

Title: Kingdom Stories: What is the True Heart of a Jesus-Follower?

Text: Luke 14:1-14

Date: Oct 10, 2021, at FBCW

INTRO.

First, note the background of the Sabbath (vv 1-3). It is important we recognize some background about the mention of the “Sabbath” day here – including Jesus’ own personal habits on the Sabbath.

Scripture teaches us to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy (Exodus 20:8).

- This is the 4th commandment of the Decalogue.
- It’s patterned after the 6 & 1 theme of Genesis 1-2...
- God created the entire world...then God rested on the 7th day.

All through the Old Testament – the Jewish Sabbath was to be a day of:

- Worship...teaching...honor...inspiration...rest.

When Scripture says, “Sabbath rest” – it also meant – “Do not work...” (*complete rest, no work*).

- No washing, no cleaning, no agriculture, no meal prep, no sports, no school, etc.
- Sabbath was totally designed to be a time of restorative reflection, worship, and rest.

Jesus honored the Sabbath all during his life (Luke 4:16).

- He grew up in Nazareth.
- Jesus faithfully attended “Sabbath worship” at their local synagogue.

As a young Rabbi, Jesus was invited to read Scripture and give interpretation (Luke 4:16).

- He was invited to speak openly.
- He was invited to give the interpretation/remarks.

Mark 1:22, 27, “*They were astonished at his teaching because he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not like the scribes...they were amazed...they began to ask each other...what sort of teaching is this...even the unclean spirits obey him?*”

Jesus → honoring the Sabbath.

Jesus → the powerful young Rabbi.

Jesus → overcoming evil with His teaching.

Background information from Luke 14:1

It was customary for synagogue leaders (Scribes, Rabbis, Pharisees) to gather for a large midday meal after the synagogue services.

V1 → *after worship in the synagogue, they go to the home of a leading Pharisee...they are watching Jesus closely.*

- Language is descriptive here – loaded with meaning.
- It means: “to watch from the shadows...to lurk”
- They are hoping to see Jesus fall and make a mistake!

Luke is framing a picture for us:

- They (Pharisees) want a look into the real Jesus... “Who is this guy?”
- But Jesus will flip the script on them... “Who are you?” “Who’s the real you?”

LESSONS from the background here:

- Attending worship services is a good thing!
- Putting into practice what you learn in worship is a better thing!
- If I truly paid attention...I’ve got enough to worry about “with me” (the inside).

V2 → *There in front of Jesus is a sick man...swollen with fluid.*

- The sick man is right in front of them, “Before Jesus’s eyes.”
- Jesus wasn’t seeking the man out...but nor was he ignoring the man.
- The situation occurred and the needy man happened to be right in front of Jesus.

V3 → Jesus’s question to the religious experts was prompted by the sick man’s appearance. Jesus asked, “*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?*”

Jesus wants the Pharisees to learn/consider: Will they defend their traditions? Or will they show compassion and empathy for a sick man?

In my heart, my personal view on the matter of Jesus healing on the Sabbath:

Why would Jesus regularly heal on the Sabbath in the Gospels?

- Because Jesus wants to show us that people matter more than laws/traditions.
- Because there is a present “nowness” to our obedience. Don’t delay obedience. Obey God now...with whatever is right in front of you.

Second, notice Jesus divinely heals the sick man (vv 4-6). The Pharisees and experts in the Law had created an air of haughtiness and arrogance. Love and humility were lacking.

I love the wordplay that is occurring in Luke 14:4. There is a contrast between the Pharisees silence verses Jesus touching/attending to the man.

- What the Pharisees are not willing to even speak of...Jesus is willing to touch!
- Jesus does with His heart and hands...what they won't even address with their mind and mouth.

Christianity is not a religious theory...it's a lifestyle! Christ provides a *very real touch*.

LESSON: if your faith doesn't move from your head to your heart...then you'll never do anything significant for God.

If you claim to have been to “synagogue services” – but all you do is sit back in silence...or merely talk about religion...BUT you don't act in obedience...then you've missed the point!

Jam 1:22, *But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

V5 → To the Pharisees, Jesus strongly implies:

- If it was your son...your donkey...your sheep...having fallen into a well...
- You would want someone to act!

For us today: when we encounter needs/people – let's not hide behind our fears, our traditions, or even our limitations.

