



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
Dr. Rob White – Senior Minister
<https://aulc.us>

TITLE: A Different Kind of Luncheon

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: Christ calls us to a life of humble service and promises, "You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

SCRIPTURE: Luke 14:1, 7-14

Our scripture lesson today, comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 14, verses 1 and 7 to 14.,,,

Starting at verse 1:,,,

One Sabbath, when He went to eat at the house of one of the leading Pharisees, they were watching Him closely. ,,,

He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noticed how they would choose the best places for themselves: ,,,

“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, don’t recline at the best place, because a more distinguished person than you may have been invited by your host.,,,

The one who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in humiliation, you will proceed to take the lowest place.,,,

“But when you are invited, go and recline in the lowest place, so that when the one who invited you comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ You will then be honored in the presence of all the other guests.,,,

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”,,,

He also said to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a lunch or a dinner, don’t invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. ,,,

On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind.,,,

And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”,,,

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!,,,

-- Hello, I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.,,,

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!,,,

Sitting around a table together and sharing food is an important part of the day. It is a time not only to eat, but to talk. We can tell about the happenings of our day and listen to what others have to say. Our time at the table, whether it be in the school cafeteria with friends or at work with co-workers or at home with family, is most pleasant if everyone has good table manners. We learn from our parents that we should sit up straight, chew with our mouth closed, use a napkin, and avoid putting our elbows on the table. In our country these manners are a part of our dining customs.,,,

People in other countries have different dining customs. In the Sudan, a region of Africa, people sit on pillows around a low table and the host pours water from a pitcher over the guest's hands into a basin. The guest is offered a small glass of fruit juice as a welcome.,,,

In China and Japan people use chopsticks rather than a fork to lift food to their mouth.,,,

In Spain and Mexico some people take siestas following the midday meal. It is a time when they rest and perhaps take a nap.,,,

In a Korean home it is customary for the eldest person to eat first.,,,

The people of Argentina dine late in the evening, about nine o'clock.,,,

In ancient Greece people reclined when they ate.,,,

As you can see, there are many different dining customs. At the time Jesus was on earth there were also specific dining customs and Jesus used those customs to teach about the kingdom of heaven. In those days, as there is now, there was a special place at the table for the guest of honor. Many people, then and now, want to sit in the place of honor. It is similar to wanting to be first in line or having the best seats at a baseball game.,,,

Jesus taught that in the kingdom of heaven the order is reversed. Those people who have reverence for God and are humble will have a place of honor. He said, "**For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted**" ,,,

Being first is not always best. The lesson Jesus taught reminds us to think of others and remember that, above all, God should have first place in our lives.,,,

Some years ago, at a class at a university, one of the students challenged the class. He said, "The Bible says, 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth'—but that isn't true! It's aggressive people who inherit the earth—not the meek." Then he waited for our response. The room got very quiet.,,,

A Minister taking the class had preached a sermon on the Beatitudes several times, so he remembered it well. It was based on William Barclay's commentary on Matthew. In that commentary, Barclay talked about the Greek word *praus*—the word that is translated "meek" in our Bibles. He said that, in Greek literature, *praus* is often used to describe a horse that has been domesticated—tamed—a horse that has learned to take orders.,,,

So this Minister broke the uncomfortable silence and explained about *praus* and horses that had been tamed. Then he took it another step and explained that horses in that time and place were an instrument of war. Soldiers rode horses into battle. Those horses were *praus*—broken to ride—tamed—but hardly what we would call "meek." He said that *praus* isn't really about meekness, but is about power under control.,,,

He was proud of himself for answering the challenge. He was especially proud of remembering that Greek word, *praus*, and being able to explain it.

But later, he found himself replaying that little scenario and becoming less and less comfortable with his answer. The more he thought about it, the more he felt that he had given a "this-world" answer to that young man's question—when Jesus, in the Beatitudes, was talking about something completely different. ,,,

It occurred to him that, in the Beatitudes, Jesus hadn't been trying to tell us how to get ahead in this world. ,,,

- He was giving us a glimpse into the kingdom of God. ,,,
- He was like a tour guide preparing us to enter a foreign land. ,,,
- He was explaining local customs and rules of the road. ,,,
- He was preparing us so we wouldn't get a rude shock entering the kingdom of God. ,,,
- He was inviting us to start living by Kingdom Rules now—to start life in the kingdom of God now. ,,,

Our Gospel lesson today reminded me of that story. Jesus was eating dinner on the Sabbath at the home of a leader of the Pharisees. This Pharisee had invited a number of people, and they were jockeying for the best seats—the "places of honor" —the seats nearest the host. That's where everyone wanted to sit. ,,,

But Jesus saw what was happening, and gave them some advice. He said:,,,

"When you are invited...to a marriage feast,
don't sit in the best seat,
since perhaps someone more honorable than you might be invited by him,
and he who invited both of you would come and tell you,
'Make room for this person.' ,,,

Then you would begin, with shame, to take the lowest place. ,,,

But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place,
so that when he who invited you comes,
he may tell you, 'Friend, move up higher.' ,,,

Then you will be honored
in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ,,,

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,
and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." ,,,

