



## 4. 'Join the party!'

Luke 14.<sup>1-35</sup>

### Background

*"Jabez was more honourable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, 'I gave birth to him in pain.' Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that You would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let Your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request" (1 Chron.4.9-10).*

The request of Jabez reflects the grace of the gospel: he recognised that the blessing of God issues in growth, enlargement, freedom. It's the answer to his prayer that forms the backdrop to this final study in the present short series.

Perhaps there's a certain, almost ironic, significance in the narrative opening with the record of a man with an 'abnormal swelling' – because it's possible to pursue (and to be satisfied) with the wrong sort of growth: you can grow fat as well as fit, after all. The Pharisees had settled for the wrong sort of 'growth': for them what mattered was 'position' and prominence – an 'abnormal swelling' in them which was no less a malaise than the dropsy of the man at the meal.

True growth comes as we respond to the call of Jesus. And rightly understood that call of Jesus is a summons to join the party. You'll see from the start there is this focus on meals: a 'Sunday' lunch at the home of 'a prominent Pharisee' (vv.1-6): then Jesus' story of a wedding feast (vv.7-15): and finally, His parable of 'a great banquet' (vv.16-24). There's a deliberate progression, underlining the way that the kingdom of God is marked by growth, and that a feast is as good a picture as any to describe what that 'enlargement' of our territory is like: celebrating joyfully, congregating with others, and satisfying the hunger of our hearts in the company of the King.

Could anything be more important than that? Well, often other things, good and noble in themselves, can seem to be more important or pressing – and by focussing on them we can miss out on the best thing of all. There's a cost, in other words – and it's that cost which Jesus spells out in the final part of the chapter, the cost of a total commitment: He uses three striking pictures to make the point, each of which highlights an aspect of what that 'enlargement' of territory will be like – building a great tower, winning a great battle, having a great effect on society at large.

Read the whole passage and start with **'days' (4), (5) and (6)**.

## 1) Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October – sabbath rest

Read [Luke 14.1-6](#)

“.. Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee ..” (Luke 14.1)

The chapter centres round meals – because they’re as good a picture as any of the great festivity and fellowship which heaven will involve. That’s the true ‘sabbath rest’ which we’re invited to enjoy, and in which our truest ‘healing’ will result.

How conscious are you of people ‘carefully watching’ you, to see how you speak, act and react as a follower of Jesus?

Jesus often used questions to initiate discussion: how might you use questions with neighbours, colleagues and friends to start discussion with them?

**Prayer:** *Help me so to live, Lord Jesus, that those around me will see that I have been with You: may my words and deeds always be as light shining into the darkness.*

## 2) Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October – humble yourself

Read [Luke 14.7-11](#)

“.. when you are invited take the least important place ..” (Luke 14.9)

The world doesn’t revolve around you – but around Him: the Lord. See Him for who He is and you’ll see that none of us mere creatures have any importance at all. He alone is King, He alone the great Creator God, He alone our only adequate Saviour.

To what extent and in what ways do you think the ‘celebrity culture’ spills over into the life of Christ’s church today?

‘Those who humble themselves will be exalted’: but what does it mean to humble yourself and how do you go about it?

**Prayer:** *Let holy charity mine outward vesture be, Lord, and lowliness become mine inner clothing – true lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler part*

## 3) Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October – a taste of heaven

Read [Luke 14.12-15](#)

“.. when you give a banquet, invite the poor ..” (Luke 14.14)

Grace is the complement of growth in the Kingdom of God. Freely you have received from the hand of a generous God you can’t ever repay: so, freely give to others, not least those who’ll never be able to ‘pay you back’. Give others a taste of heaven today!

How might you be able to display this sort of grace to others today?

How do you do so without coming across as somewhat patronising?

**Prayer:** Thank You, my Lord and Saviour, for that grace which You have shown towards me in giving me a permanent place at Your table. Help me to show grace to others.

#### 4) Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October – a ticket to the table

Read [Luke 14.16-24](#)

“.. they all alike began to make excuses ..” (Luke 14.18)

Possessions, projects, and people. How easily each of them can keep us away from that for which we were made. Those who are lacking in wealth or health will jump at the hope of the gospel and gladly grab that ticket to the table which Jesus freely gives.

This parable follows the comment about ‘the feast in the kingdom of God’ (v.15): why is the picture of ‘the feast’ such a good description of what’s coming?

‘The Kingdom of God is a Party’ is the title of [a book](#) by Tony Campolo: in what sense is that true, and in what ways might that be misleading?

Parables have one basic lesson: what would you say is the basic lesson of this parable?

Why do you think Jesus again makes reference to ‘the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame’ (see [v.13](#))?

**Prayer:** To my shame, O Lord, I’m so easily distracted away from Yourself by people and things that vie for my attention: help me to keep my eyes fixed firmly on Yourself.

#### 5) Friday 6<sup>th</sup> October – costly criteria

Read [Luke 14.25-27](#)

“.. such a person cannot be My disciple ..” (Luke 14.26)

Priorities. Who (or what) matters most in your life? The call of the Kingdom puts everything in its true perspective. If Jesus is Son of God and Saviour, then He must occupy the primary place and reign supreme in your life – whatever the cost may be.

What does Jesus mean by insisting that we *hate* father and mother, etc?

How do you balance this call by Jesus to *hate* father and mother, with the commands of Scripture to *honour* your parents ([Deut.5.16](#)), to love your wife ([Eph.5.25-28](#)), etc?

What is Jesus pointing to when He equates following Him with ‘carrying our cross’?

In what ways have you found yourself having to ‘carry your cross’?

**Prayer:** Stir in my heart every day that delight in Yourself, Lord Jesus, which will see me, in all that I say and do, pursuing Your glory – whatever cost that may involve.

## 6) Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October – a big adventure

Read [Luke 14.28-33](#)

“.. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost ..” (Luke 14.28)

Following Jesus is an adventure – not some great philosophy! Like rolling up your sleeves to undertake some massive building project: or putting on your armour to go out on the battlefield and face a dangerous foe. Are you up for the challenge?

Following Jesus demands your all: how as a fellowship can we help one another to persevere in the work of the Kingdom?

Why does Jesus start by using the picture of a person wanting to build a tower to illustrate the point He wants to make?

In what ways does this picture help inform how we think about the work of Christ's church?

In what ways do the two pictures Jesus uses here help you to understand what it is to be His disciple?

How have you found the life of discipleship to be akin to a war?

**Prayer:** Thank You, my Lord, that You have called me into Your kingdom and given me work to do: help me to fight the good fight and to finish the work entrusted to me.

## 7) Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October – secure your saltiness!

Read [Luke 14.34-35](#)

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again ..” (Luke 14.34)

Costly commitment is the very essence of discipleship. Jesus neither needs nor wants your plaudits – it's that giving of yourself entirely to Him for which He calls. Without it, He can do nothing with you: but with it you become truly the salt of the earth!

What qualities are there about salt which prompted Jesus to use salt as a helpful picture of our discipleship?

What lesson did Jesus want to underline by pointing to the way that salt that is no longer salty is simply 'thrown out'?

**Prayer:** Come among Your people, Lord, on this fresh day of worship, and stir within the hearts of all Your people a single-minded, whole-hearted commitment to Yourself.