

THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU

Luke 14:1, 7-14 Text vs. 11 *"All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."* In the home in which I grew up, the meal table was our main social center. A lot of my warmest memories are associated with having a meal at our table with family and friends! And so, it was with Jesus! Our entire lesson this morning centers around a discussion with Him at a meal table. And behind all the things being discussed was, *who will sit at God's table in the coming kingdom.* That's going to become clear later in this lesson. It happened on a Sabbath day. Jesus had gone to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, and Luke's the only Gospel that tells of Jesus eating with Pharisees. The conditions under which Jesus was invited were less than honorable. Rather than having a friendly conversation around the table with warm hospitality, it had hostility and contempt on the part of the Pharisees. Now, where a person sat in the synagogue showed one's status. One who claimed to be more honorable sat in the prominent place, hoping for the honor that went with it. And where one sat at a meal was the same. Jesus noticed guests were picking places of honor at the table where He sat. Guests were clamoring to *"choose the places of honor"* around the table. (v. 7a) All *"were watching Him carefully"* (v. 1b) and as Luke tells it, *"There was a man before Jesus who had dropsy"*. An *"abnormal swelling of his body"* (v. 2). Our term for this today is *edema*, the accumulation of excess water in the body. It's the only record of this disease in the New Testament. And who tells about it? A physician. The writer of this Gospel, Dr. Luke. He said, out of kindness this poor man had not been invited, but he was being made a pawn by the Pharisees to trap Jesus. Oh, it's possible the man just happened to be there. But it's more likely the Pharisees brought him to test Jesus and see if he would again, heal on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had their idea about it. Jesus had another. And *"the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath, so they might find a reason to accuse Him."* (Luke 6:7). Last week, we learned Pharisees believed the fourth commandment is to keep the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Sabbath is the rest day, because six days God had worked and then rested on the seventh day. God blessed the seventh day and commanded it be kept as a holy day, having the Pharisees believe healing on the Sabbath violated the Fourth Commandment of not working on the seventh day. (Exodus 20:8-11) So, Jesus raised the question to the Pharisees and straight-out asked them, *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"* (Luke 6:3) Not wanting to have a theological discussion *"they remained silent"* (v. 4a) since their only objective was to trap Jesus. But Jesus was using it as a teaching moment. And without waiting for the Pharisees to respond, Jesus took the man, *"healed him, and sent him away."* (v. 4b) After the man left, Jesus asked the Pharisees a second question: *"Which of you having a son, or an ox, which has fallen into a well on the Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?"* (v. 5) Now, Jesus could have healed that man at another time. But He chose to heal him right then to teach His opponents they had developed traditions which allowed them to do good to an animal on the Sabbath yet kept them from doing the same to a human being! By defending His Sabbath day healings, Jesus was showing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. No matter what the Pharisees thought, or taught, or demanded of others, they always made exceptions for themselves. Like some politicians of our day and time! Jesus believed if it was permissible to help a fallen animal on the Sabbath day, why shouldn't the same principle be applied to suffering people as well? That silenced them! *"They could not reply to these things"* (v. 6; cf. Luke 13:17). Then He told them a parable. *"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor. A person more distinguished than you may have been invited, and if so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least prominent place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled. And those who humble themselves, will be exalted."* He was taking this way beyond dinner etiquette so He could teach a life lesson. *If you build yourself up, you're setting yourself up for a fall!* Then Jesus said to his esteemed host, a prominent Pharisee, *"when you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors. If you do, they may invite you back and then you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."* Jesus said that so they would include into their personal lives those the world rejects. And that's a struggle for a lot of people. They're comfortable to welcome the homeless, the drug addicts, and other "outcasts" into their church. But invite them to their homes? He emphasized this so that those who do so will receive an eternal reward. And isn't it amazing how many times Jesus taught that our response to our fellow human being will influence our eternal reward. So, it's that eleventh verse that's our text this morning; *"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled. And those who humble themselves will be exalted."* An American missionary was traveling by train across South Korea. At a busy train station, an old man boarded and sat across from him. He was Korean and spoke in Korean something to the American missionary. The missionary responded with the only Korean phrase he knew, which was, "I DON'T UNDERSTAND". After a few minutes, the Korean tried again. The missionary said again, "I DON'T UNDERSTAND". Then the Korean tried a third way. "YESU?" The American missionary recognized that familiar word. It

means JESUS. The missionary pointed to himself and said, "YESU." The old Korean man did the same thing. And with a smile on His face unwrapped the bundle he was carrying . It was a large Korean Bible. He turned to a page and pointed to a place he wanted the American to read. Remembering Asian Bibles are written from back to front, he took his own English Bible and counted the number of books and chapters from the back to the place which the old man had pointed. It was Mark 3:35. *"Whoever does the will of God is my brother."* The American searched for a suitable reply. Then he counted out and pointed to Psalm 133:1. *"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"* And friends, Matthew 25:34-46 says it exactly right! ³⁴*The King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* ³⁵*For I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me.* ³⁶*I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came to me.'* ³⁷*Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you. Or thirsty and give you drink?'* ³⁸*And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you. Or naked and clothe you?'* ³⁹*And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'* ⁴⁰*And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'* ⁴¹*"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* ⁴²*For I was hungry, and you gave me no food. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.* ⁴³*I was a stranger, and you did not welcome me. Naked and you did not clothe me. Sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'* ⁴⁴*Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?'* ⁴⁵*Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'* ⁴⁶*And these will go away into eternal punishment. But the righteous, into eternal life."* This describes the Last Judgment where you will be seated at God's Table in heaven. And it explains there is a judgment to come! Every person is going to be sentenced either to an eternity of everlasting happiness, or one of everlasting misery. Jesus is coming! Not just in the glory of his Father. He is coming in His own glory. As Mediator, an attorney, who will speak before God for everyone. The wicked and godly, those living together in the same house as families, those who go to the same churches, on that day, they are going to be separated – forever! Jesus Christ will separate those that are His, from those that are not. There will be a great dividing between saints and sinners. And it will remain, forever! The happiness you may have in Jesus now, is but a faint likeness of the blessed state you will have in heaven. A kingdom has been prepared by God for you. He wants you to be with Him forever in the greatness of His wisdom and power. Jesus purchased it for you by His death on the cross. And the Holy Spirit, is preparing you for that kingdom which has been prepared from the foundation of the world. That happiness is for all the believers. It was planned from the beginning of time! But it's not inherited! Eternal happiness is not something to which you are entitled! You can't get it by yourself! It's a free gift given through Jesus and made possible through the Holy Spirit through God's grace. The wicked in this world have been called to come to Jesus. But they turned from His call because they would not believe in Him. They are the condemned sinners! And they will offer vain excuses at God's Final Judgment because the punishment of those wicked will be an everlasting punishment. It's eternal separation from God. And it can't be changed! So, life and death. Good and evil. Blessing and curse. All are set before you, and you must choose. And as you choose, so shall be your end. What Jesus was saying in our lesson today was, there's a place for you in Heaven beside Me at God's table. But it's not a place you can force your way into. It's not a seat to which you are entitled, because Jesus said, *"I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. God has prepared those places for the ones He has chosen"* (Mark 10:40) It's a place made possible for you when *"the Lord of heaven, the king shall say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* And to those on His left He will say, *"Depart from Me! I never knew you!"* Which will it be for you? Left? Or right? There's a place for you in heaven! You've been invited by Jesus! Take it, before it's too late! AMEN