

Luke Study 7 - Humble or Proud?

Luke 14

Introduction

Today's section of *Luke*, Luke 14, is all about pride and humility: how the proud refuse to accept God's invitation to be saved, but the humble accept it.

Jesus is invited to a meal with a Pharisee and his friends. While he's there, Jesus uncovers and points out their obsession with status, and points them towards a better way to relate to God and people: humility. But will they accept his critique and give up their pride? And if not, who *will* be humble enough to accept a place at the meal God invites us to - the feast in the kingdom of God? Let's find out.

Read Luke 14:1-6

1. Jesus is being 'carefully watched' (v.1) by the Pharisees. What do you think they're watching for? (See 13:10-14 for a similar scene).
2. How does Jesus respond to their scrutiny?

Jesus is eating at a Pharisee's house and is being carefully watched. Why? Because there's a man there who's unwell, and it's a Sabbath. Normally that wouldn't be notable, but Jesus has a habit of healing people like this man on the Sabbath (and so, in the Pharisees' view, breaking the law: see 13:10-14). So everyone is watching him: will he scandalise them all and do it again?

Jesus, not much caring what people think, has compassion on the man and heals him. And then he turns to his fellow-guests and asks them: don't they save animals and children on the Sabbath? So shouldn't he be able to save, too? They respond in silence. The meal is off to a tense start. Let's see what happens next.

Read Luke 14:7-11

3. What are the guests doing?
4. What advice does Jesus give them?
5. What's the basic principle behind all this? (v.11)

Jesus notices that his fellow-guests are jockeying for the best seats at the table. So he tells them a parable that explains the foolishness of this: if you go for the best seat in the house, you may be humiliated and sent to the worst one. Far better to start in the worst seat and then be invited to a better one, so winning the praise of those around you. He's not saying that winning the praise of others is important. He's just saying that, as a general principle, the way God has set up the world, the way to be exalted is to be humble (v.11). If you want to get the best seats in the house, that's the way to do it.

But whereas where you sit at a meal is insignificant, whether you make it to a much bigger party - the resurrection of the righteous - is crucial. So Jesus now leans over to speak with his host.

Read Luke 14:12-14

6. What advice does Jesus give to his host?
7. What will the result be of taking this advice?

Jesus tells his host not just to invite those he knows and loves. If he does, they'll only invite him back, and there will be no overall gain in hospitality. Rather, he should also invite the lowly in his town who will never be able to pay him back. That way, though *they* will never be able to repay him, *God* will, and with a better reward: the resurrection of the righteous.

That explains why Luke started this scene with the healing of the swollen man. Jesus tells the host to invite people like him to meals (14:13), and in this way be kind and humble to people like him, just as Jesus was kind and humble to him.

Essentially, Jesus teaches the guests and the host the same thing: be humble and you'll be rewarded. Pick a humble place at the table and you'll be given a better place. Pick humble guests and you'll be given something even better: eternal life. But either way: only humble people will be rewarded.

Which is important, because Jesus is about to tell them that none of them are humble, and all of them are going to miss out on the best feast of all if they don't change.

Read Luke 14:15-24

8. What does the guest say to Jesus?
9. Jesus replies with a parable.
 - a. 'A certain man' is preparing a banquet. What does he do? (vv.16-17)
 - b. What do his guests do? (vv.18-20)
 - c. What does the man then do? (vv.21-23)
 - d. What will be the result for the original guests? (v.24)
10. What point do you think Jesus is making?

Overhearing Jesus' conversation with the host, another guest pipes up and says how good it will be for those who get to go to the feast in the kingdom of God (another way of saying the resurrection of the righteous, i.e. eternal life). Jesus responds with a story

about some privileged people - they have fields, oxen, and wives - who refuse to come to a great feast because they are preoccupied with their privileges. The point is clear: Israel's elite are so proud that they're rejecting God's invitation, though Jesus, to eternal life. They care about status now: having the best seats in the house now (vv.7-11), eating with the best people now (vv.12-14). So, they will be shut out (v.24), and their seats given to the poor, crippled, blind and lame (vv.21-23). Yet again the principle holds true: *the humble will be rewarded.*

Read Luke 14:25-35

11. Who is Jesus talking to now?
12. What does he say a person who wants to follow him must do? (vv.26-27, 33)
13. What is the point of his two illustrations? (vv.28-30 and vv.31-32)
14. What do verses 34-35 mean?

Jesus is now talking to a different group - not guests at a meal, but a large crowd - but his point is the same. If you're going to follow him - with all the rewards that will bring - you'll need to be willing to give up any attachment that will distract you from that life. You need to be willing to give up everything - be humble - to follow Jesus.

As we close, choose one or more of these questions to reflect on:

15. What are the ways you're tempted to boost your status? It might not be getting the best seats at a dinner party or being seen with the right people. But what is it?
16. How could a preoccupation with our status stop us from following Jesus?
17. How can we humble ourselves so we're more able to follow Jesus? Invite someone to lunch we wouldn't normally invite to lunch? Something else?