

Semicontinuous

**Jer. 2:4–13**

**Ps. 81:1, 10–16**

Complementary

**Sir. 10:12–18 or**

**Prov. 25:6–7**

**Ps. 112**

**Heb. 13:1–8, 15–16**

**Luke 14:1, 7–14**

# An Invitation

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Children will celebrate that God invites everyone, even unexpected guests, to the banquet.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Luke 14:1, 7–14

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Rodney S. Sadler Jr.

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!

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Emilie M. Townes

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.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Charles E. Raynal

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.

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

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Ronald P. Byars

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].)

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**  
**Luke 14: 1, 7–14**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Children are excited when an invitation to a birthday party arrives, but they also know what it feels like to be left out. The most popular children are invited to party after party while others may never receive an invitation at all. The party in today's focus scripture includes some of those people who were usually left out. Children, whether they are always included or long to be included, can never hear too often that God's love includes them.

*God of grace, may your love fill even those dark corners of my soul so that I may overflow with the joy that comes from knowing your love. Amen.*

## ■ LEADING THE SESSION

### YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ green cloth
- ☐ Christ candle
- ☐ lighter
- ☐ offering basket
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Color Pack 1, 2, 28, 31
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, [bit.ly/SingingTheFeast](http://bit.ly/SingingTheFeast)
- ☐ mural paper
- ☐ pencils or dark crayon

### For Responding

- ☐ Option 1: *Singing the Feast*, [bit.ly/SingingTheFeast](http://bit.ly/SingingTheFeast)
- ☐ Option 2: construction paper (light colors), markers, newsprint
- ☐ Option 3: copier paper, markers
- ☐ Option 4: Resource Sheet 2

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, print the opening litany on newsprint. Prepare the mural paper for Exploring. For Responding, option 2, fold construction paper in half crosswise and write the prayer opening on newsprint. For Responding, option 3, gather information about a local food pantry and how the children and their families can participate.

Greet children by name as they arrive. Invite several children to set up the worship table with the green cloth, candle, offering basket, and Bible, opened to Luke.

When everything is ready, gather at the worship table. Point to the green cloth. Explain that today is the Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time. Tell about this season, using the information on Color Pack 1. During Ordinary Time, the church focuses on growing in faith and following Jesus.

Light the candle. Pray, inviting the children to echo each phrase after you:

*Lord, / prepare our hearts, / and teach us to love each other, / as you love us. / Amen.*

Play "Do Lord, O Do Lord" (Color Pack 28, [Singing the Feast](http://bit.ly/SingingTheFeast)). Invite children to sing along. Receive the offering. Then extinguish the candle.

Display Color Pack 2. Ask:

- ✠ What title would you give this photograph?
- ✠ Who do you think is invited to this party?
- ✠ Do you think you would like to go to this party? Why or why not?

Explain that today's Bible story is about a special party and the people who are invited to it.

Recalling biblical stories they know helps children recognize how much they know from the Bible.

### **Do Lord, O Do Lord**

Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do remember me.  
Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do remember me.  
Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do remember me,  
Way beyond the blue.

Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,  
I know I need to pray.  
Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,  
I know I need to pray.  
Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,  
I know I need to pray,  
Way beyond the blue.

Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do help me to pray.  
Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do help me to pray.  
Do Lord, O do Lord,  
O do help me to pray,  
Way beyond the blue.

**EASY  
PREP**

## **EXPLORING**

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table and tell the group the book to which it is open. Tell children there are many stories they may have heard from Luke, including the stories of the good neighbor, Jesus' visit to Mary and Martha, the Lord's Prayer, the farmer and his barns, and the healing of the bent-over woman. Then ask another child to find chapter 14.

Explain that people often invited Jesus to eat in their homes. There were no restaurants to eat in when people traveled. It was the custom to seat special guests, as Jesus would be, near the host, the person who was having the dinner. This was a place of honor. Tell the story from Resource Sheet 1 (A Surprising Guest List).

Ask:

- ✠ In Jesus' time, how were people seated at special dinners?
- ✠ Why did Jesus tell people to seat themselves far away from the host?
- ✠ Who did Jesus tell the host who gave the dinner to invite?

