

Associate with the Lowly

Luke 14: 12-14

July 11, 2021

Well, we are back in Luke 14. Jesus teaching on the subject of humility and he's doing that while he is sharing company with the proud, eating a meal. He's been invited to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees on a Sabbath day. It's after, an after-synagogue dinner, hosted by a wealthy powerful man, probably located in Jerusalem. And they, he and the guests, they are watching him carefully. They were watching because they had set a trap for Jesus.

There's a man there with dropsy, a, a man swollen with fluid, he's in need of healing, he's probably suffering from a chronic, very severe heart condition. And so, the Pharisees, the lawyers, and the Pharisees, wanted to see if Jesus would violate their Sabbath tradition.

That's their view, that's not scripture's view, but violate Sabbath tradition by healing a man on the Sabbath. So, Jesus, as we have already studied, he's exposed their cynical trap, he confronted it, he ignored their traditions, and he healed the man.

But it was after that, that Jesus really went to work on them. So, the instantaneous healing of a man. That does not work at all. It took no effort at all whatsoever from Jesus. Unseating the stubborn, blinding, religious pride of this company, that's another matter entirely. The religious pride that would concoct such a scheme as this. The audacity to attempt the impossible really, to entrap the Son of God.

Well, that's the level of pride that was on display here in the course of this afternoon meal and Jesus is surrounded by people who exude and live out this kind of pride. So, after the healing, as everyone took seats around the table, Jesus observed in verse 7, how they were all choosing the best seats for themselves.

They're trying to scramble even in that occasion, always trying to scramble for the top of the social ladder. But there's another thing that Jesus noticed here, which gets us into the text, that we'll look at for today.

Jesus had a chance to observe the guests themselves. To take stock of the company. He's noticed who has been invited and then also who had been excluded. So, after confronting the pride of the guests, teaching them a lesson on humility, he turned his attention to his host in verses 12 to 14 of Luke 14, and he's going to do the same thing.

A principle that we talked about last week in verse 11. That he just applied to the guest, "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Now he's going to apply that principle to his host. Look at the text there, "He said to the man," verse 12, "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'd be repaid.

“‘But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.’”

We just read earlier out of Luke 6 that Jesus pronounced woes on the rich, and certainly this man was counted among the rich. Many of the guests, probably most of the guests, that he invited over for the meal, were among the rich, were the recipients of those woes, that Jesus pronounced on the rich.

But here we see a beatitude for the rich, “blessed are you, blessed are you” when you invite people like this, in that second list, you'll be blessed because they cannot repay you. So, the subject here of this beatitude, of this offer of blessing to the rich, to get them out of the woes of that are upon the rich, and get them into the blessing and the favor of God. The subject here is hospitality. Hospitality.

Getting also to the motivations of hospitality, showing hospitality. Those who are able to offer hospitality to others are those with some means, aren't they? Anybody who can invite people over means that they're going to share out of their own provision, they're going to be able to share what's extra, and be able to have people over, host them.

Those who are able to offer more extravagant hospitality on more occasions, they're obviously those with more significant means. So many of us are the former. We have enough, enough left over after paying the bills, that we can invite people over for an occasional meal.

This ruler of the Pharisees, this man who hosts Jesus and the other guest, he is of the latter. He is a man with significant means. He hosts guests for meals, he hosts guests for banquets, for parties, for receptions. And so, though Jesus speaks directly here in our passage, to a man of significant means, what he says to that man, it really does apply to all of us, no matter what our means, or condition in life, or station in life is.

Probably like many of you, I've, I've had the opportunity at various points in my life to know people of means, and some of them were people of very significant means, very wealthy people.

One man I, one man I used to know, he earned a good income. His life situation ah, allowed him to spend quite freely, even extravagantly, at times. He liked nice things, cars, clothing, houses, furnishings, and he was quite generous in giving to other people. He loved to host guests, bring people into his home, feed them. He, he loved to have his house full of people. And he spent a lot, a lot of money to feed and host all those people, made a lot of work for himself.

As I got to know him, I'd hear him criticize those who had received his generosity. Sometimes even criticizing about having to host at all, but then criticizing those who received his generosity.

And the substance of his complaints, were this; that those who benefited from his giving, they were really not willing to reciprocate his giving, by giving him what he really wanted, which was companionship. There's a lonely man, and so he used his means as hospitality, what appeared on the surface to be generosity, he literally used that to buy the company and friendship of other people. When he didn't get it, he was bitter.

Again, it's the motivation that Jesus is targeting here in the text. This is what he's talking to his host about, which is why we, we don't need to be people of significant means, like the host that invited Jesus over. We don't need to be wealthy people to apply this.

