

August 31, 2025

St. Luke 14:1-14:

“What Do You - Think”

- I. Dropsy and Dinner
- II. Places of Honor
- III. Care for Others

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St. Luke 14: 1-14

Dear friends in Christ,

Doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes, a 19th century physician, was the father of the noted United States Supreme Court Justice of the same name. The doctor was a short man. The story goes that one day he went to a meeting and found himself standing in a room full of tall men. This made him look even shorter. Now, keep in mind that the value of coins was quite different in that day because someone remarked to Doctor Holmes, "You must feel very small among these big people." Doctor Holmes responded by saying, "I do," said the Doctor, "I feel like a dime among a bunch of pennies." I must confess that I liked that story a lot even though I knew it was about elevating the self.

It has been said, "It is not what a man thinks he is; but what a man thinks - he is!" And a fellow by the name of Henry Sandham said, "To set up self is to deny Christ; To exalt Christ is to reject self." So . . .

WHAT DO YOU - THINK?

I. Dropsy and Dinner

One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the House of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away and he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that had fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" And they could not reply to these things (vv.1-6).

Dropsy is the accumulation of fluid in the body that can cause swelling and affect the heart, liver, or kidneys. Today it's called Edema. But the question is: Why would Jesus dine with lawyers and Pharisees who wanted Him destroyed? The answer begins with Jesus' words, "For God so loved the world...". Scriptures tell us that these men witnessed teachings and miracles of Jesus a good number of times.

But there's another part to this. It's the same Word, Jesus, who said this word to them: "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins (Jn.8:24)." And they would go to hell! That's what they didn't want to hear, their sinfulness. They were lost in denial. And the Lord confronts us in the written Word with this: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rm.5:8)."

As in the case of the lawyers and Pharisees, we too were sinners and enemies. And we still sin. The issue of life is not the self, but the importance of God's love for us. Unlike the lawyers and Pharisees, we hold on to the words, "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him (Eph.1:4)." And why? Well, it wasn't because we were "somebodies", people of importance, but because as Scripture says, "He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (Eph.1)." God loves us because. . .because. . . "it was the purpose of His will." He loved us and gave Jesus to be the One to win His favor for us. But something else . . .

II. Places of Honor

Now he told the parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you

be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place." But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (vv.7-11).

If we know the Word of God, we know that the Pharisees had a serious problem with self-exaltation, of being recognized as important. Jesus addressed this a number of times. You may recall this word of Jesus: "They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the places of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues (Mt.23:5-60)."

It has been stated, "The world challenges us: if you try to live by the golden rule, sooner or later you will realize that many others are getting ahead of you. Do yourself a favor!" In other words, "Forget it!" Well, isn't that it? "Who really cares about others? Life is about me!" Unfortunately, there's an ugly grave and eternity reserved for the selfish "me". Everything goes away - is forgotten. We must listen to Jesus: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (Mt.23:12)." I was thinking back to something that was written by Austin O'Malley:

Our lives are like waves which wash up out of the ocean of eternity, break upon the beach of time and lapse back into the ocean of eternity. Some are sunlit, some run in storm and rain, one is a quiet ripple, another is a mighty breaker. And once in every generation there is a great wave which sweeps over the land. But they all go back to the sea and lie equally level there (gone and forgotten).

We remember that Jesus gave us what is referred to as The Golden Rule. Here's the ESV translation of the verse: "So whatever you wish that others would do for you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets (Mt. 7:12)." We're not here to make a big splash. As God's people in Christ, we're here to live for and serve our Lord.

III. Care For Others

He also said 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 you be repaid. 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 at the resurrection of the just (vv.12-14)."

The Lord isn't saying that we should not invite family or friends for dinner or a special celebration. But let's face it, some spend a lot of money and effort trying to impress others for the sake of personal gain or recognition. Please listen to this Word of God through the Apostle Paul:

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit (the Spirit who has worked and sustains our faith in Christ), any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Those are powerful words: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." Again, it appears that many waste a lot of money and time trying to impress themselves and their importance by impressing others.

Alice Lee Humphres was a first-grade schoolteacher who wrote a book entitled, "Angels in Pinafores." The book was published in 1954. James S. Hewett gives this account of one of her experiences as a teacher:

She tells about a little girl who came to school one winter day wearing a beautiful white angora beret (and) white mittens... As she was coming through the door, a mischievous little boy grabbed the beret and threw it in the mud. After disciplining the little boy, the teacher sought to comfort the little girl. Brushing the mud off...the little girl looked up at the teacher and said in the quiet and responsible manner, "Sometime I must take a day off and tell him about God." As far as the little girl was concerned, everything that was wrong with the boy could be made right if she could just tell him about God.

So here we are, a gathering of sinful people sitting in pews and one standing in the pulpit. More than likely, we have all sinned at least one time this morning; an improper thought about someone or something or a word that should not have been spoken. And we know the Word and believe, "...the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin (I Ln. 1:7b)" and "Whoever believes has eternal life (Jn.3:16)." We have been set apart to be salt and light to others; to serve the Lord. You know, "what a person thinks - the person is." So, **What Do We - Think?**

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott