**The Gospel of Luke**

**Witness to the Gentiles - #38**

**Sabbath and the Law, Honor, Great Banquet**

**Luke 14:1-6, 7-14, 15-24**

**Luke 14:1-6 – Healing on the Sabbath vs. The Law**

Jesus challenges legalism by healing a man with dropsy on the Sabbath

***1*** *One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.* ***2*** *And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.* ***3*** *And Jesus addressed the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”* ***4*** *But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.*

***5*** *Then he said to them, “Suppose a child or an ox of any one of you falls in a well, will you not immediately pull it up, even on the Sabbath day?”* ***6*** *And to this they could find no answer.*

**Notes and Studies:**

1. Jesus asked a question and that marked Jesus as a heaven-sent messenger, for here Jesus is using his power to heal the misfortune of a human as the Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:5).
2. Jesus may have been invited into a house of a “leader” (see Luke 5:17; 7:36; 11:37), the Greek work ***archon*** was used for prominent persons (Luke 23:13, 35, 24:20, Acts 3:17; 4:5, 8)

**The Sabbath Meal**

1. Guests could be invited to a Sabbath meal at the end of the Sabbath Synagogue service. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, it took place at midday (sixth hour). Josephus confirmed that "Sabbath" means "rest" ("Ant." 1: 1). The beginning and end of the Sabbath were announced by trumpet-blasts ("according to the Mishnah, Suk. v. 5).
2. In later tradition the meal begins with the Kiddush, that is, the sanctification of wine. This is because wine is a traditional symbol of a festive occasion. The hands are then washed and the special, braided “Challah Bread” (
3. There is also the custom to eat fish and later to eat meat. Fish comes first because the Sabbath is a celebration of creation. Since in the Torah’s creation account fish were created before the other animals, it comes first. There is a custom to have soup after the fish as the Talmud says that that a meal without soup is not really a meal. This is then followed by the meat. Meat is a food that typically brings physical satisfaction and enjoyment and concludes the Sabbath meal.



**Challah Bread**

*The meal has to be prepared on Friday, which is called the Day of Preparation.*

Watching and waiting

1. There was a man in front of Jesus suffering from “dropsy,” which is a kind edema, an abnormal accumulation of fluids in the connective tissues or cavities of the body causing swelling, distension, and defective circulation.
2. Jesus spoke first to the lawyers who were watching Jesus: Is it lawful, and is this according to the Law?

a. Does the Law allow what is good, and here it is healing.

b. The silence has two sides: the first is that this could have been a new question. The second is that the lawyers were prisoners of the literal application of the Law that has to be challenged by new questions as human needs emerge all the time.

1. Jesus healed the man without uttering a word. The man did not ask for healing. And the whole episode could have been a set-up aiming at showing that Jesus is a breaker of the Law, therefore Jesus is a false teacher.
2. Jesus asked a rabbi’s question which is to present a case that can happen in real life:

a. A child

b. An ox

c. The child is an important member of the family for he or she would secure the continuation of the family.

d. The ox is a very important domestic animal for helping in the fields, etc.

e. Both are two real things and common with the human predicament, so what would be the Law’s verdict?

5. Jesus brings the human personal interest to the awareness of the lawyers. If you have had a need that touched your family and your work, what would do if one of these urgent needs appeared on the Sabbath?

**They could find no answer**

1. Lawyers who face a new challenge look for the text and if there is no text in the codex, they maintain their silence.
2. When the Law must meet human urgent needs, the Law is impotent for two reasons:

a. The Law has been always impersonal for it is does not deal with specific persons but with rules for everyone.

b. The Law seeks the common interest and good of all, which is good, but it is blind to any particular human need.

**Luke 14:7-14 – A Parable about seeking Honor**

***7*** *And he spoke a parable to those who had been invited, as Jesus noticed how they chose out the first seats; He said to them,* [***8***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-8.htm) *“When you are invited by someone to a banquet (marriage feast), do not recline at the first place; it may be that someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host,* ***9*** *and he who has invited you and him may come to you, ‘Give this man your place;’ then in your embarrassment you would proceed to take the last place.* ***10*** *But when you are invited, go settle down in the last place; so when your host comes in he can say to you, ‘Move up my friend.’ Then you will enjoy honor before all who are at table with you.* ***11*** *For everyone that exalts himself shall be humbled; and the one who humbles himself shall be exalted.”*

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

**Notes and Studies**

1. Jesus was still at the house of the Pharisees and it was a dinner Sabbath meal. Here Jesus directed his words to those who were at the table.
2. The Gospel is for the whole church not just this occasion. It teaches how the church deals with self-seeking ambition and self-seeking persons. The usual social way to invite only friends and relatives to gain a place in their life is no longer the case.
3. The Greek word for banquet is ***gamos***, a word normally used for marriage and weddings. From this we understand that there was a social gathering that may have taken place at the house of the Pharisee. The sick person whom Jesus has healed could have been one of the guests and there is the “hint” in verse 12 that covers all social relations. This is just a good conjecture.