Tell the group that they are going to create a dinner party with the guests that Jesus told the host to invite. Form pairs. Give each pair a length of mural paper as long as a child's height and a pencil or dark crayon. One child lies down on the paper and the other child draws around the child, creating an outline. Each pair, with markers, adds facial features and clothing to the paper figure. Assign each one a different type of person (one who is poor, blind, lame, and any other category they can draw). Tape the figures to chairs arranged around a table. Ask each pair to introduce their paper figure to the group, giving the figure a name. Have the children stand behind their figures as you read Luke 14:12–14. Ask:

- ✠ Who do you think Jesus would tell us to invite to the dinner today?

## **RESPONDING**

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children.

1. **Music and Meditation** Children will reflect on including those who are often excluded in their prayers. Ask the children who they usually pray for. Then ask them to think about who else Jesus would want them to pray for, based on the story he told the host of the dinner. Possible responses are, besides those Jesus named, people who are sick or suffering, people who are lonely, people who are homeless, people who have left their homes because of war. Explain that you are going to play some soothing music. They are to sit comfortably with their feet on the floor and close their eyes. Play "Harp Music" ([\*Singing the Feast\*](#)). While the music plays, ask children to pray for the people they have just named. Urge children to continue to pray for these people during the week.

2. **Table Prayers** Children will make prayer tents for the dinner table they created in Exploring. Have children gather with their partners when they made the paper figures in Exploring. Give each pair a sheet of construction paper, folded in half crosswise, and markers. Explain that they are to write a prayer for people who are like the figure they created. Help them begin by providing this prayer opening on newsprint: *Dear God, we pray for people who. . . .* If possible, help the group take their dinner guests and prayers to set around a table where the congregation will see it.
3. **Food Pantry** Jesus' words to the host make an easy connection for Christians today to care for people who are hungry. Participating in an outreach ministry around hunger is a natural for children of all ages. Tell children about a food pantry supported by your congregation. Talk about how they and their families can be part of this ministry. Food pantries often run out of food in the summer. Perhaps the children can publicize the need for donations through posters or leaflets they make and distribute. They might make prayer tents (see above) for their family dinner tables as a reminder to pray for people who are hungry.
4. **Including the Excluded** Children may have opportunities with the start of the school year to include new students. Read the story on Resource Sheet 2 (Not Left Out). Discuss the questions there. Talk together about what they can do to welcome new students at school or church.

### I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

I have decided to follow  
Jesus;  
I have decided to follow  
Jesus;  
I have decided to follow  
Jesus;  
No turning back, no  
turning back.

Though none go with me,  
still I will follow;  
Though none go with me,  
still I will follow;  
Though none go with me,  
still I will follow;  
No turning back, no  
turning back.

My family with me will  
follow Jesus;  
My family with me will  
follow Jesus;  
My family with me will  
follow Jesus;  
No turning back, no  
turning back.

Another way to introduce this conversation is to read *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig and illustrated by Patrice Barton to the group. It tells the story of a boy who is ignored by everyone and how it took just one child noticing him to change his world.

### CLOSING

Gather at the worship table. Light the candle.

Remind children that Jesus told the host of the dinner to care about people who suffer—people who are lame, blind, crippled, or poor. Included in that group could be people who are lonely or left out. Ask:

✠ Who will you pay special attention to this week? To whom will you show God's love?

Sing "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" (Color Pack 31, [Singing the Feast](#)).

Pray:

*Loving God, we want to show your love to people all around us, especially those who are often forgotten. Amen.*

Extinguish the candle.

## A Surprising Guest List

based on Luke 14:1, 7-14

In Jesus' time, travelers depended on people welcoming them to their homes for meals and to sleep. When this story begins, Jesus is at the home of a leader of the Pharisees, men who studied God's word and especially God's laws.

Jesus watched the other guests come into the room. Some quickly chose the best seats, those close to the owner of the house. These seats were saved for special guests, and people didn't take them unless they were asked to sit there.

