

A Study of Luke's Gospel
Week Twenty-Two
Luke 13:22-14:27

Day One

22 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, 24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' 26 "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' 27 "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' 28 "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. 29 People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

v. 22-30 – Jesus was asked, presumably by a Jew, whether only a few people would be saved. First of all, Jesus was always accessible to questions and people were free to ask Him. If you are a leader, how accessible are you?

Jesus didn't directly answer the question, but basically said, "All those who find the narrow door will be saved, whoever they may be—Jew or non-Jew." Jesus was not saying that only a few would be saved, but He was saying that only those who found the "narrow door" would find salvation. What is the narrow door? The narrow door isn't a "what," but rather a "who." The narrow door is faith in Jesus.

The Jews thought they had a system that, if kept perfectly, would lead to salvation. But when they would not find the "way in," they would then beg, claiming their Jewish heritage as the salvation entrance requirement to no avail. Jesus was telling the Jews that they did have favored-people status, because Jesus came to them first. But if they rejected Jesus, then they would see many after them come to salvation in Him while they were left out. This did indeed happen, when Gentiles came to the faith and Jews gradually became hardened and left out.

Day Two

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." 32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and

the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

v. 31 – This rumor or presumed threat from Herod makes sense, for Herod's father, Herod the Great, was responsible for the tragic genocide described in Matthew 2:16-18 when all the male babies around Bethlehem were killed. Herod was "king" over the region of Galilee by appointment of the Roman government. Their family was insecure in their political power and did what they could to preserve their position.

When Herod finally got an audience with Jesus, it was during Jesus' trial. The Lord was so "done" with this "royal" family that He didn't utter one word in response to Herod's questions. You are in a bad place when God refuses to speak to you.

vs. 32&33 – Jesus wasn't referring to a literal span of days for His travels, but just referencing His eventual "journey to death" in Jerusalem. Jesus wasn't afraid of Herod's death threats, because Jesus knew where He would be put to death and how—in Jerusalem by the Jewish leaders. So He had confidence that nothing would happen to Him until He got to Jerusalem.

v. 34 – I have been to Jerusalem five times. All I can say is that it is a difficult spiritual environment, super-charged today by the Arab-Jewish conflict. There is religion of every kind and you can feel the tension in the atmosphere. Jesus lamented the fact that Jerusalem rejected and killed those sent to her. The Lord yearned for an intimate relationship with the seat of Jewish power and authority, but the city would have none of it. As Jesus predicted, Jerusalem would be the place of His death.

v. 35 – Jesus referred to the Temple as "your" house—He no longer identified with it as a place where God dwelt, as My Father's house. Yet the Lord went there one last time to fulfill the Scripture and prophecy concerning His death. Then He made a prediction that they would not "see" Him again until they acknowledged that Jesus was sent by God and not of His own accord. This must be a reference to what Paul described:

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins" (Romans 11:25-27).

There will be another time when Jews will be open to the gospel, but I don't think we are in that season or time yet. Think of how little evangelism has taken place among Jews since Jesus time. Then consider how many Gentiles have been reached. The day of the

Gentiles will end, however, and the Jews will once again be given a chance, but only if they acknowledge Jesus as the “narrow door” to God.

Day Three

14:1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. 2 There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. 3 Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" 4 But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away. 5 Then he asked them, "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?" 6 And they had nothing to say.

v. 1 – Jesus was under constant scrutiny, but as far as we know, He never altered His behavior to accommodate what those watching expected Him to do. Jesus did not come to please men but to please God. If that meant displeasing men, He would do so without regret or hesitation. I have not been that free from what people thought of me, so often I have been people-conscious and not God-conscious.

