

Our setting today is once again around a dinner table. And the dinner table in the ancient world is typically where people would get to advance socially. Picture the ballroom dances and parties in many of Jane Austen's books. This where important people would hobnob. And just getting invited to a particular house would alone increase your social standing but also might increase your obligation now you need to invite them as well to your house. This is where deals are made and people can rise or fall socially. There are all sorts of social rules or etiquette that you need to follow. And one of the most unwritten rules is, Don't invite Jesus to dinner. You really shouldn't. If you invite Jesus to dinner to increase your social standing, then you are going to be severely disappointed when He doesn't play along.

Some people treat the Christian life like one of these dinners. They think that becoming a Christian, or asking Jesus into your heart is like a dinner invitation. He'll come attend a little and then leave when dinner is over and you can get back to normal. But we cannot treat Jesus like a dinner guest. And becoming a follower of Jesus requires much more of us.

Turn in your Bibles to Luke 14. And we are going to see what it really means to follow Jesus. We will see what Christ requires.

### Point 1: **Put others before yourself (v. 1-24).**

This is the golden rule.

It was not written by other religions but was commanded by God.

We are to love our neighbors as ourselves.

We are to put them first.

You see Jesus is about to ruin dinner.

Last time Jesus showed up for dinner He didn't wash His hands and made the host angry.

Today He's going to challenge them all.

Because they're not loving their neighbors and they're not putting others first.

In fact, they are using other people as props.

Verse 1, **"one Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully."**

Already see this isn't a normal dinner.

They are keeping an eye on Jesus.

They have only invited Him here to test Him.

Verse 2, **"And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy."**

Dropsy was an older word for Edema.

It is when excess water builds up in your body and makes you bloated.

It also makes you incredibly thirsty and never satisfied.

At this point in time, people who had dropsy were thought to be glutinous.

They believed this condition was their own fault.

So, someone with this obvious of a medical condition would not have normally been welcomed at the dinner table of a Pharisee.

Especially not one of the rulers.

He is only here to test what Jesus will do on the Sabbath.

Verse 3, **"and Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"**

Jesus asks them.

He knows they don't like it.

So Jesus wants them, as religious leaders, to make a ruling.

Tell Him if Jesus is allowed to heal this man.

Verse 4, **"but they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away."**

They are cowards.

They will judge Jesus silently, but they won't say anything to His face.

And Jesus trapped them.

They did not say it was wrong, so Jesus did it.

You also notice that Jesus heals the man quickly and sends him on.

This is not Jesus kicking the man out.

It appears like the man was not really invited to dinner.

He was just a prop to judge Jesus with.  
He had to know he was just a tool.  
I can't imagine it felt good for this man.  
And so Jesus heals him, then sets him free.

Verse 5, **"and he said to them, "which of you having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" And they could not reply to these things."**

They do not have anything to say.  
Jesus wants to know if they would treat their own animals or their children the way they treated this man?  
If they fell into a well, would they leave them there until the Sabbath was over?  
No!  
Because they value the lives of their ox and their children.  
But they do not value the lives of everyone.  
They don't put people before themselves.  
And they have nothing to say.  
Because deep down in their hearts, they know Jesus is right.

Verse 7, **"Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them,"**

It is silent at the table.  
Everyone is hoping Jesus will move on and they can continue with the meal.  
But Jesus does not.  
They invited Jesus to judge Him.  
But now Jesus will judge them.

He looks around the table and notices how they picked their seats.  
You see Jesus is about to ruin dinner.  
Last time Jesus showed up for dinner He didn't wash His hands and made the host angry.

Today He's going to challenge them all.

Because they're not loving their neighbors and they're not putting others first.

In fact, they are using other people as props.

Verse 8, **"When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place."**

Jesus wants to reverse their normal behavior.

He says they shouldn't try and sit as high up as they can.

They should not be putting their selves first because if they do there's going to come a point when they are asked to move down.

That would be one of the most embarrassing things that could happen to you at one of these dinners.

Everyone will be told, "No he shouldn't be honored that much he should be honored less."

Verse 10, **"But when you are invited, go and sit in 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."**

Instead they should let other people be honored.