The principle in this text, it really does confront all of us. Everyone, it would seem, wants to appear to be generous. No one likes a miserly, stingy person, but why do we do what we do? Why do we give what we give? Why do we show hospitality? Why do we serve? Why do we give to others?

One more thing to mention before we look at the particulars of the text, you notice maybe as we read, that Jesus tells his host, first, whom not to invite in verse 12, and then in verse 13, about who he should invite.

So, both pieces of the counsel there, the negative and the positive, you notice that he gives the reasons why. But it's important to point out that Jesus is not stating his case, in either/or terms. That is, never invites your friends and relatives for dinner, only invite people from one of these disadvantaged groups.

You know, so like the poor come on Sundays, and crippled on Tuesdays, and then blind people Fridays, and that kind of thing. That's not what he's saying. He's not putting this counsel in either/or terms. It's more like a, a both/and. The language, the Greek, and all the words he uses in the tenses of the verbs makes that very clear. Ian Howard Marshall puts it this way, that Jesus here is speaking in, in, "in a Semitic idiom, meaning not so much of the former."

So only inviting friends and relatives, as rather, consider the latter, invite the poor and the disabled. So, he's not excluding the one in order to include the other, he's saying include both. Don't be exclusive, on the one hand and then exclude the others. Again, that's just to emphasize the point, first, to be aware of your motivations for showing hospitality.

In Sermon on the Mount terms, as we just heard in Luke 6:35, do you "Do what's good and give and lend expecting nothing in return?" If so, Jesus says "your reward will be great and you'll be sons of the Most High." So, we need to consider what are our motivations in giving. Do we give expecting nothing in return? Do we give with our hands wide open?

Second, we should also calculate the consequences of our motivations, and examine the kind of hospitality that we actually do give to people, and offer other people, or withhold from people. Consider the outcome of that.

We need to become aware, more aware, thoughtful of our hospitality, because it's part of the stewardship of our life before God. Those who don't, show hospitality are all, they're really missing out, not only missing out, but there really is a question on where their hearts are. You show no hospitality at all.

But what Jesus says here, he's applying the principle, the same principle that he applied to the guests in verse 11, of pride and humility, and he's addressing heart motivation. Things that are unseen but show up on the surface. He's addressing whether the motivation for showing hospitality, for giving, for doing, for serving, whether that's coming from self-love, or whether it's coming from love for others. Pride is associated with the former, humility with the latter.

So that's the question really put to us. Why do we do what we do? What explains the good works that we do in our lives, works that are seen by others?

Are we motivated by love for all of our neighbors? Maybe even the difficult ones to love, the, those who are unseemly, those who, in Sermon on the Mount terms might be counted enemies, do we love them? Or are we motivated by love just for our kind? Are we motivated just to share table fellowship with people who make us feel comfortable? That's the question. Are we motivated by love for all of our neighbors? And love for all neighbors is a friend of humility. Self-love that's rooted in pride, very selective about associations.

So, two questions for our outline. First question, just two. This, this will just break this up into two parts 'cause you see the text breaks up into two parts. So, the first question is, is our hospitality too narrow? Is our hospitality too narrow?

Narrow hospitality may, not must, but may be an indication that pride and self-love might be motivating factors. Rather than humility and love for all neighbors. Not always, but maybe.

Consider it for yourself, look at verse 12. "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'll be repaid.'"

As I said, Jesus' host, he's a ruler of the Pharisees, he's a man of means. This man, gotta consider many years of hard work, doing business, making investments, also as a Pharisee, many years of study. He has not been slack in his life. He made good connections. All of that resulted in high social rank, means, influence in society, those are things that he worked for.

To maintain that status, he hosted large groups of people, held huge, sometimes even extravagant banquets, served expensive foods, fine wines, provided elaborate, expensive, entertainments and all the rest that goes with hosting those with means. So, notice though, he's not, Jesus is not only addressing elaborate feasts and big banquets.

He says "When you give a dinner or a banquet," so the word dinner, *ariston*, in its strictest sense, it refers to the earliest meal of the day. So, what we call breakfast. But later usage of that word extended the meaning to the noon meal. So, it was very commonly used to talk about lunch or a luncheon, and then also to, to dinner.

But the point is, that the first one that Jesus mentions there, is a relatively casual, informal meal. Jesus point in saying, giving the two things, "When you give a dinner or a banquet," he's painting a mild contrast between a less formal casual meal, like a luncheon, and then a formal meal, like a reception, or a wedding banquet, a feast.

Jesus' host, he invites people to his home for both kinds of meals, on both occasions, both informal and formal as well. So less formal meals like lunch or dinner, they're routine for someone like him, more formal gatherings like feasts and banquets for a man of his means, perhaps less frequent, but probably fairly common for him in his life.