This Pharisee invited Jesus on the Sabbath deliberately so that He could catch Jesus doing something wrong on the “holy day.”

v. 2 – I wonder if they put this sick man in front of Jesus on purpose, knowing that the Lord would have compassion on him. Dropsy is a condition where a body retains and collects water in bodily tissue. The man was probably swollen and red. In chapter 13, we saw how Jesus healed the woman bent over for 18 years on the Sabbath. The synagogue ruler was indignant. Now, was Jesus going to back off Sabbath healing, heal in secret or after the dinner, or proceed in the presence of all.

v. 3 – First, Jesus tried to use the situation as a teachable moment, as was His custom. He asked the “experts in the Law” whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. I doubt if the experts had ever been confronted with that question, because they had no power to heal anyone, only to bind them up in legalism.

v. 4 – They remained silent, probably because they had no answer, or not an answer that would have refuted what Jesus was about to do. Since they said nothing so that Jesus could not instruct them, He took the man, healed him and sent him away so that the man would not have to hear what was to follow.

v. 5 – Jesus used a similar example to prove the validity of what He had just done as He used when He healed the woman bent over. This time He not only referred to the condition of an ox, but also of a son fallen into a hole. It would be lawful to pull that son out of a hole and so it was lawful to pull this infirm man out of his condition on the Sabbath.

v. 6 – The Pharisees had nothing to say, but the situation did not change their attitude toward Jesus as evidenced by their subsequent behavior.

Lord, deliver me from any religious attitudes that would cause me to look past the needs of people as I try to serve you. Help me to change any thinking I have that would prevent me from serving the needs of people. God, I don't want to oppose you; I want to flow with You. I want to be like Jesus, not affected by what people may think; I want to be motivated by what You think. Amen.

Day Four

7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8 "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

v. 7 – Jesus was a keen observer; He seldom missed anything that was going on around Him. This time He watched human nature in action as the guests picked their places at the table. Are you aware of what is going on around you? Do you allow the Lord to teach you out of those simple every-day situations?

I think Jesus taught the following lesson in the context of Israel believing that they had a favored position at the table of God. For this parable, Jesus drew on a lesson that was first introduced in Proverbs:

Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among great men; it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here," than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman (Proverbs 25:6-7).

vs. 8-11 – Jesus used the example of seating at a wedding feast. He was indicating it wasn't good for one to choose a place or honor too soon lest someone of greater importance come and one be asked to move down, perhaps to the only low place remaining at that time. Of course, this is good advice for day-to-day life. Paul wrote:

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you (Romans 12:3-4).

It is a good rule of thumb to humble yourself lest God humiliate you. Humility is always a choice, never a feeling. And before the Lord can use you to the fullest, He must insure that your humility is intact and permanent.

The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor (Proverbs 15:33).

And this lesson also should have applied to Israel, who became haughty and thought they had the “inside track” to God. They looked down on any poor Gentile who was separated from God, but did little to include those Gentiles in the life of the covenant community. So in their pride, they were humiliated. There is no sense being proud over your spiritual standing with God. You had nothing to do with it; it was His gift. So don’t be arrogant when you pray, evangelize or give. Stay humble or God will humble you. The choice of who does the humbling is yours.

Day Five

12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

vs. 12-14 – An important tool to use in understanding Scripture is to study the context in which something appears. Here we have an admonition from Jesus that would seem to endorse kindness to the poor. But does it? That is what it says, but is it a veiled teaching lesson that, like the parables, requires the listener to be open to the lesson? Consider this: Jesus had been addressing the Pharisees and experts of the Law. One of the issues He had addressed was their exclusive mindset—they had a special relationship with God and weren’t eager to share that with others.

I don’t think this story is to be applied literally. How many people do you know who have gone out and had a banquet for the kind of people Jesus mentioned here? Not that being kind to people with these infirmities isn’t a good thing, but that isn’t the point here. The point is that we can treat God like He is a commodity to be protected or hoarded. That isn’t how we are to act. We should be looking to share Christ with any and all.

Do you have a prejudice against some group of people with whom you would have trouble sharing the gospel? Don’t answer too quickly. How about Democrats? Republicans? Political opponents? Homosexuals? If you do, then you must repent. God wants you and me to be open to all people, for He is and loves them, even in their sinful or imperfect condition.