They should not seek the place of honor for themselves but should let other people sit in it.

Then they might find that they will be honored instead and asked to move and sit closer to the host.

But I want you to see that Jesus is not just trying to teach them new social etiquette.

I don't think this is Jesus trying to save them some embarrassment for getting moved and shifted around the table.

It's me that sounds like Jesus is rebuking them for how they are behaving.

They have made a mockery of how followers of God should behave.

Verse 11, **"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

The principal Jesus wants them to see is that they need to put others before themselves.

Those who seek to elevate themselves. Those who want to be seen as important and significant and honored and don't care if that means others get pushed down.

Those people will be humbled by the true host of the wedding feast Jesus. But the reverse is also true that at the wedding feast of the Lamb in the kingdom of God those who humble themselves and who put others first will be elevated.

Because following Jesus means you have to put other people before yourselves.

Not because we think that other people look at us more favorably when we do so but because God will.

Then Jesus tells another parable.

Verse 12, **"He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return to be repaid."**

Most people when they have dinner invite people that they like.

They invite family whose company their enjoy.

Or they invite their rich neighbors.

They invite the popular and influential.

They want people to come to dinner who they can gain something from.

They want to be invited back over to dinner.

They want to climb the social ladder.

It is all about what they can get.

Verse 13, **"But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."**

Jesus says that they shouldn't do that at all.

Their feasts should invite the poor.  
They should invite the crippled and the disabled.  
They should invite those who cannot walk, who will need to be carried to their house.  
They should invite the blind, who might need to be taken by the hand.  
And they should do this because those people cannot

Jesus is implying that this man might not be there at the resurrection of the just.

Because he does not invite the poor to his table.  
Because the truly righteous behave differently.

Verse 15, **"When one of those who reclined at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"**

The feast is a reference to the great wedding feast God will give when Jesus returns.

The ones who eat at the feast are the ones who are saved.

And so someone says, that everyone who gets to eat there will be blessed. I think this is not just a random person saying, "How awesome that day will be!" Something else is happening.

It seems like they want Jesus to tell them who is on the guest list.

Who are the people who will be blessed on that day.

Verse 16, **"But he said to him, a man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 17 and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, "come for everything is now ready."**

Jesus uses this man's interruption to tell another story.

It is the same basic theme.

A man is giving a great banquet.

He is having a large feast with lots of important guests.

And when the day has come he goes to send a reminder to all the guests.

He tells them that all the preparations have been made.

The table is set and the food is in the oven.  
Now it is time to come.

Verse 18, **"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'** 19 **And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.'** 20 **And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'"**

But now the excuses come in.

All the people who have been invited suddenly can't come.

And Jesus makes it clear these are all just excuses.

They are not legitimate reasons.

They are just what people say so that they don't have to come to this party.

One person says they bought a new field and it is very important that they see it tonight.

Another person just bought five ox and so of course they need see them.

Another person says that they just got married so they need to spend time with them.

Have you ever had a party where this happened?

Or you planned a big trip with friends?

And everyone was excited to come.

But when the time comes for the party suddenly everyone has all these random reasons they can't attend.

Maybe they even sound plausible like these ones,

But you know deep down it's all excuses.

Now the party is ruined.

Verse 21, **"So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'"**

The master is angry about all of these excuses.  
All his friends, or the important folks about town have said no.  
But he refuses to cancel the banquet.  
The feast will go on as scheduled.  
He will just invite someone else to join him.

Instead, he invited all the people who would not normally be included in high society's parties.  
The people who are not welcome at the ruler of the Pharisee's home.  
The poor.  
The crippled.  
The blind.  
The lame.  
They are all invited.

The servant is go run through the streets and the roads.  
Because that is where these people seem to live.  
They do not have homes to live in.  
They don't have family to stay with.  
They live in the streets and the alleys.  
These are the ones invited to the banquet.

Verse 22, **"And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'"**

The servant comes back and says that all of them have been invited.  
But there is plenty of food left over.  
The house is not full.  
They can still invite more guests.

Verse 23, **"And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.'"**

So the master invites even more.  
He wants the house full.



