**, and there's nothing wrong with enjoying the fruits of your labor.
- But one of the reasons God prospered **you is for the purposes of blessing others.**
- **For many of you, the whole party you are throwing with the money you make from your job is for you.** Sure, you throw some change and leftovers God's direction, but you're not giving the first and best to God, and not using the money God gave for the purposes God gave it to you for.
- God didn't enable you to make the money you make just so you could drive the nicest cars, live in the nicest houses, and have a life filled with the nicest amenities. He gave it to you so you could **leverage it for the poor and needy** and we'll have to answer to God for that.
- **One of my favorite biblical heroes has always been William Tyndale.** He translated the Bible into English. I learned something new about him...

So that is question #1. *If your life were depicted as a party, who would be the "invited guests"?* Here is a 2nd question from Jesus's teaching. **It is much more literal:**

2. Are you including outsiders at your dinner table?

Let's just take Jesus's teaching at face value. Around your actual table—your meals—are you including "the poor, lame, blind and crippled?"

I read a book recently I want to commend to all of you (and we have copies available at the Next Steps area—and if we run out, you can just get them on Amazon or BN, of course). The book is called *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*—it's written by a lady named *Rosaria Butterfield*, who actually lives here locally.

She has the most interesting story

- Practicing lesbian and feminist. Wrote seminal article on critical theory still referenced today. Leader in the culture war.
- Group called Promise Keeper was coming: began a 2-year relationship with Ken and Floy Smith.
 - a. She first went to do research for a paper she was writing against evangelical Christians
 - b. Amazed by their hospitality: "There were so many people coming to the Smith house that it was as if the front door didn't actually exist."
- Make a long story short—through their love eventually she came to faith in Christ. Left the lesbian community; got fired from Syracuse and is now married to a pastor named Kent Butterfield here in Durham and is the mother of 4 children, 2 of which are foster-adoptions.

She points out that in today's climate, this is the main way people will have to be reached, and it's **the primary way Scripture** tells us to reach out to people! As I've shown you, this is **how Jesus primarily**

reached out to people. The gospel, she says, is supposed to come with a housekey to our lives.

She says: *“Those who live out radically ordinary hospitality see their homes not as theirs at all but as God’s gift to use for the furtherance of his kingdom... My prayer is that this book will help you let God use your home, apartment, dorm room, front yard, community gymnasium, or garden for the purpose of making strangers into neighbors and neighbors into family.”*

In the book, she gives what she calls a typical overview of a **typical week in the Butterfield household**

- **Sunday** — worship and fellowship, which includes a fellowship meal for church family at the Butterfield’s house for ten to thirty people on Sunday nights
- **Monday** — sometimes delivers a meal to a neighbor in need
- **Tuesday** — dinner, informal conversation, and prayer at Butterfield home with neighbors and church friends
- **Wednesday** — prayer meeting at church; errands, such as dropping off a gift to a neighbor in jail
- **Thursday** — prayer walk in the evening with neighbors; Thursday is regular “neighbor night”
- **Friday** — regular Costco run with an offer to pick up items for neighbors; optional meal and fellowship with neighbors
- **Saturday** — optional meal and prayer with church members and neighbors

I shared this with our staff, and I told them two things strike me about that schedule:

- **First, it seems pretty exhausting.** And, to be honest, that’s not my family’s schedule right now.
- **But second, most of it are things any of us can do!** You don’t have to have a great home or a lot of money or be particularly

gifted to do this. You just need to believe that God wants you to include “strangers and outsiders” in your rhythms of life.

- I have gotten to know her—and been over at her house for dinner. She told me: “The only social media I am on is the Next Door app. I am the Next Door queen. I know when anything happens with my neighbors, and I am the first one there offering help.”
- **She thinks that the bulk of gospel ministry is accomplished just by being a good neighbor.**

Throughout the book, she deals with obstacles American Christians have to this:

The first, **A. The wrong definition of hospitality**

- This is a big misconception, particularly in **Southern culture**. We think hospitality means entertaining church friends.
- **Biblically speaking, hospitality means welcoming in “the stranger.”**³ The word “hospitality” literally means “love of strangers.”
- **Welcoming ‘insiders’ around your table in the Bible** is called fellowship. That’s important, too. But it is different from hospitality.
- There’s nothing wrong with enjoying fellowship, but don’t limit your **guest list to family/friends/relatives/rich neighbors. Where’s the single mom at your table? Orphans? Special needs? Prisoner. Foster child. The abused?**
- This is **central to Christian ministry. One of the requirements for an elder** is that they are “given to hospitality.”
- Don’t include in your households only those you enjoy, can benefit your life, or who can repay you!

***B. Fear**

³ *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*, 35.

Many of us, she said, are afraid of what will happen if we open up our homes. What it will expose our kids to! We think of our homes as **our safe castles**.

But the **real danger is not what some stranger may introduce** in our family, but the sin that grow in your kids hearts when they live only sheltered, self-centered lives.⁴

It's **not stranger danger that's really dangerous**—it's selfishness— isolation from the stranger, that really destroys.

Another author I was reading was talking about how fear kept his family from fostering. What influence will it do to my kids? **Eventually** he sensed God just telling him to trust him and do it, and he said now he sees 3 benefits of fostering:

First, for the kid.

