

Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-Up Notes
August 25, 2024
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Sermon Text Aug 25th: Luke 14.15-24 /// Title: “The Great Banquet”

Core Observations of the Text & Questions to Ponder

1. Jonah’s Discovery of God’s Huge Compassion: Last week the kids presented the prophet Jonah musical (“Oh, Jonah!”). Jonah’s central life discovery is that God is infinitely more compassionate than he had previously realized – towards his own foibles, to the pagan sailors on his boat, to the Ninevites ... even to animals! Two stories of Jesus help us think further on this theme, and we’ll look at them on Aug 25th and Sept 1st. Jesus shows us how God’s compassion works out in our daily lives.

2. Jesus & Meals in Luke’s Gospel: The bible scholar Robert Karris wrote a book called *Eating our Way Through Luke’s Gospel*, which shows that in Luke’s Gospel Jesus is always coming from a meal, at a meal, or going to a meal! Luke wants us to know that Jesus was a lot of fun at parties (see Luke 7.34!), and that mealtimes magnify what God values and cherishes. In 14.15-24, God’s compassion is put on display in an ordinary meal.¹ This parable leads us to three realizations:

First, people underestimate the wealthy generosity of God (v16-20). The household owner comes across as being of moderate wealth (he only has one slave). The people he invites opt out of the feast because of their supposedly greater wealth: one underscores that he has multiple properties (v18), another has massive land that requires 10 oxen (it’s like owning ten tractors, v19), another probably implies that his wife’s family is wealthy (v20). All three assume that what they currently own is better than what their neighbor owns. They’ve underestimated him!

Second, God seeks to be generous to those who can’t pay him back (v21). The slave goes into the public areas and sweeps up the homeless people. These individuals could not reciprocate with their own party in due time – but, these folks will lick their plates and talk around town about how generous, wealthy and gracious this host was to them! This is what God seeks – people who are amazed at God’s generosity and realize they are not deserving.

Third, this meal is happening now (v22-24). Your Christian life and our fellowship at FPC will be strongly determined by “when” we think this meal that Jesus is describing happens. Some say it will happen in the future (along the lines of Isaiah 25.6-9), but v21 is clear that illnesses won’t be part of that final feast. Others say it happened in the past, when Jesus shifted from a Jew-focused ministry to a Gentile-focused one. But nothing in Jesus’ story signals Jew/Gentile differences. The right answer is that this meal is happening now – every time we eat the Lord’s Supper (“the bread” of v15) together as a church. This is the meal where God pours out His wealth and generosity in a special way.

Discussion questions:

1. In what ways can our own wealth cause us to underestimate God’s compassion and generosity?
2. Why do we feel guilty when God is good to us? With what attitude can we replace a guilt emotion?

¹Jesus is riffing on a story told among the Pharisees about Ashqelon; see here:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=oUVs1eqlzaEC&lpg=PA57&ots=5jrzkqghj3&dq=incident%20in%20Ashkelon%20%22Bar%20Maayan%22&pg=PA57#v=onepage&q=incident%20in%20Ashkelon%20%22Bar%20Maayan%22&f=false>

3. Do you agree that it makes a difference how we answer the question “when does this meal happen?”
What difference does it make? What’s your answer to the “when” question?