When everyone was seated, Jesus told this story:

"When you are invited to a special dinner, don't think that you are better than the other guests and sit in the best seats. Someone who has a special invitation may come, and the host, the one who is giving the dinner, will say to you, 'Please give this person your seat.' You will feel embarrassed as you get up to find a new seat. Instead, when you are invited to a special dinner, find a seat that is not special at all. Then, the host may come over to you and say, 'Come, sit closer to me!' In this way, you will be honored rather than embarrassed. Remember the people who try to make themselves important will be taken down, and the ones who do not think highly of themselves will be raised up."

Then Jesus spoke to the man who had invited him to the dinner: "When you give a special dinner, don't just invite the people you know will invite you to their special dinners. Instead, invite people who are poor, people who cannot walk, and people who cannot see to your dinner. These people can't invite you to dinners, but God will repay you when God's kingdom comes on earth."



What a different kind of dinner party Jesus described to the people!

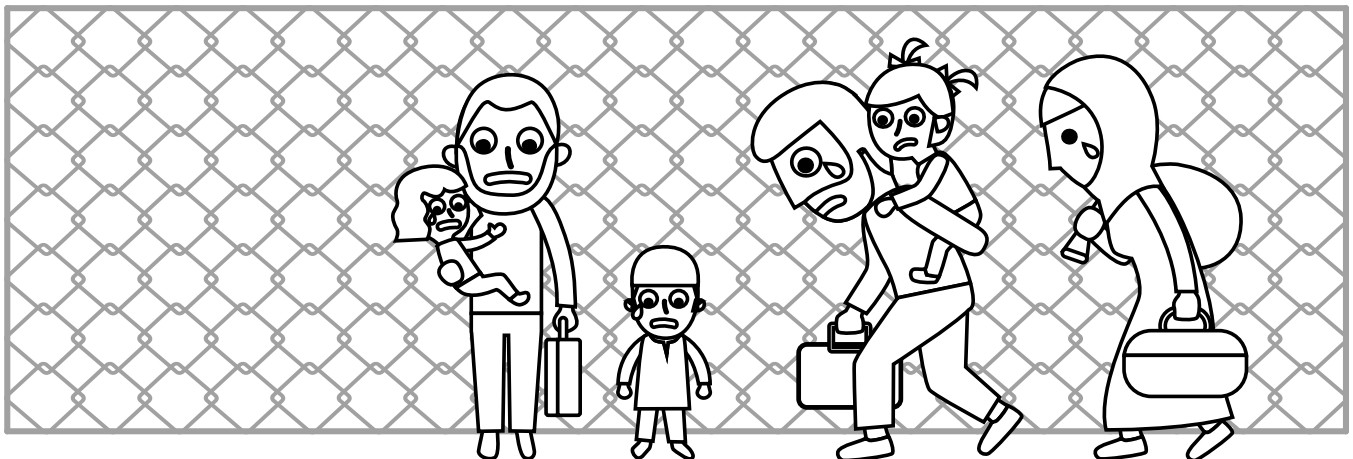
**Not Left Out**

Have you ever moved to a new town where you didn't know a single person? Have you ever moved to a country where no one spoke English? What would it be like to move thousands of miles to a place where you didn't know anyone and you couldn't understand what people were saying?

Every year many children travel with their families to live in a new land. Everyone around them is a stranger. What's worse, when people talk to them, they don't understand what they are saying.

When those children are supposed to go to school, they are surrounded by people who talk to them in a strange language. It must be frightening not to understand the words, or the rules, or the way things are done in this new land. How do you think you would feel?

What would you want the children in your class to do? How could they help you?





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 Heb. 13:1–8, 15–16  
 Luke 14:1, 7–14

# Gospel Hospitality

## Goal for the Session

*Adults will imagine how individuals and communities of faith might demonstrate Jesus' words on humility and hospitality through modern-day practices.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Luke 14:1, 7–14

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Rodney S. Sadler Jr.

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!

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Emilie M. Townes

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.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

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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.

#### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

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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].)

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**Luke 14:1, 7–14**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Humility can be difficult for adults. For some, conceit stands in the way of valuing humility in one's own life. For others, lack of self-esteem misidentifies humiliation as humility. In either case, struggles with one's own humility create barriers to extending gracious hospitality to others. In today's focus scripture, Jesus blends teachings on humility and hospitality in challenging ways. Adults accustomed to holding privileged places in community and serving as "gatekeepers" into it may find Jesus' words to be impractical or seditious.