He tells him to go far away.  
Run all the way out of town.  
Go to the highways where those just passing through are.  
Invite and compel people.  
Invite everyone until the house is full and there is no more room.

Because this is a picture of the kingdom of God.  
It is the wedding feast of the lamb that will come when Jesus returns.  
And everyone is welcome at that feast.  
Especially those who would be overlooked by the world.

Verse 24, **"For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."**

This is a warning for all those who had excuses.  
They will not be invited to the banquet at all.  
If they try to show up late, then they will find that their names are not on the list.

These stories are not about who we invite to dinner.  
Although, who is welcome in our homes and at our table does reveal something about our spiritual lives.  
So it is worth asking who is welcome at your table?  
Is it only those who bless you and have something to offer?

Or are the poor welcome at your table?  
Are the homeless and the addicts welcome?

Are they welcome not just at our tables, but in our lives?  
Because if we are going to be followers of Christ,  
Then we have to put others before ourselves.  
We have to be willing to sacrifice our social capital for the oppressed.

Because this is exactly what Jesus did with us.  
He invites us to the communion table.

Even when we have nothing to offer Him but our sins.

Jesus is known for hanging with sinners and tax collectors.

But He does not enter into their lives.

He does not spend time with them because He is behaving as they do.

They are invited to come into the kingdom.

And they are welcome at Christ's table.

Jesus loves this out.

Even though it costs Him His reputation.

Even though He could have had more power and influence.

But He puts others first.

Jesus did this for us.

Jesus did not die on the cross to win brownie points with the powerful.

He came and died to save those of us who had nothing to offer Him.

And if our God does this, shouldn't we?

Point 2: **Put Christ before everything else (v. 25-35).**

If you want to be a follower of Christ, then we have to leave everything for Him.

It is not just about loving other people and being kind.

Though that is part of it.

Verse 25, **"Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."**

This sounds harsh.

Jesus says we have to hate our parents, spouses, children, siblings, and even our own lives.

And if we do not, then we cannot be His disciples.

What does it mean?

Simply put it means that Jesus has to come first.

We have to put following Him before everything else in this life.

Part of this is also covenant language.

Love and hatred are used by God to describe who are His chosen people.

He says, in Romans 9 **"Jacob have I loved and Esau I hated."**

This does not mean that God looks at Esau with fiery rage and hatred in His heart.

It reflects His priorities.

It reflects what God has chosen.

Jacob and Israel are shown God's love, affection, and blessing.

It must be a similar way with us.

We must choose God over every family attachment.

As Abraham had to leave his whole family behind to follow God.

The disciples had to leave their families behind.

We have to choose Jesus above all else.

We are to hate our own lives.

It doesn't mean we wish that we were not alive.

But we do not value anything in our lives above Christ.

We count all things as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.

Verse 27, **"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."**

Following Jesus involves sacrifice and suffering.

A suffering that leads to the death of many things.

It may lead to the death of all of the dreams you had about how your life would be.

It may lead to the death of all the hopes you had.

It may lead to the death of the desires you have.

For some, it even leads to their physical deaths.

And if we are unwilling to put Christ first.

If He is not more important to us than anything else, then we are not Christians.

Some think they can follow Jesus a small amount.  
They think that being a Christian is just about what you value,  
Or how you vote on election days.  
Or what you do on Sunday morning.  
Following Jesus is much more than those things.  
It is everything.  
And this is costly.  
You need to understand what following Christ will cost.  
It is not cheap.

Verse 28, **"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?"**

Anyone who planned on building a tower needs to know how much it costs.

If you were going to add a second story on your house, you would get a quote.

You wouldn't just start building.

Verse 29, **"Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'"**

If you didn't count the cost, then everyone would make fun of you.

The unfinished tower would stand as a monument to your foolishness.

There are plenty of such towers all over the world.

One is the Sathorn Unique Tower in Bangkok.

It was meant to be a skyscraper filled with high priced condos.

They were 80% finished before a financial crisis in 1997 ruined it.

It currently stands at 49 stories.

It is completely abandoned and is now just a place people explore.

