

I. Set Up

A. Greetings. Intro. Welcome. Today we launch a four week series on some of the most important and powerful stories Jesus ever told – our Parables found in Luke 14 & 15. And the main point he makes in the parable we study today, which is often called the Parable of the Wedding Feast, is that we can either chose humility or we will eventually be humiliated. By way of warning, the parables pack more of a punch than most people realize until it's too late.

B. Let me read you this parable. Luke 14: Verse one gives us our context: “One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.” Our parable begins in verse 7:

1. When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

2. Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

II. Introduction

A. The world is broken – many are working hard to advance a kingdom of grace and love in difficult corners of the world and are being persecuted for that. I appreciate the work Billy and his family are doing on behalf of Syrian refugees right now. May we all remember to pray and advocate for those who are suffering for their faith.

B. Years ago, when Jason (our youngest) was still in a high chair, I was trying to get him to eat the food on his tray but he kept pushing it away saying, “tastes like BBQ.”

1. I didn't understand what he was saying, in part because it was the middle of the winter and these were green beans, so there was no reason for them to taste “like BBQ.” But eventually Sheri jumped in to interpret and tell me what he was saying. I looked at her and said, “Tastes like BBQ? That's weird.” Then I turned to him and said, “That's good. Bonus. It tastes like BBQ. So, eat!”

2. At which point she explained that “‘BBQ’ was his word for burnt.”

3. “Oh, OK, I get it.” And then it hit me. “Hey, wait a minute! I'm the only one who grills around here. He thinks my cooking tastes bad.”

C. That pattern – of not understanding what is going on, and then having two moments of insight, first in understanding what is going on and then understanding that this is an indictment of you – is generally what happens when we finally understand the parables of Jesus, which is where we are turning now.

D. Jesus uses parables in a lot of his teaching. There are about forty in all and they make up about one-third of the things he says to us.

E. They are not unique to him. We see them several times in the Old Testament, such as in II Samuel, when Nathan uses one to get through to David.

1. He tells David a story about a man who had only one lamb and he loved it and cared for it like a child. He let the lamb eat off his plate and he generally adored the animal. And then one day a rich man – who had flocks of sheep but didn't want to lose any – took the lamb and slaughtered it for a special meal. It was a gross misuse of power.

2. David, who had been a shepherd – who understood what it was like to be a poor shepherd with a few special lambs – was furious. His righteous anger boils and he yells, “that jerk needs to be hog-tied and whipped and then forced to pay the poor man back four-fold.”

3. At which point Nathan said, “You are that man. You are that jerk. You had many wives and yet you slept with Bathsheba – who was married to Uriah – and when that led to trouble you had him killed.”

F. As I said, a parable is like that. You get drawn into the story, drop your guard, see something from a new angle and buy in before you realize, “Hey, this is about me.” And seldom are you the good guy in the story.”

1. When Jesus tells the Parable of the Prodigal Son to the religious leaders, they think they are hearing one story. It's only after they have gone along for quite a while that they realize, wait, the real bad guy in this story is the older brother, and that's me!

III. You could take a graduate level class on parables down the street and realize that you have only begun to scratch the surface of what's there. So do not confuse this brief overview with that. But there are a few things you should know as we get started .

A. First: Jesus uses the Parables because Propositional Truth is not enough.

1. We are all about reason and facts: give me the bottom line; I want the truth; just the facts. And sometimes that works:

- a) Water boils at 32 degrees.
- b) Springfield is the capital of Illinois.
- c) The Civil War happened in the 1800s.

2. These are all true statements, but the only way you get a feel of the Civil War is to hear the stories. Similarly, to be told “God loves you” is not enough. To understand God's love you need more than a precise statement of fact.

3. Sometimes the truth dissected, distilled and systematized is flat. It lacks color and passion.¹

4. In the Parables Jesus invites us to step into a world and look around and we see things we often cannot see otherwise. Part of what this means is that in spite of what you may have heard, the parables are not powerful stories simply designed to be memorable and make an important moral point. They are not like Aesop's Fables – i.e., “a long time ago in a faraway land...., and there were three bears...., so chew your food all the way before you swallow.”

5. The Parables are not children's stories with a nice lesson, nor are they simple illustrations. Parables do not make a point, but it's better to think, the parables are the point. And – and this is key do not miss it – usually the parables have a big kick to them.² Properly understood they often make people mad. In fact, some of the people who hear Jesus tell a parable want to kill him.

6. Point one: Jesus uses Parables because often a straight statement of fact is not enough.

B. Second: You have to understand parables in context.

1. This is always true of Bible study, but there is often more going in a parable than people think. We need to understand the context to understand that point and we have to do our homework to be able to understand the context – to hear things the way the first person to hear them would have understood them.