*Gracious God, I thank you for your invitation to lead this session for the good of those whom you will gather. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheet 1
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheet 1 for the next session

**For Responding**

- ☐ option 1: Resource Sheet 2, pens or pencils
- ☐ option 2: Resource Sheet 1

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, arrange a tight circle of chairs, and scatter the rest of the chairs around the room. Make sure that the inner circle will seat less than half of the participants.

Welcome participants as they enter. Direct adults to find a seat, but not change the seating arrangements or move any of the chairs. When all have been seated, introduce any guests or visitors to the group.

Have adults reflect on today's seating arrangement by raising the following questions:

- ✠ What are the benefits and drawbacks of sitting in the "inner circle?"
- ✠ What are the benefits and drawbacks of sitting on the seats scattered around the room?
- ✠ How does sitting where you are right now make you feel about yourself; about this group?

Invite adults to return the chairs to their normal arrangement and be seated. Note that in today's focus scripture, Jesus utilizes seating arrangements at a table to blend teachings on humility and hospitality.

Offer these or similar words in prayer:

*God, whose grace makes a place for us and for all, open us to the words and ways of Jesus before us today. Amen.*

### EXPLORING

Have a volunteer read aloud Luke 14:1. Invite adults to reflect on the closing detail of context in that verse of Jesus being "closely watched" by asking these questions:

- ✠ Why might these individuals be watching Jesus closely, and for what purpose?
- ✠ Put yourself in Jesus' place. How might being "closely watched" affect what you will say or do, and why?



Form two groups. Assign one group Luke 14:7–11 and assign the other group Luke 14:12–14. Explain that each group is to create a dramatic role-play or acting-out of Jesus’ teachings in their assigned text. Direct the groups to take into consideration in their preparations and presentations the context of Jesus being watched closely, and how they see that detail playing into their assigned text.

Have each group act out their portion of the narrative. Then invite responses to the presentations by discussing these questions:

- ✧ How did the other group’s presentation help you understand what Jesus was and was not teaching about humility or hospitality?
- ✧ What question would you have liked to ask Jesus about the teachings played out by the other group?
- ✧ What did you learn about Jesus and his teachings on humility and hospitality from your group’s presentation?
- ✧ What question would you have liked to ask Jesus about the passage you helped present?

“There are in Luke more references to eating, banquets, tables, and reclining at tables than in any of the other Gospels . . . [these are] one of our Lord’s key loci for teaching (22:24–30), reproving (11:37–41), and encountering those who are marginalized (7:[36], 39).”<sup>1</sup>

Have the volunteer who read verse 1 aloud earlier do so again. This time, focus the ensuing conversation on the context being that of a meal by relating the information in the sidebar. Underscore the significance of this context in Luke by having participants look up the sidebar references from Luke along with 5:29–32, 7:34, and 13:39. Discuss ways in which these other connections of meals with Jesus’ ministry or teachings connect with today’s focus scripture. Have adults reflect in broader terms on what it is about tables and meals that might lend them to serving as settings for Jesus’ ministry and teachings in Luke.

Review the conclusion to the parable of the Wedding Banquet in 14:11. Discuss:

- ✧ What insights are revealed in the parable as to what “humble” or “humility” involves?

Compare verse 11 with the song of Mary’s mother in Luke 1:47–53, particularly verse 52. Discuss how Mary’s song might help us better understand this parable on humility.

Invite adults to imagine themselves in the place of the Pharisee who hosted this meal.

- ✧ How would you feel about Jesus’ version of hospitality in verses 12–14?
- ✧ What might incline you to practice such hospitality; why?

Affirm that it was not this Pharisee alone to whom Jesus was addressing this invitation to gospel hospitality. Distribute Resource Sheet 1 (Focus on Luke 14:1, 7–14) and read the “What?” excerpt. Ask adults to silently reflect on the following:

- ✧ In what ways—at our tables, in our churches, through our lives—do we practice the hospitality and humility to which Jesus invites us in today’s narrative? And how might we broaden our practices of Jesus’ hospitality?