- Let's act out in faith before God!
- Let's trust the results to God.
- All people have worth, value, and dignity.
- Let's have compassion for all...even if it requires stepping outside our comfort box.

Third, an important lesson for the invited guests (vv 7-11). Jesus shares here some important lessons for those who have intentionally sought out the seats of honor.

V7 → Many guests have been invited for the meal in the home of this prominent Pharisee. Jesus' observation:

- They are jockeying for seats of honor.
- They seek out the ideal, noteworthy seats.

VV8-10 → So Jesus shares this word with the crowd: when you are the invited guests at any event –

- Don't seek out the prominent seat.
- Someone far more distinguished than you could be on the way.

- You don't have full knowledge of who all is invited...or who may show up.
- You could eventually be forced to give up your seat...you could lose your seat.
- You would then be moved to the lowest place in the room.

Word here in 14:9 for "*humiliation*" means → disgrace, or shame.

- Avoiding shame in the Ancient Middle Eastern culture was especially important.

So, Jesus' teaching here is especially simple...but especially important.

14:10 → "*When you are invited*"

- Seek the lowest place.
- Let the host/friend decide if you should move closer to the seat of honor.
- If you move closer...what a great lesson for the crowd...what a blessing for you.

LESSON. To be clear, Jesus is not giving hints on etiquette at feasts/parties. He is actually explaining that the way into the Kingdom of God is by humbling oneself!

LESSON. If you are prideful...there's only one place to go...down! But if you are humble... God will raise you up at the right time.

Prov 16:18, *Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.*

Jam 4:10, *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.*

E.D. Smith, Jr., "If you stay small enough, long enough, God will make you big enough, soon enough."

But this great lesson here also foreshadows the essence of the Gospel of Jesus –

- True Christianity is all about humility!
- One far superior to us is on His way! (Phil 2:5-11) (Rev 19:11).
- John the Baptist was known for his greatness (Matt 11:11) and his humility (Matt 3:11).
- Jesus said, "Do you want to be great?" – then be a servant! (Mark 10:44).

Fourth, an important lesson for leaders and hosts (vv 12-14). Finally, a concluding word about those who have resources to "host" parties. Those who are blessed with material substance and wealth (most everyone here today).

- Don't just invite people in your social bubble...in your echo chamber.
- Don't exist solely in a world of reciprocal relationships.

- Let's follow Jesus' example of sacrificial ministry to the needy!

If all you do is “trade evenly” with other rich/affluent/connected people – you’ve got your reward...and this is not true Christianity.

David Wenham, “Jesus is warning that there is a type of generosity which is really only this → worldly self-interest: ‘You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.’ This will bring its rewards in this life...but we should not confuse this with investing in God’s Kingdom.”

- Jesus’ kindness was toward people who could never repay him!

Matt 5:46, *If you (only) love those who love you, what reward will you get?*

Jesus’s lesson → invite the poor nobodies! (Poor, maimed, lame, blind, etc.).

A good word for mature adults and leaders → stay in touch with the poor!

- Never lose your eye for God’s grace.
- Never lose your eye (heart) for those who have less.
- If you are not in touch with the poor...you are not a good host!

FACT. God sees and knows everything about our lives!

- God will reward in eternity what we do for the “least of these” (Luke 14:14; Matt 25:40).

Big Idea. The true heart of a Jesus follower is this: caring more about genuine humility than outward appearances.

Application for today

1. Let us not just come to church → instead, let us ask God to touch our hearts.
2. May we value people more than we value rules and traditions.
 - a. There is nothing in the world dearer to the heart of God...than people.
3. May we seek a lifetime of humility!

Why should we be humble?

- We are nothing without God.
- He’s given us everything we have (all the tools, knowledge, etc.).
- It could all vanish in a moment.
- Pride is nauseating.
- Ask your close family and friends, “Am I humble?” “Where am I prideful?”

4. Helps to ensure our humility:

- a. Spend your time and money on outsiders.
- b. Don't seek earthly recognition or favors.
- c. Keep this in mind always: God will repay our humble acts of service with heavenly treasure!

One picture of applied humility –

Grateful for FBCW's heart to reach more → what if all of us circled a name and prepared ourselves to reach "one" for Christ?

- Who's Your One?
- Outsiders are all over the place – what are we doing about it?