

Luke – Chapter 14

Healing of the Man with Dropsy on the Sabbath

1 On a **sabbath** he went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully. 2 In front of him there was a **man** suffering from **dropsy**. 3 Jesus spoke to the scholars of the law and Pharisees in reply, asking, “Is it lawful to **cure on the sabbath** or not?” 4 But they kept silent; so he took the man and, after he had healed him, dismissed him. 5 Then he said to them, “Who among you, if **your son or ox** falls into a cistern, would not immediately pull him out on the sabbath day?” 6 But they were unable to answer his question.

- The cure of a **man with dropsy** (a condition characterized by swelling in the body caused by fluid retention) on the sabbath and the controversy that results furnishes a parallel to an incident that will be reported by Luke in (13: 10-17), the cure of a crippled woman on the sabbath. A characteristic of Luke’s style is the juxtaposition of an incident that reveals Jesus’ concern for a man with an incident that reveals his concern for a woman.
- Luke narrates five episodes when Jesus **heals on the Sabbath**:
 - Man with unclean spirit (4: 31-35)
 - Simon’s mother-in-law with a fever (4:38-41)
 - Man with a withered hand (6:6-11)
 - Crippled woman (13:10-17)
 - Man with dropsy (14:1-6)
- **Your son or ox**: this is the reading of many of the oldest and most important New Testament manuscripts. Because of the strange collocation of son and ox, some copyists have altered it to “your ass or ox,” on the model of the saying in Lk 13:15.

Conduct of Invited Guests and Hosts

7 He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. 8 “When you are invited by someone to a **wedding banquet**, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, 9 and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then you would proceed with embarrassment to **take the lowest place**. 10 Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, ‘My friend, move up to a higher position.’ Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who **humbles** himself will be exalted.” 12 Then he said to the host who invited him, “When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. 13 Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; 14 blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For **you will be repaid** at the resurrection of the righteous.”

- The **wedding banquet** scene found only in Luke provides the opportunity for these teachings of Jesus on humility and presents a setting to display Luke's interest in Jesus' attitude toward the rich and the poor.
- **Take the lowest place:** A lesson on humility, where greatness is measured by concern for others and a modest estimation of oneself. It is dishonorable to presume that one's position (social or otherwise) will automatically win the favor of God (Proverbs 25:6-7).
- **You will be repaid:** God will look with favorably on works of mercy at the resurrection.

The Parable of the Great Feast

15 One of his fellow guests on hearing this said to him, "**Blessed** is the one who will dine in the kingdom of God." 16 He replied to him, "A man gave a **great dinner** to which he invited many. 17 When the time for the dinner came, he dispatched his servant to say to those **invited**, 'Come, everything is now ready.' 18 But one by one, they all began to excuse themselves. The first said to him, 'I have purchased a field and must go to examine it; I ask you, consider me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have purchased five yoke of oxen and am on my way to evaluate them; I ask you, consider me excused.' 20 And another said, 'I have just married a woman, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 The servant went and reported this to his master. Then the master of the house in a rage commanded his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in here the **poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame**.' 22 The servant reported, 'Sir, your orders have been carried out and still there is room.' 23 The master then ordered the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedgerows and make people come in that my home may be filled. 24 For, I tell you, none of those men who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

- The parable of the **great dinner** is a further illustration of the rejection by Israel, God's chosen people, of Jesus' invitation to share in the banquet in the kingdom and the extension of the invitation to other Jews whose identification as the poor, crippled, blind, and lame classifies them among those who recognize their need for salvation, and to Gentiles.
- An image of the **joys and blessings** of the New Covenant: Israel was long invited to this **feast** by the prophets, yet many of the people declined when the Messiah announced the meal was ready. The Father revised the guest list, summoning the despised of Israel and the Gentiles to enjoy the banquet in their place.
- According to Isaiah 25:6-9, God was preparing a grand **messianic banquet** to celebrate the salvation of all his children from Israel and all the nations.
- **Invitations** were customarily issued in two phases: the first was given far in advance of the meal; and the second when everything was ready.
- A similar **parable** is found in Matthew 22:1-14 (Parable of the Wedding Banquet).

Sayings on Discipleship

25 Great crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and addressed them, 26 “If any one comes to me without **hating** his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my **disciple**. 27 Whoever does not **carry his own cross** and come after me cannot be my disciple. 28 Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and **calculate the cost** to see if there is enough for its completion? 29 Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him 30 and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’ thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? 32 But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. 33 In the same way, every one of you who does not **renounce all his possessions** cannot be my disciple. 34“**Salt** is good, but if salt itself loses its taste, with what can its flavor be restored? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear.”

- This collection of sayings, most of which are peculiar to Luke, focuses on the total dedication necessary for the **disciple** of Jesus.
 - No attachment to **family** (14:26)
 - No attachment to **possessions** can stand in the way of the total commitment demanded of the disciple (14:33).
 - Acceptance of the call to be a disciple demands readiness to accept persecution and suffering (14:27)
 - Realistic assessment of the hardships and costs (14:28-32).
- **Hate:** An idiomatic term meaning “to love less” – not even the sacredness of family loyalty should outweigh our commitment to Christ, since we must be willing to abandon even close relationships to follow him (Mt 10:37).
- **Calculate the cost:** Discipleship is a serious commitment. It is not about testing the waters or holding ourselves back from God. A complete surrender to Christ is necessary to complete the tasks of Christian living.
- The **simile of salt** follows the sayings of Jesus that demanded of the disciple total dedication and detachment from family and possessions and illustrates the condition of one who does not display this total commitment. The halfhearted disciple is like salt that cannot serve its intended purpose.