1. Rodney S. Sadler Jr., “Exegetical Perspective,” *Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 4* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 21.

EASY  
PREP

"Humility is certainly a virtue, but exhortations to be humble can be dangerous to those who already have little sense of their own worth."<sup>2</sup>

## RESPONDING

Choose one or more of these activities depending on the length of your session:

1. **Gospel Hospitality** This activity will encourage adults to reflect on personal and congregational practices of gospel hospitality. Distribute Resource Sheet 2 (Gospel Hospitality: Taking Inventory) and pens or pencils as needed. Review with participants the instructions in the opening paragraph. Provide time for individual work, then gather adults in small groups for consideration of the congregational inventory responses. Remind adults to do the assignment in the coming week on personal practices of hospitality as outlined in the third question under the individual inventory. Encourage adults to find a partner, or speak with the pastor, in order to devise ways to work for those changes.
2. **Humility: Burden or Blessing** This discussion will help adults distinguish between helpful and unhelpful understandings of humility. Read the "Where?" excerpt on Resource Sheet 1, and then read the sidebar quote. Have adults relate situations where humility and low self-esteem have been detrimental to others or themselves. Discuss how the excerpt's connection of blessing to humility might provide a helpful corrective in such situations. Ask adults in the coming week to focus on one particular action or challenge in their lives to exercise humility toward others that is not self-deprecating.
3. **Host a Gospel Hospitality Meal** This activity will challenge adults to translate Jesus' words about hospitality into a function of the church. Read Luke 14:12–14. Ask adults to imagine what it would be like to literally follow Jesus' teachings by your congregation hosting such a meal. Develop a plan: who would be invited, how would the invitations be made, what steps would need to be followed to have the congregation host such a meal? Urge adults in the coming week to follow through on making the congregational contacts and seeing to it that this meal comes to pass.

## CLOSING

Gather the adults in a circle. Ask adults to offer reactions to this day's session and its focus on humility and hospitality.

Explain that today's closing prayer will take the form of a litany. Individuals are encouraged to remember in prayer some insight into faith or discipline that they have found helpful from the past few weeks' discussions. After each prayer, offer the following response: *In your name we have gathered, in your service we will go.* Practice the refrain so adults are comfortable with it, then lead the group in the litany by offering its first prayer. When all have had opportunity to pray, say: *Go in the grace and Spirit of God.*

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 for the next session, or e-mail it to the participants during the week. Encourage participants to read the focus scripture and resource sheet before the next session.

2. Ronald P. Byars, "Homiletical Perspective," *Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 4* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 21.

## Focus on Luke 14:1, 7–14

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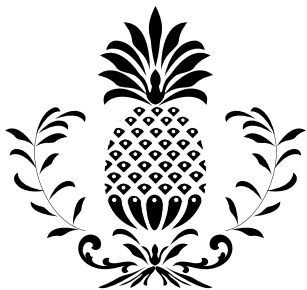
Luke gives beautiful testimony to this barrier-breaking hospitality in the account of the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where she gives birth and lays Jesus in a manger “because there was no place for them in the inn” (2:1–7). The birth of Jesus thus breaches the blockade of 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.

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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].)

## Gospel Hospitality: Taking Inventory



What follows is an “inventory” or checklist of hospitality, both in terms of the hospitality you personally exercise and the hospitality exercised by this congregation. Write down your responses to the questions in each. Then gather in a small group that will share and discuss responses to the congregational inventory. Take this home for your use in the coming week, particularly in working on and perhaps adding to your response to the third question in the individual inventory.



### As an Individual

- Who are the ones I readily extend hospitality toward, and in what ways?
- Who are the ones I am not so hospitable toward, and why?
- How might the gospel hospitality that Jesus evokes in Luke 14:7–14 change or transform the hospitality reflected in my responses to those previous two questions; and what steps can I begin to take now in response to Jesus’ call?



