



## **“It’s Party Time!”**

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### **Scripture:**

#### **Luke 14:1, 7-14 (NRSV)**

1 On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath, they were watching him closely.

7 When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 9 and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 11 For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." 12 He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

## **Sermon:**

It seems that Jesus loved to “eat out”! As far as we can tell from this gospel, Jesus just loved to eat! He goes to dinner with all sorts of folks, and he talks about food a lot, too. In chapters 8, and 11, and 15, just to mention a few.

Mealtime matters to him.

He understood the immense power of breaking bread with others.

He saw that, not unlike our own times, among the very public rich and famous, it is a big deal where you eat, and with whom you eat. Restaurants rise and fall according to public perception of them.

Heck, it doesn't have to be among the rich and famous: in the school lunch room it matters where you eat and with whom you eat!

There is power, and pride, and shame.

At first it seems that Jesus is telling folks how to play the game of honor and shame more carefully.

But it is not that. It is never that with Jesus, because he marches on in his teaching and talks about a wealthy host who invites to his table those who are wholly without power or prestige or purity.

He moves from a conversation about the rules of the table in his society, to the rules of the table in the Kingdom of God.

That, as we so often see in Jesus' parables...means the rules are turned on their heads.

So, the poor and the lame and the sick and the outcast come to the feasting table.

The powerful, the mighty, the wealthy are nowhere to be seen at the table that God hosts.

Jesus sounds like his mama, who sang out her prophetic song of the tables being turned in the first chapter of Luke; her Magnificat.

“My soul magnifies the Lord” she sang, because...” He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. God has filled the hungry with good things, but has

sent the rich away empty.” Remember that? You probably last heard it around Advent or Christmas time when we pay close attention to Jesus’ mama.

This turned-around imagery is the “kingdom theology” of Jesus and it flies in the face of what we see in so much of the “Christian world”, where power and money reside in the lives of exclusive pastors and their families, their minions and sycophants.

I don’t see Jesus’ call in the lives of pastors or churches that require their own private jets, huge estates, and tv stations, even colleges that spout bigotry and hate.

But I do see it in the life of the man who started “Cup of Cool Water” a ministry for homeless street kids, down the road from us.

I see it in the five churches and their members, who 50 years ago, agreed to feed the shut-in, homebound and lonely of our city with Meals on Wheels.

I see it in many places; in faces that are Christian and in faces that have nothing to do with Christianity. It is Jesus’ idea of welcome and how to throw a party!

But it will not make you rich, or famous. Whether it is the ancient Roman worldview of honor and shame, or our current worldview of power through wealth, in the radical world of Jesus, there is no place for that.

Hierarchy’s of power, money and status are dead.

- In the topsy-turvy world of Jesus you may just find your family among outsiders, not among blood relations.
- You may just find your true home where you are welcomed for who you are, not where you are forced to be silently submissive to oppression.

And you have your party, yes, you party in the world of Jesus’ vision!

But it is with folks who are not obsessed with being rich or quick or clever or beautiful.

A Jesus party is with people who really need a party...people who are sad and suffering, hungry and anxious, bereft and powerless.

At the parties Jesus throws, there is a welcome for anyone who needs a celebration.

You hungry? Come and eat!

Thirsty? Come and drink!

Are you sad or lonely? Come inside and find a friend!

Does this sound vaguely familiar to us? It should, it reflects the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Jesus knew the prophets.

Jesus knew Yahweh, the God of Israel, the great I Am.

Jesus knew that at the table of Yahweh, the feasting was not restricted to the pretty, the powerful, the pure. In fact, that table was spread for those who needed it most: the widow and the orphan, the sick and the suffering, the stranger and the foreigner.

This is the “kingdom” of Jesus that cannot be made with conquering armies, or with vast wealth.

This is the “kingdom” that must be built with our changed priorities, our new perspective to see people first with God’s eyes, and to welcome them as Jesus welcomes them.

In responding to human suffering, easing human loneliness, showing respect to both high and low... in this we find our focus for our lives.

And we find a place at the feast in the kingdom of God.

May our lives show, what we hear today. Amen.