Luke Chapter 15

- The following parables: Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son indicate that God does not simply welcome penitent sinners, he seeks them out.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

1 The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him, 2 but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and **eats with them**.” 3 So to them he addressed this parable. 4 “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and **go after the lost** one until he finds it? 5 And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy 6 and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘**Rejoice** with me because I have found my **lost sheep**.’ 7 I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.

- Since table-fellowship is an expression of friendship and acceptance, the Pharisees were scandalized that Jesus ate with disreputable people (sinners, tax collectors, poor).
- In a pastoral culture every sheep of one’s flock was valuable, and shepherds would naturally rejoice when a stray was recovered.
- Jesus is the shepherd who restores us to friendship with God. Yahweh is depicted as a shepherd in the OT (Isaiah 40:1) as is the Messiah (Micah 5:4).
- Ezekiel brings these two traditions together, promising that God himself will seek the scattered flock of his people and send the Davidic messiah to shepherd them (Ezekiel 34:22-24).

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 “Or what woman having **ten coins** and **losing** one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it. 9 And when she does **find** it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘**Rejoice** with me because I have found the coin that I lost.’ 10 In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who **repents**.”

- Upon careful examination of these parables, we can see that Jesus was turning His listeners’ understanding of things upside down. The Pharisees saw themselves as being the beloved of God and the “sinners” as refuse. Jesus uses the Pharisees’ prejudices against them, while encouraging the sinners with one clear message: God has a tender, personal concern (“and when he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders.” God has a joyous love for individuals who are lost (in sin) and are found (repent). Jesus makes it clear that the Pharisees, who thought they were close to God, were actually distant and those sinners and tax collectors were the ones God was seeking after.
- **Ten coins:** Literally “ten drachmas” Each is worth an entire day’s wage.

- To the parable of the lost sheep (15:1-7) that Luke shares with Matthew (18:12-14), Luke adds two parables: the lost coin (15:8-10) and the prodigal son (15:11-32) from his own special tradition to illustrate Jesus' particular concern for the lost and God's love for the repentant sinner.

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Then he said, "A man had two sons, 12 and the **younger son** said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father **divided the property** between them. 13 After a few days, the **younger son** collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. 14 When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. 15 So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to **tend the swine**. 16 And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. 17 Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. 18 I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' 20 So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, **embraced him** and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' 22 But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest **robe** and put it on him; put a **ring** on his finger and **sandals** on his feet. 23 Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, 24 because this son of mine was **dead**, and has come to **life** again; he was **lost**, and has been **found**.' Then the celebration began. 25 Now the **elder son** had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. 26 He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. 27 The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 28 He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him.

29 He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. 30 But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' 31 He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. 32 But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

- Parable of the **Prodigal Son** reveals the boundless mercy of God. Though our sins offend the Father, he is ever willing to show us mercy and restore us to family life. In many ways the parable narrates the continuing struggles of the spiritual life, whereas conversion and repentance are part of the ongoing process (CCC1439, 2839).
- On another level, the parable narrates the exile and eventual homecoming of historical Israel. After the reign of King Solomon, Israel split into two kingdoms, becoming like the two brothers living side by side in the northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) Palestine (1 Kings 12).

- By the 8th century BC, the Assyrians had carried off the northern tribes of Israel into a far country, where they walked away from God and worshipped idols—a sin the prophets called **harlotry** (Jeremiah 3:6).
- In the New Covenant God, welcomes home his **exiled son** by lavishing him with mercy and restoring him to full sonship. This is especially brought out in Jeremiah 31:18-20, where Ephraim (northern Israel), after a period of exile and disgrace, repents of his sin, is ashamed of his wrongdoing, and turns to God for mercy.
- **Divided the property:** It was unusual and even shameful for a son to demand his inheritance before his father's death (Sirach 33:23). Here the younger son compounded his father's dishonor by squandering his inheritance in sin.
- **Tend the swine:** Since Jews considered pigs unclean animals (Lev 11:7), only the most desperate conditions would force the son to take this disgraceful position. Working for a Gentile employer, he would be expected to violate the weekly Sabbath as well (Ex 20:8-11).
- **Embraced him:** Literally, "fell upon his neck." The actions of the father recall the mercy shown to Jacob and the joys of family reunion in the patriarchal narratives (Gen 45:14; 46:29).
- **Robe, Ring:** Symbols of honor and authority.
- **Sandals:** Household slaves normally went barefoot. The father refuses this for his son, restoring him instead to full family membership.
- **Dead, come to life:** A transfer of covenant status from curse to blessing. It is a restoration from spiritual death to eternal life (Ephesians 2: 1-5).
- **Elder Son:** The older brother's grumbling signified the bitterness of the Pharisees, who wrongly saw God's acceptance of sinners as a violation of covenant justice. The father in the parable is innocent of such a charge; he is simply forgiving and loving to his son, who recognized his errors and turned to the father for mercy.