

Luke 14:12-14; Isaiah 61:1-4; Inviting Others to the Feast I. Who We should Invite II. Who Jesus Invites
 Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who do we like to associate with? If you have the freedom to choose, who would make the list of those invited to a party we host? We usually choose to associate with people that we like- or people who can give us something in return- right? For example, when we invite someone to our wedding, we normally we expect a gift from them, right? It has been known to happen that people invite guests to their wedding because of what they will give. Well, one of the hardest parts of organizing a wedding reception is not only figuring out who will sit where as we saw last week- but ultimately who will make the cut to be invited and who will not! At some point you have to say- this person is not close enough- I have not seen them in years- they do not need to be invited. Today Jesus returns to the concept of the Kingdom while using this Sabbath feast to teach us- who should be invited when we throw a feast. Last week we considered the attitude of those who are invited, this week we find out who should be invited. Jesus has already rebuked and challenged those who came to the feast- now Jesus is going to challenge the very Pharisee who threw the party in 14:1. No-one is safe from Jesus' piercing eyes! Today we see that Jesus Christ graciously invites all to freely come and taste His banquet.

I. Who We should Invite

We begin by considering who we should invite. When we are throwing a feast or a celebration, what kind of people should we gather and welcome in? As we saw last week, there is at the first level a clear, human and earthly component to Jesus teaching. V. 12 begins, when you give a dinner or banquet- when you throw a party or hold a fellowship meal- give careful consideration to whom you invite. Now the Pharisee of v. 1 would have invited Jesus because Jesus was a popular teacher. He would have invited his friends to curry a favor. Human logic teaches- invite those who can give you something back. Welcome those who can do something for you- or at least invite people whose company you enjoy. But Jesus says- do not invite your family, friends or rich neighbors. Why not? For this very reason- they are able to invite you back and return the favor. Rather, invite the poor, crippled or maimed. Now this command makes us uncomfortable- because

it is a radical command that flies in the face of everything we are used to. When you host a party- we usually only invite our friends and family. The thing is- when you invite, feed and bless those who have- they will likely bless you in return. This is not bad in itself- but your service, kindness and invite will be rewarded in this life! You will already be blessed by these family and friends below. But if you are looking for a blessing in the life to come- you may need to change your strategy!

Who do you seek to invite to a meal? Here Jesus is calling us to a radically different way of life- to a lifestyle so unfamiliar it can only be described as divine or other worldly! Here Jesus is calling us to have a love for the lost- and the pressing command to do justice and show mercy to the poor, needy and neglected. So then- have you ever invited someone into your home who was not a family member or close friend? Someone you knew would never invite you back? Jesus is saying- if your generosity is reserved for those who can repay- then you do not really understand the generosity of God! Now if you invite and they do not come- that is on them as we will see next week. But the command to invite the despised ones rests upon us! If our hospitality is only focussed on the family and friends- then we really do not understand the concept of Christian hospitality- which is really a love for broken, fellow man. I remember growing up in Iowa how hard it is for people to change or challenge tradition. For example- when asked about inviting people into their home the answer was- We always go to grandma's house for Sunday dinner. Any visitors to church would have to find somewhere else to go- because they had a standing invite that could not be broken. Now I love going to grandmas for dinner just as much as the next person- however- do we have room for the least of these? Jesus is calling for us to change our focus- to look around- to break with the trend. A commitment to the lost- to the poor, to the economically overlooked- what about these? Do we care for those with special needs- and seek to minister to those in prison? Basically – Jesus is saying- the “have nots” of this world- do not overlook these little ones! Jesus is not forbidding normal, social gatherings with friends and family. NO, we do not neglect or fail to take care of our own families. But this generosity is normal and expected- and it will likely be repaid in kind. True, Christian charity is to give to those who cannot repay. Be willing to associate and minister to such

