

## **Jesus is others-centered, the Church is self-interested**

Week of September 26, 2021

### **Opening Prayer:**

God, we come to you exactly as we are. Some of us are exhausted, distracted, disillusioned, and overwhelmed. We pray that wherever our hearts and minds may be as we come together in conversation, we would find understanding and connection to you and to each other in this time and place. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Historical Context:**

*This section explains where the passage we are about to read lives in the Bible and how it fits into the overall story of God working in our world.*

One key way Jesus teaches truth is through parables; simple stories used to illustrate moral or spiritual lessons. In this section of Luke 14, we see Jesus first give instruction (14:12-14) and then follow it with a parable (14:15-24). The lesson is sometimes referred to as "The Parable of the Great Banquet". Jesus uses this story to help explain his point further.

### **Read Aloud:**

Luke 14:12-24 (CEB)

12 Then Jesus said to the person who had invited him, "When you host a lunch or dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. 13 Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. 14 And you will be blessed because they can't repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected."

15 When one of the dinner guests heard Jesus' remarks, he said to Jesus, "Happy are those who will feast in God's kingdom."

16 Jesus replied, "A certain man hosted a large dinner and invited many people. 17 When it was time for the dinner to begin, he sent his servant to tell the invited guests, 'Come! The dinner is now ready.' 18 One by one, they all began to make excuses. The first one told him, 'I bought a farm and must go and see it. Please excuse me.' 19 Another said, 'I bought five teams of oxen, and I'm going to check on them. Please excuse me.' 20 Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' 21 When he returned, the servant reported these excuses to his master. The master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go quickly to the city's streets, the busy ones and the side streets, and bring the poor, crippled, blind, and lame.' 22 The servant said, 'Master, your instructions have been followed and there is still room.' 23 The master said to the servant, 'Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

### Engaging Scripture:

*Let's pause before we think about how this passage makes us feel or how it applies to our context. This section can help ground your group in talking about what is written and consider its impact on the original audience.*

1. What is the essence of the instruction Jesus gives in verses 12-14? Can it be summed up in a few words?
2. How does the parable shed additional light on that instruction? Does it clarify Jesus' point? If so, how? Or, does it make his point less clear, perhaps broader? If so, how?
3. In verse 21, the master says to bring "the poor, crippled, blind, and lame" from the streets. When he expands the search for guests further in verse 23, he says to "Go to the highways and back alleys" to search for additional people. What additional kinds of people might be found there not already included? Who are the only people left out in the end?

### Application Questions:

There are times in life when we are nudged by God to speak or act in a way that may be in opposition to our desires. Following in the way of Jesus is about far more than *having a better life*. We are also asked to be others-centered. Even when it costs us, God wants to use us to bless the world around us. The sermon challenges us to look at our service, invitation, or participation at large, from a selfless perspective. Jesus commissioned us to live as he lived, demonstrating creative, life-giving, other-centered love.



1. Jesus loves us unconditionally and trusts that we will faithfully bear his image by continuing his work. With this in mind, how do you currently serve others (at home, church, work or in your community)?
2. Doing unfamiliar or uncomfortable things is hard work, it can be scary or energy draining. How do you stay motivated to be others-centered like Jesus?
3. We have 5 shared practices here at The Gathering: worship, serve, pray, learn in groups, and give.
  - a. Which practices are you most comfortable engaging in?
  - b. Which practices challenge you? Say more about that.
  - c. How might you engage the 5 practices in your daily life, outside of the context of church?

### Closing Prayer:

Lord, sometimes we get too comfortable with the distractions in this world. We get so busy with our own lives and our own needs that we fail to see the needs of others. Forgive us, oh God. Please open our hearts towards the needs of all people. Help us to be others-centered and to seek opportunities to help. Guide us in ways that fulfill your plans. In your name we pray, Amen.

### Taking it Further:

*Check these out to take the heart of this sermon and our discussion further this week.*

- Matthew 6:1-4: Jesus encourages us to be humble in our ways that help others. In a sense, he wants us to be pure in heart when we live outwardly and not seek recognition. He notes that recognition leads to earthly rewards, alternatively, serving others without flare is rewarded by God.
-  Tauren Wells - Known (Official Music Video)
-  Zach Williams - Fear Is a Liar (Official Music Video)