Verse 31, **"Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?"**

Just like you want to know the cost of a building.

If you are going to start a war, you want to know if you can win.  
You need to know how big the other nations army is.

Verse 32, **"And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace."**

Otherwise, you will have to quit and ask for peace very soon.  
That would be devastating for a king and a nations reputation if they picked a fight that they could not win.

The point in both stories is that you need to consider the cost.  
Because not considering the cost means you might not finish.  
And we need to consider the cost of following Christ.  
Because it will cost you everything.

Verse 33, **"So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."**

Following Jesus means renouncing everything.  
All other allegiances and considerations fall to the wayside.  
Your allegiance to a political party, an ideology, your family, etc.  
Everything that we have has to come after Christ.

Because if we do not put Christ before everything, we cannot follow Him.

Verse 34, **"Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? 35 It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."**

These are famous Christian verses.

They are ones that we repeat so often we lose sight of what they mean.  
We definitely forget why Jesus said them in the first place.

The context here has nothing to do with witness.  
It doesn't mean we should study how salt works.  
If salt is bad, you throw it away.

If we do not put Christ above everything, then we are salt with no taste.  
So we must put Him first.  
Unless we want to be in the manure pile.

The problem is that many people think they are Christians.  
They think that following Jesus is a simple thing.  
As if just liking some of what He says, or going to church makes you a Christian.  
If you are going to be one of Christ's followers, it has to change everything  
You have to be willing to give up all that you have.  
All that you are.  
You must put everything aside and follow Christ.  
But too many are like the Rich Young Ruler.  
We have too many things we are unwilling to renounce.  
But we must.  
Or we are not true Christians.

Point 3: **Because Jesus is worth it all.**

Normally I put Scriptures here behind each point.  
Why don't you just write the entire Bible there.  
Or if you need a specific place, look to the book of Revelation.  
Look to Revelation chapter 21 about the new heavens and the new earth.  
He will wipe away every tear from our eyes.  
All sickness, pain and suffering will pass away forever.  
The world will be turned into a place of perfect love, joy, and peace.

Look to 1 Corinthians 15 about the resurrection.  
Those who give up everything for Jesus will be resurrected in eternity.  
We will get to live again.  
Death is not the end, it marks the beginning of a greater journey.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 **"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light**

**momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.**

The glory to come.

The wonder of getting to see Jesus on that day.

It is worth everything that you have.

Hebrews 11:26 Where Moses, **“considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasure of egypt, for he was looking to the reward.”**

There is great reward for those who follow Jesus.

There is nothing you could give up for Jesus that you would regret.

There is no amount of money you could give away that you would miss.

There is no experience on this earth that you could deny yourself, that you would miss out on.

I don't even mean all the wonderful things that heaven and the new earth offers.

You don't even need to think about how wonderful life will be without sickness or pain.

You don't even need to think about a life without suffering or death.

You don't need to think about how beautiful the earth will be.

You don't need to consider the rewards that will come for everything moment you have spent for God's glory in costly obedience.

Just simply being with Jesus.

Sitting in His presence.

Feeling love unlike anything you have ever known.

Getting to sit at His feet and listen to His voice.

Just those moments would be worth it.

There are worth more than everything else in this life.

And that is only the beginning.

Because you are not giving up anything.

It is all an investment.

It is putting it away where no recession can steal it.  
Where no thief can touch it.  
No money manager can misuse it.

This is the offer of the gospel.  
Jesus came to give us eternal life.  
He came to make everything right.  
To undo everything that has gone wrong in the world.

And this is here.  
You do not have to sell all your stuff and give it to me to get it.  
This is not a cult where you are no longer allowed to talk to anyone  
outside of it.  
It is free.  
There is nothing you can do to earn it.

But it is a life changing decision.  
Everything about you will change if you follow Christ.  
Because it must.  
Becoming a Christian is not like checking a box.  
It is not as simple as changing your voting registration.  
You cannot become a Christian and then continue your life as normal.  
It does require everything.  
But it is worth it all.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Put others before yourself. Put Christ before everything else. Because Christ is worth it all.
2. Christ is worth everything that we have and everything that we are.