So, it's by broadening the occasion, for making invitations, why one might make an invitation, extend an offer of hospitality. A casual lunch versus a formal banquet, this is what allows Jesus words to be applied to all of us regardless of our means. Jesus speaks to the host, but as you look down in verse 15, it shows us others are listening in as well. There are others who are listening into this conversation.

So, since Jesus knows that others are listening into this conversation, what he says is widely applicable and it really does come down to those of us who are reading about this conversation with the host, includes us as well. So, Jesus says, "When you give a dinner," or a lunch, "or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors," consider the first. And doing a lunch, inviting people over for a dinner or a lunch.

Who do you typically invite over for a casual meal like a lunch? Casual, less formal occasions, they're usually reserved for friends and brothers, right?

The first two in the list, people with whom we share an affinity with, with whom we have a closer relational intimacy. Because when it's casual, we don't want to have to be on, do we? We don't want to have to watch our manners, and conform to expectations about social etiquette, maintain social and situational awareness. We really, we really just want to relax and let the guard down.

Casual meals, close relations, more formal meals like banquets, receptions, wedding feasts, all that etiquette stuff, it's on, in full display. Those are occasions for inviting more distant relations, and visiting relatives, and oh the way, yes also rich neighbors. Distant relations, whether geographically distant or relationally distant, distant relations expect to be invited at more formal gatherings. So, excluding them would be, at the least, offensive, and maybe even imprudent. They're added to the guest list, at the very least to avoid offence, but especially inviting rich neighbors, it's just good business sense. Especially for a host like this or a ruler of the Pharisees.

Alfred Plummer put it this way. He said "it is pleasant to entertain one's friends, seemingly to entertain one's relations, but advantageous to entertain rich neighbors." Why is that? Why is it advantageous to invite rich neighbors to their events? Because of the social principle, called reciprocity.

Reciprocity, that's referring to an unstated, but very real social contract, where an exchange is made for mutual benefit. It's about giving to get. It's seeing a social occasion as an investment on a future return. Four times, actually in the text here, we see this principle of reciprocity, mentioned in the text, referred to.

Twice in verse 12, they invite you in return and then you be repaid. That's twice in verse 12, and then twice in verse 14. They cannot repay you and you will be repaid at the resurrection. So, four times this principle of reciprocity, it's thematic in the text.

So, the expectation of reciprocity and social situations, that's, that's, not just a thing in Jesus' day, like in the ancient Near East culture, that's how they did it in their culture. This is, this is throughout time, throughout history, it's a universal social expectation, especially so among the wealthy. Doling out social favors, honoring others, publicly, that is, by inviting them to your receptions and parties, sitting, in them, in the seats of honor, where they can be seen, where they're visible to all.

Extending that kind of social benefit puts others in one's debt. So, as we pointed out, Jesus is not saying here, I just want to remind you, he's not saying, never invite friends and relatives to dinner. Only invite the disadvantaged people to lunch, dinner, banquets and all that. "Do not invite" there, is a present imperative, and it's used with a negative. It could be taken in the sense of stop inviting your friends, relatives, rich neighbors, but that's clearly not the sense here.

He's not prohibiting his hosts from inviting people that he knows and loves into his home. That's not what he's saying. That's wrong on several levels. The most, the basic being, that it violates the honor your father and mother. If you can't invite your own father and mother into your home, you're dishonoring them. So, Jesus is not commanding this man, or us, or anybody to dishonor close relations.

It also, be contrary to Jesus own practice, if it meant, stop inviting your friends, neighbors or friends, friends, relatives and rich neighbors and all that. It just, be violating Jesus own practice. He shared meals with people that he knew and loved. Early on in his ministry, Peter's mother-in-law hosted Jesus and his disciples, fed them. Mary and Martha, ah, sisters of Lazarus, who Lazarus, who is Jesus' friend, close friend. They hosted them, ah, Jesus and his disciples in their home, whenever he came into Bethany.

So, Jesus is not saying stop inviting your friends, your neighbors, your relations, don't invite them over anymore. The prohibition, that's one sense, and that's one

interpretation that people come out of this with. But, it's, it's, a false interpretation.

This, there's a second sense. More of like a general precept that he's giving. Don't, and really, it's literally, don't make it a habit of, only, inviting friends and brothers. Don't make it to a practice, and put only friends on the guest list. Why is that? Because those are invitations that invite repayment. They invite reciprocity, they involve some degree of expectation.

From your friends, you expect friendship. There's nothing wrong with that. That's what makes that person a friend to begin with. Is that they, you offer friendship, they get friend, give friendship back. But there is an expectation. From brothers you expect love, understanding, shared history. Again, nothing wrong with that. That's just the situation God's placed us in. From relatives, in-laws, extended family.