Second, for the family.

***"But third, providing care for these children is the single best things we have ever done for our own kids. We have learned how God uses hospitality to shape and form us. That is a fascinating aspect of kingdom living. As you bestow a blessing for the benefit of others, you realize that you too are a recipient of God's grace."**

He says, **"The real question is not, 'How dangerous is that stranger?' The real question is, 'How dangerous will I become if I am not more open?'"**⁵

One of our pastors and his wife have gotten involved in the refugee community. She said, "At first, I was afraid..." Can I borrow a pressure

cooker? She says, "But the richness these relationships have brought into my family I wouldn't change for anything!"

This is what it means to follow Jesus! What do you think growing in Christlikeness means? What do you think *sanctification* really is? To **get busy in church**? Memorize **some verses**? Clean yourself up a little morally and stop using dirty words?

*God didn't save you to sanitize you and put you on the shelf; he saved you to send you into service!*⁶ He **converted** you not to quarantine you but to commission you!

C. Viewing hospitality as performance rather than calling

Rosaria says: **"We sometimes forget that the Christian life is a calling, not a performance. Hospitality is necessary whether you have cat hair on the couch or not. People will die of chronic loneliness sooner than they will cat hair in the soup."**⁷

First, if you have a cat, get rid of the thing. Easy fix. That's your problem right there. But if you are hard of heart and won't do that, don't let pride over how clean your house is keep you from using it for the kingdom!

The mission is too important to make hospitality primarily about what others think about your housekeeping skills.

- Rosaria's hospitality is usually **pretty mundane**. She makes a *lot* of coffee and a *lot* of soups. *Nothing about this is glamorous ... but everything about it is life-saving!*
- Honestly, **think of how absurd** it would be if you went to the hospital, and they wouldn't let you in because the plants in the lobby hadn't been watered in a few days. If you're in a medical

⁴ *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*, 228

⁵ *Next Door as It Is in Heaven: Living Out God's Kingdom in Your Neighborhood*.
Authors: Lance Ford and Brad Brisco

⁶ Adapted from David Platt

⁷ *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*, 111.

crisis, you don't care about the plants in the lobby. *You need a hospital.*

- And that's **precisely what Jesus says about our homes**. They are God's ordained hospitals and havens. Are we really closing the doors to others because we're ashamed of our old appliances? Because our television is too small? Because our kids toys are all over the floor?

Plus, other people DON'T need to see some polished, perfect, airbrushed version of you. They need to see the real you—and how Jesus loves and ministers to you in your mess so they can find hope in the midst of their mess, too.

D. Of course, the biggest, No Margin:

“Practicing radically ordinary hospitality necessitates building margin time into the day, time where regular routines can be disrupted but not destroyed. This margin stays open for the Lord to fill—to take an older neighbor to the doctor, to babysit on the fly, to make room for a family displaced by a flood or a worldwide refugee crisis. Living out radically ordinary hospitality leaves us with plenty to share, because we intentionally live below our means.”⁸

- *Without margin, you are incapable of investing in your neighbors in the spontaneous way that relationships require; without margin, you won't have the space to serve them and meet their needs.*
- Margin gives you the ability to be interruptible for God's purposes.⁹

She says, This is how we'll reach our society today! “We live in a post-Christian world that is sick and tired of hearing from Christians.” They need now to feel the love of Christians. They can

argue with our beliefs, “but who could argue with us just loving them through genuine, mercy-driven hospitality?”¹⁰

- She says that, ***“In our day, for words to be persuasive, they can't be stronger than relationships.”** Words, no matter how beautiful, aren't persuasive without relationships to back it up. My words can be beautiful—it won't reach people without your relationships!
- People's minds just aren't changed through big rallies or big events or posts on social media...
- **I loved this:** ***“Stop thinking of witnessing to your neighbors as sneaky evangelistic raids into their sinful lives.”** We have to know them. Love them. Get up close to them so we can see their mess and they can see ours. Only then can we point them to Jesus.
- **Several of the baptism stories from last weekend** involved non-believers living with believers for significant periods of time—and seeing a different *life* during that time.

So, 2 questions I have presented to you from this parable:

1. If your life were depicted as a party, who would be the “invited guests”?

2. Are you including outsiders at your dinner table?

Here are some **practical steps** to get involved:

- If you want to **explore using your career** to go overseas... or maybe you just feel called to be a missionary! Go to Go to my blog.” We're going to have all of the relevant action items linked in a post there
- If you are interested in ministry to international peoples (refugees, immigrants, etc.) Listen, the vast majority of international students—the best and the brightest from around

⁸ *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*, Loc 125

⁹ *Next Door as It Is in Heaven*

¹⁰ *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*, 95.

the world that come here to our backyard for 4–8 years of their lives—are never invited into an American's home.

- **Check out ServeRDU**, specifically our WelcomeRDU ministry)
- Next, we are doing **“Neighboring Training” on Oct. 20 at BRC**. The question, “How do we love our neighbors well. What are some ideas you can pursue to get this going?”
- Lastly, challenge: “Who is your one?” Another part of that. What if you committed to attempting to open up your home at least once a month?

Let me end by showing you why this is worth it. Why this is the heart of our church and what it all looks like when it comes together! **JR**

VIDEO