### In Our Congregation

- What practices of hospitality are currently followed by your congregation, and who are the recipients of that hospitality?
- Who might be currently left out of the congregation’s hospitality and welcome; how, and why?
- How might the hospitality that Jesus evokes in Luke 14:7–14 help your congregation address the situation(s) reflected in your response to the second question?

# *Joining the Feast*

Year C, Fall  
Proper 17—Reign of Christ Sunday



# What you will find in *Joining the Feast*!

## The Church Year Calendar

Describes the important church festivals and special days for the coming season. It provides theological reflections on their importance for the church's life and our own lives.

## The Shape of the Season

Presents an overview of the focus scriptures for the weeks in the coming season. It discusses the biblical and theological significance of each of the passages.

## Joining Worship and Learning: Making the Connections and Time with Children

A helpful feature in this section of *Joining the Feast* is the inclusion of the stories on the focus scriptures from the multi-age course. These stories can be used in the children's time during worship. Notice that some songs are used by several age levels but not in the same session. If you are interested in including a prayer, poetry, or artwork from an age level, speak with the leader in advance. May your congregational worship be enlivened by these suggestions to join worship and learning.

## Joining Mission and Learning

Help the participants in *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* resources connect with existing service opportunities in your congregation. Review this list, and offer suggestions to the leaders. Give this chart to the chair of the mission or outreach committee so that the work of the committee can be strengthened through the church school.

## Litanies and Prayers

A selection of poetic prayers and responsive readings that helps worship leaders connect the church's educational and worship experiences to find fullness and blessing in the praise and service of God.

## Children's Bulletins

A fun activity page is provided weekly to give children a sense of belonging and help them feel welcome in the worship experience. These special children's bulletins connect their worship experience to the education themes.

## *Joining the Feast*

We invite you to “Join the Feast”!

Our exciting *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* offers great opportunities for the local church. Pastors, educators, and participants can experience the wonder of God’s nourishing word to us. For church schools, for study groups, and for those preparing to teach or preach, the resources here will deepen and strengthen our faith. We have an amazing “feast” set before us! We desire and can find further understanding in our faith—of who God is and what God has done!

*Joining the Feast* helps pastors, educators, and worship leaders plan for education and worship. We want to assist in reflecting on how to incorporate scriptural and seasonal emphases across different parts of the church’s life.

*Joining the Feast* can be shared in education and worship committees. It enables important biblical themes to be integrated into the church’s study and worship experiences. A chart of suggestions for ways educational emphases can be used in worship is a feature of what follows here. Church school teachers can discuss these materials with one another to enhance education for all age levels in the church. Pastors who plan their lectionary preaching will find taking an overall look at this church season to be useful for their preparations. In all this we want to join teaching and preaching. We want the church’s educational and worship experiences to find fullness and blessing in the praise and service of God!

An important goal for pastors and educators in the church is to connect or join the church’s educational experience with the church’s worship experience. People of all ages who participate in church school study can find their Christian faith enhanced when the Scriptures read and proclaimed in worship reinforce and expand what they have been considering in their educational time. Education and worship can be mutually supportive in helping God’s word in Scripture come alive in the Sunday morning experience. Consideration of the same lectionary reading in preaching can deepen the insights gained in church school.

Pastors who want to build on what has been done in education welcome this *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* as a way to prepare congregational members for directions into which the sermon can lead. Those who participate in the education time will find the insights gained there enhanced by preaching that considers the same passage and brings God’s word to bear in fresh and nourishing ways. So as we “Join the Feast,” joining the church’s educational and worship dimensions can bring to life the richness of God’s word in Scripture.

Donald K. McKim





## A Surprising Guest List

**based on Luke 14:1, 7-14**

Jesus was at the home of a leader of the Pharisees, men who studied God's word and God's laws. He watched guests come into the room. Some quickly chose the best seats, those close to the owner of the house. These seats were saved for special guests, and people didn't take them unless they were asked to sit there.

When everyone was seated, Jesus told this story:

“When you are invited to a special dinner, don’t think that you are better than the other guests and sit in the best seats. Someone who has a special invitation may come, and the host, the one who is giving the dinner, will say to you, ‘Please give this person your seat.’ You will feel embarrassed as you get up to find a new seat. Instead, when you are invited to a special dinner, find a seat that is not special at all. Then, the host may come over to you and say, ‘Come, sit closer to me!’ In this way, you will be honored rather than embarrassed. Remember the people who try to make them themselves important will be taken down, and the ones who do not think highly of themselves will be raised up.”