as these! If you do this, great will be your reward- v. 14 concludes. Then our Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you in the open! The cup of cold water- the ones you invited over who never returned the favor- these acts of obedience will be rewarded with a Father's smile! In order to persuade us- even encourage this kind of thinking- Jesus says here that we will be blessed! Truly we see- it is more blessed to give than to receive! But how and when will we be blessed? We will be blessed by the Father at the resurrection- repaid and rewarded by God for this selfless act! Since we have not been repaid in this life- Our God will see to it that we are repaid in the life to come! Whatever is graciously given today- will be returned- even more so- pressed in and running over to you! Truly your cup will overflow! So use your earthly treasures today in this way- and gain a spiritual- even an eternal reward tomorrow! Love the least of these- because that is what I did and do- our Lord says! So Christian hospitality is fueled by love- a love that does not grumble when a return invite is not received. Rather, we look out for the poor and despised as we seek to bless those in need! Seeking to do good to those who cannot do good to us in return.

II. Who Jesus Invites

But Jesus is not only speaking to us- telling us what we should do! No, He is going to prove- to show us exactly what this looks like! The parable we find in v. 15 and following proves the generosity of this diving host. Jesus is going to do the very thing He commands- as we look ahead to v. 24. It is Jesus who is the host of this wedding banquet- He is throwing this wonderful party! It is His kingdom that is coming- it is His people that will make up the church- it is His bride that will be gathered! In this parable, Jesus is setting the table and sending out the invitations. He is making the preparations- sending out the RSVPs- and calling many to come. But the question is- who will He invite? The fact is, Jesus is going to do the very thing that He calls us to do because He will invite despised and rejected ones to His wedding supper! Note how v. 21 fulfills the command of v. 13. Jesus does the very thing He commands! Who does Jesus invite into His kingdom? Well, throughout His ministry He was known to associate with the poor, lame and blind. The social outcasts made up his companions. This was not only to fulfill His calling- as prophesied in Isaiah 61 as we read- His association with

the poor and despised was not only a necessary work- it was truly His desire to help the downcast! He truly loved the lost- and had compassion on those who were despised by other men! The people were like sheep without a shepherd- and Jesus looked at them with compassion! Added to this, the fishermen and tax collectors- even the former prostitute and the leper he was not ashamed to call his friend! The social misfits- it was these that Jesus dined with as Mark 2 says. The very ones that the Scribes and Pharisees would never be seen with- these Jesus embraced and called his beloved ones. Even little children were worthy of His blessing and care! He came to heal the sick- and those who are sinners- these are the ones He came to save! It is his compassion that moved Him into circles that most would avoid! And today- we see this in living color! Jesus comes to us- who are the outcast in our sins! Jesus comes- and invites us as our sermon next week will expand upon. The Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb- Jesus is the host- and He has invited you! As Heb. 2 says, He is not ashamed to call you brothers! The Holy host and perfect King- is not ashamed to invite you, welcome you, and call you His family! Jesus does not invite us because of what we can give Him- He knows that we are poor and needy. Rather He invites us because of what He can give us- and that is a rich banquet. Come and get wine and bread- without cost- for it is freely given!

As we now come to the Lord's Supper- we remember that Christ is calling us to come, take, eat, remember and believe! The fruits of Christ work are free to all who come to Him in humble faith! Christ has invited you to come- to sup with Him! What a privilege we have to both receive the invite- and by the Spirit to respond in faith- to this invite into the Kingdom that is to come! That we can have a foretaste of His wedding banquet today! If you feel like you don't belong- that you stick out- that you are an outcast- you are in good company here! When inviting people into your life and home, remember what Jesus has done for you! He loved the outcast like you- while you were an enemy and stranger! And today- Jesus Christ graciously invites you all to freely come and taste His banquet. Listen to these words from Isaiah 55- Come, everyone who thirsts. He who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come without money and without price- come and eat for the feast is prepared! Truly blessed are those who eat the bread of life in the Kingdom of God!