1. Who was the person who was seeking the best place? Why did this person have to give up his place to a more distinguished person? This may reveal that the social relationship was not peaceful as some were seeking more honor.
2. Christ gives the best advice. We better take a low place till we are invited to a higher place. Anyone who reads Philippians 2:6ff, where the one who was in the “Form of God” took the “Form of a slave,” he was exalted by God the Father and was given the “name above all names,” that is the name “Yahweh,” would see that the teaching of Jesus comes from his personal life of not self-seeking glory:

“*Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.” (*John 7:18)

**Jesus’ concern for the poor**

1. Exclusive invitations to weddings in a small village in Galilee are certainly not friendly and can weaken relationships.
2. Poverty was not a virtue or even recommended in Judaism or the OT. The poor were and still are looked down upon in every society. Here the dispossessed are not rejected. Jesus teaches peace and reconciliation. Nothing is more appealing than inviting the rejects to a social gathering.

**The ‘Repay’ on the Day of the Resurrection**

1. Getting back the fruit of our life of faith does not mean at all having an external reward or payment. The Greek word used by Luke is ***antapodounai*** (ἀνταποδοῦναι).

2. Literally this means “to give back” as an equivalent or recompense, but what is this?

a. All the good that comes out of our love for the Lord has its eternal blessing which is our inner maturity.

b. As we enter the glory of Heaven itself, what we will receive because of the kind of life, which have possessed as a gift in Christ, we then shall see more glory and more joy.

**Luke 14:15-24 – The Parable of the Great Banquet**

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

***16*** *But he [Jesus] 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.’*

***18*** *But they all at once began to decline. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and inspect it. Please convey my regrets.’*

***19*** *And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them. Please convey my regrets.’*

***20*** *And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’*

***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.’*

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

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

**Notes and Studies**

1. The talk that continues may be at dinner. “To eat bread in the kingdom” means to live with the king in the royal place.
2. Jesus told a parable that shattered the illusion of those who seek that royal position to “eat” with the king. The parable presented them with three cases:

a. The first one is property, that is, purchasing a field that has more prominent place than the “invitation”.

b. The second is domestic work, the oxen and their work.

c. The Third is in fact more legitimate, for the Law did not allow a man newly married to go to war to defend Israel, *“If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.*” (Deut 24:5)

**The Great Banquet**

**The Allegorical Interpretation of the Parable**

**By St Cyril of Alexandria, Sermon 104 on Luke**

“By the man” therefore is to be understood “God the Father.” For similitudes are formed to represent the truth, and are by no means the truth themselves. He therefore, the Creator of the universe and the Father of glory, made a great supper, that is, a festival for the whole world, in honor of Christ. In the last times then of the world and, so to speak, at this our world's setting, the Son arose for us: at which time also He suffered death for our sakes, and gave us His flesh to eat, as being the bread from heaven, which gives life to the world. Towards evening also, and by the light of torches, the lamb was sacrificed, according to the Law of Moses. And therefore with good reason the invitation that is by Christ is called a supper.

And next, who is he that was sent, and who it also says was a slave? Perchance Christ Himself: for though God the Word is by nature God, and the very Son of God the Father, from Whom He was manifested, yet He emptied Himself, to take the form of a slave. As being therefore God of God He is Lord of all; but one may justly apply the appellation of a slave to the limits of His humanity. Yet though He had taken, as I said, the form of a slave, He was even so Lord as being God.

And when was He sent? At suppertime, it says. For it was not at the commencement of this world that the only-begotten Word of the Father descended from heaven, and was in form like unto us; but rather when the Omnipotent Himself willed it, even in these latter times, as also we have already said.

