

Conversations on
Luke 14:1, 7–14

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! See how people who are hungry can be fed at Baytown Pay It Forward Diner in Baytown, Texas (bit.ly/PIFdiner). Discuss ways to pay it forward in your community.

WHAT is important to know?

Verses 12–14 also continue this counterintuitive message, telling us that our own tables should be surrounded by strangers, who are the “poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind,” in essence. We should populate our tables with those who are at the greatest social disadvantage. Although this instruction is patently this-worldly in its orientation, it says something about the nature of God’s reign as well; it lets the hearer know that the attributes ascribing favor in this world are not the same as those that do so at the coming feast. Those viewed as lower are to be treated with greater respect, to receive greater favor, and to enjoy places of honor in our own lives! (*odney S. Sadler Jr.*)

- ✠ What do Jesus’ words teach you about humility?
- ✠ What do Jesus’ words teach you about hospitality?

WHERE is God in these words?

The realm of God is also about how God offers an invitation in our lives to receive a genuine blessing when we learn that it is crassly unfaithful to store up spiritual points to note our goodness and then make it worse by ostentatious displays of that goodness. Receiving a blessing that invites us to grow into a deeper relationship with God is not something we can work our way into through acts designed to display our worth. No. God asks us to live into our createdness through our everyday acts toward each other and in and through our relationship with God and creation. Jesus wants us to understand that our all-too-human drive to seek the best seat in the house or at the party will not mark genuine participation in God’s mercy or love. (*Emilie M. Townes*)

- ✠ What attitudes of the heart does seeking the best seat in the house or at a party display?
- ✠ What do Jesus’ words tell us about the nature of the kingdom of God?
- ✠ Why is it important to let any “exaltation” that is given, come from God?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Luke gives beautiful testimony to this barrier-breaking hospitality in the account of the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where she gives birth and lays Jesus in a manger “because there was no place for them in the inn” (2:1–7). The birth of Jesus thus breaches the blockade of welcome for the babe at the inn and embodies royal David’s line in an unexpected way. The hospitality of the manger becomes a paradigm for Luke’s particular emphasis on the welcome of the stranger and the communion at table that breaks down the barriers at the borders to human community and overcomes the constrictive exclusions of fear and loathing in the world. (*Charles E. Raynal*)

- ✠ What does the hospitality shown to Jesus at his birth say to you about how God can use acts of care for those in need?
- ✠ In what ways does the barrier-breaking hospitality Jesus advocated change your views about social relationships?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

Jesus’ challenge reaches across boundaries of place and time, calling us to be more aware of those from whom we are inclined to avert our eyes, and to follow him rather than those who baptize common prejudices as virtues. We who “have been baptized into Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:3) are called to conform to him and to his ways. To live into our baptism is to be ever mindful of those who are typically left out. (“Do not be conformed to this world” [Rom. 12:2].) (*Ronald P. Byars*)

- ✠ What is the relationship between your baptism and the ways God wants you to treat others?
- ✠ How can you or the church offer hospitality to those at the margins of life?
- ✠ What new ministries can your church take on to serve those Jesus said to include in a banquet?

*Welcoming God, show us the way to open our hearts and homes to others,
 especially those whom Jesus invited to the dinner. Amen.*