Well, maybe less expectations of familiarity, but certainly an expectation that you've been checking the box,

in making the invitation, avoiding offence, touching base, keeping good relations, not offending mother-in-law or father-in-law, whoever it is.

So, if you invite friends and brothers only, those who, who, you like, those who you love, it may be that you're only interested in keeping yourself relationally at ease. It may be that you're trying to stay comfortable, looking out for yourself, not putting yourself into an awkward situation by getting outside your comfort zone. If you only invite those who you have a duty to love, like relatives and in-laws, then you've got to admit it, you're just trying to stay out of trouble. That's all you're doing.

Inviting wealthy neighbors. What's that about?
Inviting wealthy neighbors those who, because of connections and influence, able to provide avenues for employment, or opportunities for investments.

Maybe those people who are rich neighbors, who can come over and grace your home with their company and you

being in the same company. They just have the ability to increase your social profile, elevate your status. Those, those are the invitations that certainly expect something in return.

This ruler of the Pharisees, he'd been on both sides of the equation. He's been the invited guest of neighbors, those who want something from him, and he's done the same to them, inviting them back into his home, because he's seeking some benefit from them as well. It's a customary expectation. It's a fact of life. It runs through cultures, through time, this desire of giving to get. Inviting each other on the basis of reciprocity, it's spending social capital as an investment, not as, not as a gift. They give to get.

So, business favors, political influence, making connections, it all accrues to some benefit, doesn't it? It mitigates, helps them mitigate it against an uncertain future.

Giving the get, turning social duties like this, social responsibilities into advantageous responsibilities, and this is exactly what Jesus is warning against, not prohibiting out right. There are some things that are expected in business, inviting people over, and of course the social occasion, there's more going on in that social occasion. He's not prohibiting it outright. Sometimes that's just the way the world works and operates in company and business and all the rest. But he's warning against it.

At the end of verse 12, says "When you give a dinner a banquet do not invite your friends your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors." And why not? "Lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid." Notice how he speaks about that. Comes across like a friendly warning, like don't invite them, lest perchance, you run the risk of being repaid, as in gasp, you know, Oh my, I perish the thought. Wouldn't want that to happen. This is catching their attention. Because he is elevating in their minds that there might be something wrong with the way the world works, with the way they've been operating, unconscious of it even.

Of course, you invite people over because there's a mutual benefit. Who doesn't do that? But what can seem like a generous offer of hospitality can really be quite inhospitable. That's what Jesus experienced in this text, didn't he? He was invited over, but there was more going on that he didn't know about. What was he invited over for then? Because they loved him? What can seem like hospitality can be so disingenuous, and insincere, and ungenerous. This is expectation of reciprocity, that's to blame. To be repaid in the end. That ruins the generosity of any invitation.

So, he's saying, watch out, because by inviting friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors, you're putting yourself at risk. Putting people like that on your guest list put you in the danger, of reciprocity, that they might invite you back. Warning. There's that little twist we talked about last week. Giving the parable to his guests. Where Jesus says something that grabs his guests' attention. Here he says something that grabs his host's attention, causes that man to stop in his tracks, and wonder, and ponder what is he getting at. Makes the man curious.

What is so wrong by inviting friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors and letting them return the favor? Isn't this the way the world works, giving to get? Well, yeah, that is the way the world works. And if that's what you're after, if that's what you want, keep inviting them. Just be warned that is all the repayment that you'll get. Your hospitality hasn't been grounded really in generosity, but in reciprocity. So once your hospitality has been reciprocated, once your friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors, return the favor, that's it. Better enjoy it cause that's all you get. That's all that's coming your way.

Jesus said something similar over in Matthew, chapter 6 during the Sermon on the Mount, when he warned about practicing righteousness before other people, to be seen by them. In fact, just turn in your Bibles, it's worth noticing and drawing your attention to in Matthew, chapter 6, Matthew, chapter 6, right in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount.

In the Sermon on the Mount, you understand, especially as Matthew draws out the Sermon on the Mount, he is confronting the predominant, religious view of the people that he's speaking to. So, all the Jews. This is the predominant, religious practice that they had learned from their religious leaders, the scribes, and the Pharisees, and the priests. And they had been practicing this, not just by precept, but by, by observation, learning by example.

They've been following the practices of the scribes and the Pharisees, and you can see this corrective pattern showing up as early as Matthew, chapter 5, where he says, that pattern, "You've heard it said, but I say to you."

So, he's correcting their false understanding and he's trying to unseat a false form of religion, that's so predominant and pervasive in the culture. He wants to point them back to the truth of God's word, back to the true meaning of the Old Testament.

So, as we come into chapter 6, having already said, "You've heard it said, but I say to you," now he goes, chapter 6, verse 1, to talk about, verse 1, bew, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people. To be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your father who is in heaven." Very similar to what Jesus is warning about in Luke 14:12.

First, notice what he says about giving in verse 2, "When you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." Look, if you're giving in order to get public recognition, if you're motivated by the praise of others, well, as soon as others see you do it, you've been repaid in full, so enjoy.

Same thing with praying, verse 5, "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they've received their reward."

Again, if you want public recognition for religious deeds, even putting on a show, a pretense of praying to God, in order that other people will see you, enjoy, while it lasts. That's what you seek. That's all you get.

Same thing with fasting, over in verse 16, "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."

Once in Bible college, I knew a man who, it was really popular, one time for Christian leaders to kind of trumpet their own 40 day fast. So, I don't know if you remember a number of parachurch leaders and church leaders were saying "I'm going on a 40 day fast." Well as soon as they do that, boom, they have violated the text. And a guy in our class, our Bible school class, was gonna go on a 40 day fast. And he would walk into class every time, ah just so weak, and just limping his way to his desk, and he'd fall into his desk. And he was emaciated looking, got worse and worse.

And we're like, dude, go to the doctor, get a hamburger, you're looking terrible. Oh no, you wouldn't believe the spiritual closeness that I'm realizing. It was always in a whisper. I think it is not, not for dramatic effect, because he really couldn't muster up anything other than a whisper. He had no strength. That's exact violation of this.

Whatever you do, religiously praying, giving, fasting, any religious works, hide it from the view of others. Why? Because as soon as others are seeing it and you are letting people know, you've been paid. You got your paycheck. You did your work. You got your paycheck. Spend it wisely.

So go back to Luke 14. This is the same thing is happening here. Jesus is warning his host. And by extension, he's warning the other guests, and by further extension, he's warning us as well. He's warning us to check our motivations for what we do, why we do our religious acts, apparently performed in devotion to God, or generous acts apparently done just to bless others.

We need to watch out. Are we really trying to comfort or are rich ourselves? A true spirit of generosity, which is what Jesus encourages here. The true spirit of hospitality is to enter into the whole thing with no expectations at all. I like how Darrell Bock said it. He said, "Hospitality is generosity when no motive exists besides giving."

That's it, true generosity is giving with that any expectation in the invitation. The only desire is to bless other people. Generosity is about showing hospitality with, with pure motives, without looking for any form of repayment, leaving that to the Lord.

Most of the hospitality we show with friends and loved ones, family members, church members. Again, it is not wrong to invite those closer relations over for lunch or dinner. In fact, we strongly encourage it as a church. We want you to practice that today. But I hope you'll also add to your practice of inviting people that you don't know so well.

Maybe inviting people that make you feel uncomfortable. Maybe inviting, whoever it is, it can fall into one of those categories. Those who don't have any means of repayment to you. The question is about whether our hospitality is truly generous, or whether it comes with strings attached. Expecting something in return, looking for repayment, keeping accounts, keeping score. If that's the case, then whatever you're giving, whether it's service, acts, gifts, or hospitality, then it's not motivated by pure generosity, if strings are attached.

In the case of this Pharisee and his guests, much of their hospitality was a sham. It was a masquerade, it hid ulterior motives, such as like we said in this text, inviting Jesus to dine. Making a show of honor, in the offer of hospitality, but intending all the while to entrap him. That is pure hypocrisy, isn't it? That is the blinding sin of a soul damning, religious, pride. They're in much danger of never escaping. Here, just notice Jesus kindness to this Pharisee, to not let him go, to not remand him to the dustbin of history and an eternal lake of fire.

He confronted him. And he did it indirectly, but he confronted him. He helped him to see his error. So, now that he's got his host's attention, he's got the attention of some of the guests as well, Jesus proceeds to give some positive advice about inviting guests. And to help personalize this for ourselves, just in our outline question.

We want to ask a second question here. Is our hospitality broad enough? This is just a corollary to the other question we asked. Is our hospitality too narrow? Now we're asking the question, number two, is our hospitality broad enough?

So rather than only inviting your friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors, Jesus says, verse 13-14, "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

That list, Jesus is describing people who are disadvantaged, the poor, they are financially disadvantaged, the crippled, lame, blind, they're physically disadvantaged, and no one has expectations about those kinds of people. Jesus' host, the guy who's invited him over, he didn't even know people like that, much less shared table fellowship with them. The guy who showed up with dropsy and swollen, a swollen limbs and body and needing healing, that guy was just a plant. He wasn't there by invitation except to entrap Jesus. It's part of the ploy.