And what was the nature of the invitation? “Come: for lo! all things are ready.” For God the Father has prepared in Christ for the inhabitants of earth those gifts which are bestowed upon the world through Him, even the forgiveness of sins, the cleansing away of all defilement, the communion of the Holy Spirit, the glorious adoption as sons, and the kingdom of heaven. Unto these blessings Christ invited by the commandments of the gospel Israel before all others. For somewhere He has even said by the voice of the Psalmist; "But I have been set as a king by Him; that is, by God the Father; upon Zion His holy mount, to preach the commandment of the Lord.” And again, “I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

And their determination then, was it for their own good? Did they regard with admiration the gentleness of Him Who bade them, and the office of Him Who ministered the call? Not so: for "they began,” it says, “all of them at once to make excuse:” that is, as with one purpose, without any delay, they made excuse. For the first said, “I have bought a field, and I must go to see it: I pray you, permit me to be excused.” And another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them: I pray you, permit me to be excused.” And another said, “I have taken a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” You perceive that by senselessly giving themselves up to these earthly matters, they cannot see things spiritual; for being overcome by the love of the flesh, they are far from holiness, and are covetous and greedy after wealth. They seek those things, which are below, but make no account, no not in the slightest degree, of those hopes which are stored up with God. Far better would it have been instead of earthly fields to gain the

*St Cyril of Alexandria, continued …*

joys of paradise: and instead of transitory tillage, for this was the object of the yokes of

oxen, to gather the fruits of righteousness. For it is written, "Sow for yourselves righteousness; gather as vintage the fruit of life." Was it not their duty rather, instead of the carnal procreation of children, to have chosen spiritual fruitfulness? For the one is subject unto death and corruption: the other is an eternal and abiding; affluence for the saints.

When then the householder heard their refusal, he was angry, it says; and commanded that from the streets and marketplaces of the city there should be gathered the poor, and the maimed, and the blind, and the lame. And who then are to be understood by those who for the sake, as I said, of lands, and tillage, and the carnal procreation of children, refused to come? Certainly it must be those who stood at the head of the Jewish synagogue; men with wealthy purses, the slaves of covetousness, with their mind set on lucre, on which they lavished all their earnestness. For so to speak throughout the whole of inspired Scripture, one may see them blamed for this very thing.

Those then who were superior in station to the mass of the common people did not submit themselves to Christ, when, saying unto them, "Take My yoke upon you:" they rejected the invitation: they did not accept the faith; they remained away from the feast; and scorned the great supper by their hardened disobedience. For that the scribes and Pharisees did not believe in Christ, is manifest by what He says unto them, “You have taken away the key of knowledge: you enter not in yourselves: and those that are entering you have hindered.” In their stead therefore those were called who were in the streets and market-places, who belonged, that is, to the Jewish common people, whose mind was sickly, and infirm, and dark, and halting: for such one may consider to be blind and lame. But they became strong and whole in Christ: they learnt to walk uprightly and received the divine light into their mind. And that a multitude of Jews not easy to number believed, one may learn from the Acts of the Apostles.

When then those, it says, who were in the streets had been called, he whose office it was to bid them to the supper said to the householder, "Still there is room. And the lord said to his servant. Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that no one of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper."

Here observe, I pray, the calling of the Gentiles [happened] after the Israelites had entered by faith. For in olden times the Gentiles were boorish in mind, and uncultivated in understanding, and so to say, outside the city, as living in lawlessness, and more like cattle than men, and with little use of reason. And on this account he who invites to the supper is sent unto the highways, outside the city, and to the hedges in the fields: moreover he is commanded by him who sent him not merely to invite, and offer them exhortation only, but even to compel them. And yet in all men faith is a voluntary act, and by attaining unto it of their own free will, men are acceptable unto God, and largely endowed with His gifts.

*St Cyril of Alexandria, continued …*

How then are men compelled? Yes, this also was said advisedly. For it was necessary, absolutely necessary for the Gentiles, as being fettered by an intolerable tyranny, and fallen under the yoke of the devil, and caught, so to speak, in the indissoluble meshes of their sins, and utterly ignorant of Him Who by nature and verily is God, that their calling should be very urgent, resembling the use of force, that they might be able to look up unto God, and taste the sacred doctrines, and leave off their former error, and spring away as it were from the hand of Satan. For Christ also said, "No man can come unto Me except My Father Who sent Me [to] drag him." But dragging implies that the calling is an act of power such as God only can exercise. And the blessed David is also found addressing God in similar terms respecting them, “With bridle and bit shall You restrain the jaws of those that draw not near unto You.” You see how the God of all as with a bridle turns unto Himself those who fiercely have departed from Him: for He is good and loving unto mankind, and wills that all men should be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth.” -- *St Cyril of Alexandria, Sermon 104 on Luke*

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