Day Six

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." 16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the

time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' 18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' 19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' 20 "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' 21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 22 "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' 23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

v. 15 – Someone at the table understood that Jesus wasn't talking about a literal banquet, but they put His comments in the context of the kingdom of God. The Jews believed that the Kingdom was to be a literal restoration of David's throne. There would be public banqueting consistent with a king entertaining his guests and dignitaries. And they all dreamed of being part of that physical, literal Kingdom.

Jesus had something else in mind. Those present knew Jesus just wasn't talking about having a party for handicapped people. He was talking about the kingdom being open to many more people than just Jews.

v. 16 – After the man made the comment about sitting at the Kingdom banquet table, Jesus went into another parable that reiterated what He had just taught. Those who had been invited to the table—the Jews—were not eager to sit at the banquet. So the banquet host ordered his servants to go out and find new people to sit at the table. This is just what happened. Jesus came to the Jews but they rejected Him:

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (John 1:11-13).

But Jesus then sent His disciples to go out to “the roads and country lanes” to find those who were judged by the Jews as unworthy—Gentiles, tax gatherers, prostitutes. Jesus' Jewish disciples did not easily understand this directive, but eventually they went to the world and evangelized the nations. We must guard against the same attitude as Christians, thinking that we have somehow cornered the market on God. We don't own Him, nor can we hold Him as our own. We must “share” Him with everyone, including Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

The day we think we “own” God is the day we are in danger of losing what we thing we own.

Day Seven

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-he cannot be my disciple. 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

v. 25 – Jesus had a large crowd following Him. It is so hot in Israel that I am wondering if this didn't take place in a non-summer time of year. But either way, the people had to pay quite a price to travel with Jesus. But they must have been spiritually hungry to want to hear every word He spoke. Are you traveling with Jesus, or do you just visit His spiritual "website" every now and then? Do you hear Him regularly or just on holidays and special occasions?

v. 26 – Jesus was never impressed or enamored with a crowd. He said some of His most difficult things to large crowds, as if to chase away those who were only curious or following the crowd. Here Jesus said a hard easy-to-misunderstand statement. Jesus used a Hebrew idiom when He used the word hate. This meant that anyone who loved family or self *more* than Jesus could not be Jesus' disciple. If one loves anything more than God, that object of affection is actually their God. Thus someone can make an idol of family or even self.

God must occupy the highest place in our love, attention and affection. I often pray (and counsel others to pray), "Lord, I'll do whatever You want me to do wherever You want me to do it." I do that before I know what His will is. I surrender my will to His, trusting Him. I have also written out my life values and my first value is, "I do the will of God." My second value is "I walk in faith." My third is, "I love my family."

It is a valuable exercise to write out your values. Go to <http://www.purposequest.com/articles.htm> and download "How to Develop Your Governing Values." Take some time to develop your own values; then see if those values are truly "governing" by looking at whether or not they show up in your calendar and your checkbook. If they don't, then you are just paying them lip service. If they do, then they are truly governing or directing your life.

v. 27 – This must have been a shocking statement to the Jews, for crucifixion was a death assigned to those under a curse. The condemned criminal was made to carry his own cross, as Jesus did when He was condemned to die. Thus Jesus was saying that to follow Him was to die to self and enter into a new life with Him.

Years ago I found a list of 10 ways to deny self (I do not know who composed it). I hope it is as meaningful to you as it has been to me.

1. Not being hurt or insulted when forgotten.
2. Not being angry when misunderstood.
3. Not becoming defensive when someone disregards our advice/opinion.

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4. Lovingly and patiently bearing any disorder.
5. Confront insensitivity in others with love and without judgmentalism.
6. Being content with food, income, clothing, climate, service and disruptions.
7. Not always referring to ourselves in conversation.
8. Loving to be unknown and unrecognized.
9. Rejoicing in others' prosperity when your needs in that very area are more desperate than theirs.
10. Approaching life with a general focus on the well-being of others.

Perhaps you should pick one of those areas and ask God's help as you walk it out in every day life and relationships.