So obviously all these people, the poor, crippled, lame, blind, they're without any social standing, they have nothing to commend themselves, they can't do anything for him. So those kinds of people are virtually invisible to the Pharisees and people of his ilk. Whenever the Pharisees had to notice people like that, they found a convenient way to dismiss them as sinners, as unclean, as impure. They believe that the disadvantage condition and state of being of people like that, whether it's pov, poverty or physical malady, was evidence of a hidden personal sin.

Something that God could see, and that's why he gave them the curse of this issue. It's hidden from other people. So, there's suffering, as evidence of divine disfavor. It just hardened an already merciless heart, didn't it?

That kind of view. It could have come from a misinterpretation of the law which prohibited physically deformed men from serving as priests. You read that in Leviticus 21:16 that excluded from priestly service, is a "man blind or lame, anyone with a mutilated face, limb too long," other maladies that are listed there in that context.

But none of that excludes them from the dinner table. Poverty, physical malady, disability, those are never disqualifications from table fellowship, from hospitality, or generosity. In fact, clear counterexamples to that in Scripture, in the Old Testament. God, first of all, looks after the poor, he commands his people, those who have more, to show generosity to those who have less.

Leviticus 19, 9 and 10, also, Leviticus 23:22, both, both of them say that, Leviticus 19, "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, and neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner." In our terms, for the illegal alien. Leave them for them. "I am the Lord your God."

Part of the Mosaic law, is the mercy and the goodness of the God who gave the law. The one who loves and cares for all kinds of people, including the poor and maybe, even especially the poor.

Another example of God looking after those who are poor and disabled, comes in a case of what's written about David. The matter of physical deformity, disability. Remember the name of Mephibosheth? It's a fun one to pronounce for the kids and Bible reading, isn't it? But he's the crippled son of Jonathan. He's lame, in his feet due to a childhood accident. He was dropped.

He was about five years old and David showed Mephibosheth favor, seating him at his own table, to eat the king's food, even though he was not of the king's family, but of Jonathan's family. He treated him well, like one of his own sons, because of his covenant that he made with Jonathan. Loved Mephibosheth. He didn't treat him as a, an outcast. He brought him to the king's table.

So instead of following God's pattern of care for the poor, instead of following David's example of compassion, for those who are disabled, the Pharisees held a merciless point of view. That the poor and the disabled, they only had themselves to blame.

Corollary to that in our day, is the charismatic movement, that blames anything that you are suffering through, that you are not delivered from, your poverty, you're disabled, blind, lame, whatever, they blame it on your lack of faith. They say if you only give me more money, that demonstrates your faith, and then I will dispense the healing grace of God to you.

It's the same kind of pharisaic impulse we see back then, just in a different garb. Pharisees believed that these people are fault for their poverty. They're at fault for being crippled, and lame, blind, disabled. Perhaps the parents were to blame. Whoever's sin is the cause. They say God has visited them with judgment. He has exposed what no one else can see, and he's shown it by their disability, by their poverty, he's shown the guilt that they have hidden, their personal sin. He's exposed it by cursing them.

That view is so pervasive, that even the disciples held it. In John 9:1 and 2, they saw a man blind from birth as they walked by, and the disciples, you remember asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" You notice they gave Jesus only two options. They're parroting the Pharisees' view. Sin is somewhere. Jesus said, "It's not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." Who is providentially, sovereignly responsible for the man's blindness? God is, that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Don't ever look down on the poor, or the crippled, or the lame, or the blind, or those who are deaf, or in any other malady. Those who are maimed or deformed, do not look down on them. That offends the heart of a holy God. That offends the heart of a compassionate, loving God.

God is sovereign over all people. That includes their income levels, that includes their privileges, or their lack of privileges, and includes their physical health and ability, or their lack thereof. He's sovereign over advantages and disadvantages, and God assigns to each of us our station in life. He gives us our lot in life. He gives grace to all.

But he distributes more to some and less to others. And he distributes it in various kinds, and shapes, and forms, as he wills. That's his sovereign prerogative. It's not arbitrary, he has a good and wise reason for doing that.

This is one of the ways that God brings people together. Uniting them in a mutual concern of love and appreciation, because the rich with their wealth, that God has allowed them to have and given to them, they can look with compassion on the poor and the needy. And they, they have the means to do something about it. Showing kindness, giving generously, showing hospitality.

The poor, then they can respond with appreciation and gratitude, blessing those who show mercy to them. Thanking God, for providing for them through their gracious, generous, benefactors. So, it brings hearts together. It's not about what you have and don't have. It's not about your stuff. It's not about your money. It's not about your bank account. It's about, do you love one another? And God has made distinctions, and put disparities between us in these ways to draw us together, not to drive us apart.