When I read that part of the story, I was reminded of the student in that long-ago classroom story—and the Minister's regrettable answer about "**Blessed are the meek.**" It occurred to me that we could make the same mistake here that he made there. We could explain Jesus' advice about sitting in a low place as "this-world" advice—"How to Use Humility to Make It Big." ,,,

But Jesus wasn't telling us how to get ahead in this world. He was pulling back the lid on the kingdom of God to let us see how things work there.,,,

Then Jesus turned to the host and offered him a bit of advice. The people at that dinner were movers and shakers. That's why the Pharisee invited them. This was a gathering of the elite. They ate together often—had much in common—owned much of the town's property—made the town's rules. And they were in a position to help each other. "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours." ,,,

You don't break into a group like that easily. These men were lucky to be there, and they enjoyed their privileged status. ,,,

But Jesus advised his host:,,,

"When you make a dinner or a supper,
don't call your friends, nor your brothers,
nor your kinsmen, nor rich neighbors,
or perhaps they might also return the favor,
and pay you back. ,,,

But when you make a feast,
ask the poor, the maimed,
the lame, or the blind;
and you will be blessed,
because they don't have the resources to repay you. ,,,

For you will be repaid
in the resurrection of the righteous" ,,,

To understand what Jesus meant, we must first understand the extent to which he turns this-world wisdom on its head. That is especially apparent in the Beatitudes:,,,

- Blessed are the poor, not the rich.,,,

- Blessed are those who mourn, not those for whom life is one big party.,,,
- Blessed are the meek, not the powerful.,,,

And it is apparent here as well, when Jesus says:,,,

"When you make a dinner...,
invite the poor, the maimed,
the lame, or the blind;
and you will be blessed,
because they don't have the resources to repay you. ,,,

For you will be repaid
in the resurrection of the righteous.",,,

Jesus didn't come to earth to teach us how to get rich as this world counts riches. He came to teach us how to be rich in the kingdom of God. ,,

That might not sound very interesting, because most of us would be thrilled to be rich as this world counts riches. Being rich in the kingdom of God sounds pretty remote. ,,

- But this-world riches go by fast—and aren't very satisfying for people who lack spiritual values. ,,
- But kingdom of God riches start now and last forever. Let me say that once more. Kingdom riches start now. We don't have to die to begin enjoying them. ,,

On several occasions, Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God as having come near or as being among us. ,,

- The kingdom of God is near when we invite the poor and the crippled and the lame and the blind to sit at our table. ,,
- The kingdom of God is among us when we extend Christ's blessing to those who cannot repay us. ,,

Jesus promises that God will repay us "in the resurrection of the righteous". But I have noticed that kingdom of God people don't have to wait that long. Kingdom of God people live blessed lives here and now.,,,

And kingdom of God people help to bring about the answer the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. Jesus said:,,,

"Pray like this:
'Our Father in heaven...,
Let your Kingdom come."
(Matthew 6:9),,,

When we take care of people in need, God's kingdom comes. When we help people in need, we will see a ray of sunshine penetrating the darkness.,,,

In his book, *Finding Hope Again*, Roy Fairchild tells about getting sick while traveling in Austria. He was sick for two weeks. That cost him both time and money.,,,

When well enough to travel, Fairchild boarded a train to Vienna. He arrived there tired, broke, and depressed. He had arranged to meet friends there earlier, but had no idea where they might be now.,,,

As Fairchild tried to decide what to do, an old woman who had been sweeping the station stopped and asked if he was hungry. She opened a brown bag and offered him half her lunch. Fairchild says:,,,

"I was moved.
She not only helped my aching hunger,
but lifted my spirit in an unforgettable way." ,,,

They talked, and the woman told him about losing her husband and sons in the war. Her life had been hard, but she was nevertheless thankful for many things.,,,

As they came to the close of their conversation, Fairchild asked why she had shared her lunch with him. She answered:,,,

"Jesu is mein Herr.
Gott ist gut." ,,,

Which means:,,,

"Jesus is my Lord,
God is good." ,,,

Fairchild concluded, ,,,

"She understood and lived the story of Jesus
in a way that the most sophisticated scholars could never do.
Her faith touched mine." ,,,

Then Fairchild asked this question:,,,

"Who was it, after all,
that I met that day in Vienna?" ,,,

Fairchild doesn't give us the answer to that question, but the answer is clear. He met Christ in Vienna. He met Christ in the presence of a woman who was ordinary by the world's standards—but who was part of the kingdom of God. Her kingdom of God values blessed him, but they also blessed her. God had not given her an easy life, but he had given her warmth of face, a sparkle in her eyes, and a thankful heart.,,,

Jesus promised that such people will be repaid "**in the resurrection of the righteous**"—but I believe that God starts blessing kingdom of God people here and now. ,,,

We have a number of kingdom of God people in this congregation today. Look around, and you will see them. You are probably one of them—a kingdom of God person—a person who understands that it is truly more blessed to give than to receive. ,,,

Kingdom of God people bless all of us. Let us thank God for them, and let us thank God that he enables us to become kingdom of God people. ,,,

Let us thank God that he enables us to experience kingdom of God blessings now. Let us determine to be kingdom of God people today—and every day.,,,

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!,,,

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!,,,

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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