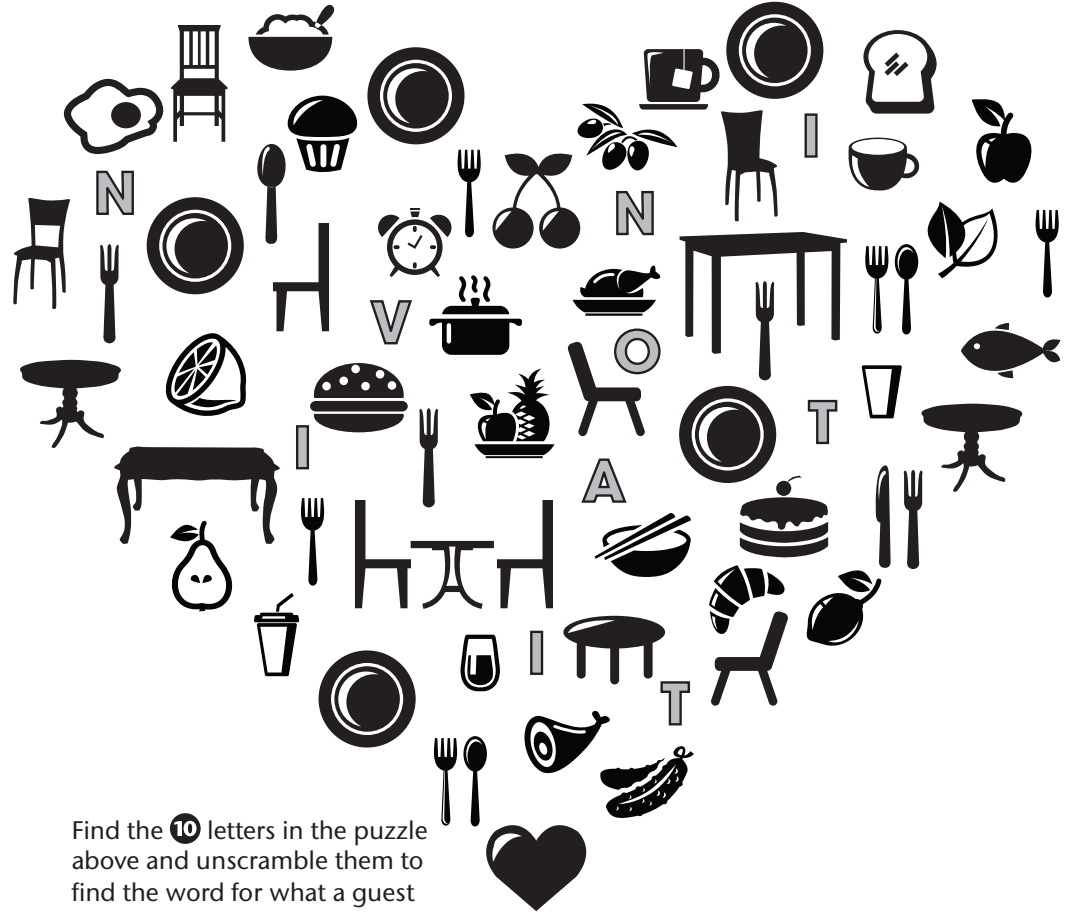
Then Jesus spoke to the man who had invited him to the dinner:

“When you give a special dinner, don’t just invite the people you know will invite you to their special dinners. Instead, invite people who are poor, people who cannot walk, and people who cannot see to your dinner. These people can’t invite you to dinners, but God will repay you when God’s kingdom comes on earth.”

What a different kind of dinner party Jesus described to the people!

In today's story, Jesus told the people about a special dinner.

Find the following items: **8** chairs, **6** tables, **3** spoons, **9** forks, **5** cups, **5** plates.



Find the **10** letters in the puzzle above and unscramble them to find the word for what a guest may receive before a party.