This is, again, this is what makes the social justice movement so wicked. Because it exacerbates difference and sees it as a reason for stealing from other people, in order that I come up to their level. It's wicked.

Going back to the text, the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, these are the people on the kingdom guest list. Verse 21 says, these are the people that Jesus came to heal and to save. Luke 4:18, he came to "preach good news to the poor [...], recovery of sight to the blind and set at liberty all those who are oppressed."

So as Jesus speaks to his host, he's essentially calling this man to join him, this wealthy man, this prosperous man, this, in terms of we use today, privileged man. God gave him those privileges. God gave him those opportunities. God elevated him.

Jesus is calling this man to join him in dispensing divine generosity. He's calling this man and giving him the opportunity to become with him, with Jesus, a conduit of divine grace. To learn the secret of the saying, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. He's inviting his host to join him in associating with the lowly, because that's what he does.

So, as Jesus advises his host about how to make a guest list, and you gotta realize in a setting like this, as this man is invited Jesus to his table, and given him a seat of honor, and sat him down at the table, and he's feeding him, and his servants are all feeding him. The man is probably looking, or maybe tends to look at Jesus with a bit of disdain.

You're a Galilean, going to talk to me about hosting banquets? Is that what you hicks do out there in the sticks? Sure, you know how to put together a guest list. Got it. What home do you have Jesus, to entertain people? He may have thought that way, but he failed to realize who he's talking to. Jesus is the king of heaven and earth. His kingdom is over all. And there is a bounty and a plenty in his domain, there is infinite, eternal, and he continues to pour it out over and over.

Oh yeah, he knows how to make a guest list. He knows how to do inviting, he knows a lot about throwing banquets and parties. So, he advises his host about how to give banquets, who to include on the guest list.

He says verse 13, "Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind." And he adds a reason why. "You will be blessed." Precisely because they cannot repay you. Again, verse 14, "When you give a feast, invite the poor, crippled, lame, blind, you will be blessed because they cannot repay you," for, here's the reason, "you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just."

Inviting those people over, those people, throwing them a banquet, that's pure generosity, isn't it? Just pure generosity. Those kinds of people can't repay. They simply can't afford it. They lack the resources, no financial resources, no physical resources. Therefore, get this, you giving to them, those kinds of people, it becomes a matter of justice for God, to do what is righteous, rewarding those who use their personal wealth to bless other people. God is gonna see that everything gets its just reward. That comes in a retributive, justice sense, negative judgment. It also comes in a remunerative justice sense, reward.

Showing generous hospitality, leaves all repayment to God. Luke 6:38, "Give and it will be given unto you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use, it'll be measured right back to you." So don't be stingy in giving. If you're stingy in giving, it'll be stingy right back to you. If you're generous in giving, it will be measured back to you. No one out gives God right? No one out gives him.

So, it makes sense to ask the question at this point, which Jesus raises, makes sense to ask, do you want your reward now paid in full? The reciprocity of tiny little human beings, or even the combined repayment of friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors. Do you want that now? As Jesus said, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" Or do you prefer to delay your gratification? And wait for God's timing? To trust him to distribute a reward to you? Are you willing to wait for repayment? Never, maybe seeing it in this life, but waiting for the resurrection of the just.

Because if you prefer to wait for God to recompense you, if you prefer to wait for God to reward your generosity, to reward your pure hospitality, then you are truly among that category that he describes there, what he calls the just. There's a resurrection of the unjust, the wicked, and the just, the righteous.

Here he speaks of the resurrection of the just. That's a category made up of people that are believers only. The just who live by faith. Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, and even though "it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God," and even though, 1 Corinthians 1:26 says, there are "not many who are called who are wise and powerful or of noble birth" and rich, there are some.

Paul gives instructions about those rich people, the wealthy people, to Timothy. At the end of his first pastoral epistle, he says this in 1 Timothy 6:17 to 19, "As for the rich in this present age, charge them, not to be haughty." That is arrogant, proud.

That's what he's saying to this Pharisee and his host. "Charge them not to be haughty, nor does set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches," which is why they give to get, because they're trying to mitigate an uncertain future.

So, "Don't set your hopes on the uncertainty of riches" at all. Set your hopes "on God, on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy." What are the wealthy to do? "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share. Thus, storing up treasure for themselves as good foundation for the future, so they may take hold of that which is truly life."

What is truly life? It's not your stuff. What is truly life? It's not your money. What is truly life is that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Those who use wealth to be generous, those who give with no other motive than to bless, expecting nothing in return, Jesus not only promises repayment, or fundamentally, more importantly, he speaks of here, of resurrection, of living forever.

