

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, August 28-September 3 (C) - Luke 14:1, 7-14

Discipleship: *A New Hospitality*

Focus Question: *How do you welcome and include the less fortunate?*

word of life

“For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” Luke 14:11 (NRSV)

Read Luke 14:1, 7-14

Chapter 14 begins with the announcement of Jesus choosing to dine with the Pharisees despite their habit of watching him. This is not his first dinner with them, but Jesus uses the meal to teach a lesson on hospitality and manners. As usual, there is a deeper meaning behind his words.

1. *Why does it or does not surprise you that Jesus dines with Pharisees?*
2. *Why do you think the Pharisees watch Jesus closely? (See Luke 14:1)*

Although the Pharisees intend to watch and scrutinize Jesus, it is Jesus who watches the Pharisees select their seats for the meal. Without name cards on the tables, the guests wander around and select their own places at the dinner table. With bold audacity, some guests select places of honor for themselves and do not consider others who might be more distinguished. This creates an awkward situation for both the host and the guest. Who wants to be asked to move from the best seat in the room to an inferior one?

3. *What is surprising about this text?*
4. *Why does Jesus invest time and energy teaching manners?*

Jesus instructs it is better to sit at the lowest seat and be asked to come forward to sit at the place of honor. “For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11 NRSV)

5. *What are examples in the Bible of the humbled being exalted?*
6. *What are examples in the Bible of the exalted being humbled?*

Jesus also addresses the host of the dinner. His concern is the cycle of entertaining where people continue to invite each other to dinner, trying to pay each other back for the previous meal. There is no end to such indebtedness. In fact, there can be a gradual escalation as one tries to impress or out-entertain the previous event.

Jesus introduces a whole new approach to hospitality. “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.” (Luke 14:13 NRSV) That is not a common list of people to invite to a banquet.

7. *What point is Jesus trying to make?*
8. *What is wrong with inviting friends and relatives?*

Throughout Luke’s Gospel, there is an emphasis on including the outsider. The specific four-fold list of the poor, crippled, lame and blind is repeated in Mary’s song (Luke 1) as well as in the first sermon by Jesus. (Luke 4:16-21) Disciples of Jesus are encouraged to go beyond giving food to the stranger but actually eating and interacting with those humbled by life’s circumstance. In doing so, there is a foretaste of the feast to come at God’s inclusive banquet of heaven.

word among us

There was a middle-aged couple who received an invitation to an engagement party located in a town several hours away. The groom was the son of some dear friends, so they decided to make the trip even though they would know very few people at the party.

The party was at night and the dimly lit street made it difficult to find the house. Thus, they were greatly relieved to see balloons on a mailbox and a party overflowing with people. As they walked up the drive and into the house, everyone was quite friendly and welcoming. But after a while, they got confused when they didn't see their friends. When the couple began asking people, they discovered that no one knew their friends.

It turned out they were at the wrong house and wrong party. Their party was on the next block. Somehow they had managed to stay forty-five minutes at the wrong party. They were horrified! But on the way out, people shouted, "It's ok to stay!" "Come back and enjoy our party."

1. *What would that have felt like to be the couple at the wrong house?*
2. *What etiquette have you learned about being a "good guest" at a dinner party?*

Imagine another party where a guest walked into the kitchen, grabbed some spices, and began adding seasoning to the food before it was served at the party.

3. *How would you respond to a guest who acted in such a manner?*
4. *If you are a guest, what is the role of humility?*
5. *In all circumstances, what is the role of humility?*

Although Jesus provides instruction about meals on earth, he is also pointing to heaven. Who among us is worthy to be at the banquet feast which has no end? Who among us is prepared for such a feast?

6. *Describe heaven in terms of a feast.*
7. *How does a human become worthy to be at such a banquet?*
8. *What does it feel like to be invited to and included in God's feast of heaven?*

It's hard to imagine heaven. Jesus suggests we can get a glimpse of the magnificent meal in heaven by hosting meals on earth which include all kinds of people, particularly those who are in need. But Jesus is not just suggesting we provide food at a food pantry or a once-a-year Thanksgiving meal for the homeless. Jesus encourages the hosts to dine with the guests.

This instruction is consistent with the inclusive and interactive nature of Jesus throughout his ministry. He continually chooses to eat and interact with sinners. He invites and includes those who have been traditionally left out. He pushes back boundaries and challenges his disciples to do likewise. Jesus is introducing a new kind of hospitality, one not built on common practices, but on grace and gracious sharing of resources. No paybacks are to be expected.

9. *How might this passage influence you doing the coming week?*
10. *What do you hope to remember from this passage?*

Prayer

Gracious God, instill in us a gracious spirit to invite and include those in need. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Psalm 112

last word

This week, invite someone to lunch who cannot repay you.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2007 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelism/dailydiscipleship

9/02/07 Page 2 of 2