

July 21/24 Leader's Guide

Luke 14:1, 12-24 "Generosity Flowing from the Father's Heart"

Jesus is at the home of a prominent Pharisee. It is there that we are invited into the world of patronage. You see, if you wanted to increase your standing in the community or grow your business you needed to be in relationship with wealthy patrons. A patron was one who perhaps could grant you a loan, or open the door for your goods to be sold at market, or grease political wheels and so on. The way you secured and grew your network was through these feasts. As you showered food, drink, and entertainment upon your guests you would secure your power over them, put them in your debt, giving you the opportunity to call in favors whenever you needed them. At such a feast Jesus rises and addresses the host:

Read Luke 14: 1, 12-24

1. (12-13) What is the force of the semitic idiom here? What application does it have for the patronage system?

We looked at one of these semitic idioms a few weeks ago. Jesus says to his followers unless you hate mother, brother, sister, spouse you cannot be my disciple. Is Jesus inviting us to hate our family? No! He is saying your love and devotion towards me should make your love of family appear as hate. It is an idiom to communicate priority.

There is a similar force to this idiom as well. As you consider the currency of your generosity – be it relational, emotional, social, financial priority should be given to kingdom concerns. Investing in others encountering the deep love of God for them in Jesus. Investing in the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked etc.

In many ways this statement is a repudiation of the patronage system – it had the effect of commodifying human relationships such that you would only be in relationship with those who could repay you, leaving a whole group on the outside looking in.

2. (14) What two blessings are associated with this posture? What does each look like?

The following is an unedited segment from the sermon that reflects on this question.

A. *You will be blessed because they can't pay you back: think for a moment how the patronage system commodified human relationships – I'm only interested in you for what you can give me – and vice versa – every single one of us has likely been in a relationship where we knew the person wasn't interested in us – they were only interested in what we could give them – it's an icky feeling – as they use us as a stepping stone to reach higher all we feel is the heel of their boot gaining leverage – our purpose fulfilled they toss us aside – the patronage system commodified relationships so you were either doing the stepping or being stepped upon – there is still threads of this commodification everywhere in our society – and so there are few places you can go to truly know and be known – loved and be loved – serve and be served – it's all rationalized self-love – but to be in relationship with someone who can never pay you back frees you from all of that – genuine relationship can be formed – your blessed in relationship with people who can't pay you back.*

Or you could reflect on the blessing in this way – so many of us navigate relationships by keeping accounts right – I have given that person so so much – they owe me – or that person has hurt me – wronged me – spoken ill of me – and we spend so much time and energy reviewing these accounts – plotting – planning how to balance them – resenting where there's imbalance – but to give expecting nothing in return – and to keep doing that – lays down an entirely new pattern in our hearts – fostering relationships where no accounts are kept – what freedom – what joy – what flourishing – there's blessing in this posture – Jesus says – to give expecting nothing in return.

B. *Those who prioritize kingdom concerns will be repaid in the resurrection of the just – what is that? – well the whole trajectory of the scriptures is oriented to the promise that God will return one day to make everything new – and the most common biblical imagery of that promise realized is a feast – as we read in the Isaiah passage – a feast where the bounty of the earth is enjoyed – a feast where all wrongs are righted – all evil undone – all tears wiped away – all things made new – and this is not some sort of heavenly ethereal spiritual existence – it is rather an earthly – material – physical one – a new creation – that is the ultimate promise of God.*

You see one of our greatest fears if we were to consider shifting our posture –generosity flowing more and more into kingdom concerns - is that we are going to miss out – we’re going to miss out on the trips – the shows – the house - the comfortable retirement – the whatever – we fear missing out

And Jesus is saying you aren’t going to miss out on a thing – for the future we’re oriented toward – the future of promise is a remade cosmos – where all of your earthly longings will be satisfied beyond imagining...

3. (15) What presumption do you see behind the guest’s declaration?

I will be a part of the feast of new creation. Why? Because I am the kind of person who gets invited to such things. This is one who trusts that their performance, their goodness, their station in life makes them worthy of the feast.

Read Isaiah 25: 1, 4a, 6-9

4. (16-24) What do we learn about the character of God (Lord of the Banquet) from this parable?

He is lavish in his generosity – he desires his home to be full.

He is eager in his invitation – he will send messengers out to the furthest reaches to compel people to come in

He is impartial in his invitation – it is not dependent upon who we are, what we have, what we have done or not done.

He is preparing for us the feast of new creation. This feast is given shape in many different ways throughout scripture. Our Isaiah reading gives us a window into it. It is a feast where the bounty of the earth is enjoyed. A feast where all things are made new, all wrongs righted, all evil undone, all tears wiped away.

5. (18-20) What do the excuses reveal about the human heart?

Each of the excuses reveal a priority of heart – myself over the kingdom.

They are also really silly excuses. Who buys a field without first seeing it? And couldn't you do that tomorrow? Who buys five yoke of oxen without knowing that they can do the thing you have bought them to do and couldn't you do that tomorrow? What does getting married have to do with a feast? Couldn't they be your +1?

This invites us to consider the foolishness of such a choice. Next to the glory of new creation, the glory of all things being made new why would you choose anything else? It's utter madness...

6. What decision are we being invited to make in light of the parable?

A. Accept the invitation to the feast of new creation.

B. Allow the generosity of the father to shape our own generosity. For when we encounter Jesus the one who poured out all of his wealth for us on the cross expecting nothing in return, it shapes us to pour out our wealth for others expecting nothing in return.

C. Give priority in all things to the Kingdom

7. How is the Spirit inviting you to live in light of this passage?

This is simply a personal application of what would have been brought to light in question six.