Ah, he speaks of justification, having a clear conscience, having sin forgiven. Is that not enough? Those who are justified are content with that. That is a pure gift. To be at peace with God, no longer under his condemnation, no longer fearing his future judgment, wrath for sins, but to be declared righteous before God. Declared righteous by God because of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. What greater reward is there?

There are those, among us, there are those who, are going to enter into the kingdom, who are wealthy, and then there are those, those who are poor. There are those who are in between. There are those who are believers who are counted in our world as the uber rich. And they're also among the just. There are brothers, sisters in Christ. There are those who are more moderately wealthy. There are those among the middle class, lower middle classes as well. Anything extra, all material possessions, and whatever we have, any money we have extra, leftover, none of that really matters. Except, as that which God has entrusted to us to provide for our families, number one, and then most joyfully to give and to bless other people and show generosity.

So, we rejoice in the stewardship that we have from God. We rejoice to use what we have leftover to bless other people, especially, especially as Jesus said, those who cannot reciprocate. Once again, Jesus is not allowing here the mentality of giving to get, as if giving to the poor and the needy, as a path to greater reward in heaven. God doesn't reward greed. That's not the attitude at all.

The attitude here, and the offer here, and the encouragement, advice, and counsel here from Jesus, is inviting us to share in the blessing. To get involved in what he's doing, to put this world behind us, and all of its principles of reciprocity, and say that's for them. It's not for me.

What I have is this principle, it's more blessed to give than to receive. Jesus invites us to, to join him, to become a conduit of God's blessing to other people that it comes through us, and it blesses other people. We get the joy and satisfaction of that.

By associating with a lowly, by inviting those who are not a part of our social sphere, not a part of our class, and believe me, here in America we do have class systems, by befriending those who don't have anything to offer, in return. We get used to the kind of company that we're going to share in heaven. You get used to people like that. We sit around that, we're going to sit around the table of the great banquet in heaven and the kingdom of God, together with people just like that.

Because God has given to us the kingdom, because he's given us his very own son, his generosity to us is what frees up our hearts so that we cannot not be fearful about the future and try to mitigate against an uncertain future. Frees up our hearts to show generosity to others and freely give. Jesus said that in Luke 12:32, "It's your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," which means, he follows up with this, "sell your possessions, give to the needy. Provide yourselves with money-bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches," nowhere, where, "no moth destroys. Where your treasure is there your heart will be also."

That's the question for Jesus's host, isn't it? Where is your heart? Is it bound by greed? Is it enslaved to money? Is it chained up by fear about an uncertain future? That everything you've worked to get might be taken away from you? Where's your heart?

Where's your treasure? Bound up in what men can give, how men can reward you, how men and dealings with men can mitigate against an uncertain future. Is it what brothers, friends, relatives, rich neighbors, can provide you? Is that what you're setting your hope on? Or is your treasure contained, completely in the resurrection of the just? Because if it is, you'll not only extend invitations to friends and family, but you will show generosity, the needy, the poor, the crippled, lame, the blind, as Jesus teaches, as it goes on in the next section.

People like that are invited to the great banquet. They will eat and drink in the kingdom of God. Jesus invites them. He associates with the lowly and he calls us to do the same.

So many of the lowly are those who are be, going to be gathered into the kingdom from North, South, East and West, sit at the table and taste of the master's banquet. So, it's best for us to get to know them now. Amen? We can use treasure, earthly treasure, to facilitate all that hospitality and get to know them now. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you so much for the generosity and graciousness that you show. The goodness you show, the wisdom you show, and the way you've constructed the world, and the way you've sovereignly ruled the world. We thank you for how you have shown such generosity to us. Those who will participate in the resurrection of the just, well, we know that, that's because of your greatest gift, the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. The one who came and humbled himself to the, to take on the form of the man, and humbled himself even further to the point of death, even the death of the cross. He did not count wealth, and grandeur, and splendor, and all the attributes of deity, all the glory, a thing to be grasped and held onto. Rather, he emptied himself as it were. Took the form of a servant.

Father, let us, whatever our means, whatever our station in life, let us have the same attitude, that same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Help us to walk in his pattern, the example that he set. Please grant us the Holy Spirit to, to encourage and strengthen that commitment in us and strengthen that conviction. To remind us of when we may not have the right, the best motives in what we do.

And let us rejoice in this gift of hospitality that you've given us. The opportunity that we have, with what's left over, to use that to facilitate relationships. Yes, with friends, and brothers, and relatives, and neighbors, but also Father for those who will never be able to repay, and return. The poor, crippled, the lame, the blind, and others. Father, let us be merciful, as you are merciful, let us follow in the steps of Jesus Christ our Savior, who showed that kind of compassion to us. It's in his name that we pray, amen.