2. This is harder for us for some biblical genres because we are less familiar with them. It was true of the Proverbs and it is true of the Parables. They are both a bit like riddles or jokes that people do not get. But once you get them they are powerful.

3. By way of example let me note that lots of people understand the Parable of the Prodigal Son as some sort of promise that a wayward adult child will come to their senses. While that may be true, that is not what Jesus was talking about. As we'll see in a few weeks, the Pharisees listening to Jesus would have been shocked by some of the details we miss – like the fact that the Prodigal asks his Dad for his inheritance and then sells the land in short order. These two things were unthinkable. Asking for your inheritance was essentially saying, “Hey Dad, drop dead.” So the Prodigal is an idiot, but the person who comes off bad in the story is the older brother – and eventually the Pharisees would have realized that that was them! Jesus was letting them have it. But you need to see all of this in context.

C. The third thing to note about Jesus' parables is that they are unique.

1. Parables were used in the Old Testament – like the one Nathan told and like the ones that prophets lived out, which is what you tended to see more in the Old Testament.

a) Rather than simply telling a parable to make a point, God would occasionally have the prophet illustrate it in their life. For instance, he has Hosea marry a prostitute, who remains unfaithful to him. It was very bad for Hosea. But from this platform, Hosea then says, “By the way, I am doing this to illustrate the fact that this is what you are doing to God. You are the prostitute. You think you have the moral high ground here? No. You are acting like my unfaithful wife. You are acting like a prostitute.” It’s a powerful point powerfully made because it caught them so completely off guard.

2. The Old Testament employs parables in a few ways, so Jesus is not the first to use these. But Jesus’ parables are unique both in that he took the genre to a new level:

a) First, he is the master of the craft.

b) Second, His parables are more specifically about the kingdom of God. They are full of insight into the world to come and how things will eventually unfold. They foreshadow a time when Jesus will be fully embraced as Prophet, Priest and King.

c) Also, and this may surprise you, they were designed to make things clear to some and hide the truth from others.³ This is what Jesus himself says in Matthew 13⁴ and here in Luke 14. The disciples come to Jesus and say, “Why are you using Parables? The miracles work a lot better in drawing a crowd.” And Jesus says, “There are people here I do not want to understand.

(1) This is something we do not talk about a lot today. And the reason is because there is a big universal call out by God right now. This is a time when anyone can respond. On the basis of Matthew 28:18 and following there is a big, open ended mandate to go everywhere and tell everyone about God’s love and offer. I can say to you, “God loves you and wants you. And if you are far from God you can meet him today. He will come into your life right now no matter what you have or have not done. God is calling on you to turn to Him.”

(2) However, with the parables we come to realize that that offer can be withdrawn. Occasionally Jesus says, “It’s time to move on. It’s too late.” And we have an example of that right here.⁵

d) From this point on in Jesus’ ministry, He will frequently speak in parables, explaining them to His followers but not to everyone else. He makes a clear distinction between those who had been given “ears to hear” and those who persisted in unbelief – who were “ever hearing, but never actually perceiving and “always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.”⁶

D. So, Parables are a literary tool designed to help us see things in a different way. We need to understand them in context, and we need to realize that the Parables Jesus tells are unique. They are about the kingdom of God and something they are designed to hide truth from some people.

E. With that as a backdrop, let's look at the parable we find in Luke 14:7. I will begin reading with verse 1 so we are reminded of the context.

IV. V1: One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

A. We are about two and a half years into Jesus's ministry. He is approaching Jerusalem. The crowds are getting larger and louder and so the religious leaders are growing alarmed and jealous and starting to pay attention. In this situation – which we looked at last Spring – the Pharisees (who we think of as bad guys, and who are smug, self-righteous religious fundamentalists who think they are better than everyone else because of how zealously they try to keep the law. (We think of them as bad guys and Jesus is always dressing them down, but the people generally admired them. This was a group that tried hard to do the right thing. People thought of the Pharisees as those who were zealous to do the right thing.)

B. At this moment, Jesus is being carefully watched by the Pharisees because they want to catch him doing something wrong so they can expose him – issue a press release about his sin; catch him in a scandal, send out a Tweet linking to their web site that has incriminating pictures.

C. But Jesus is 100 times smarter than they are. He sees through all of this and beats them at their own game. He very deliberately breaks their laws – just as they hope! – but then He points out that He has not violated God's laws and He exposes them as hypocrites. We looked at this last Spring. The story continues now. Jesus caused a bit of a scene there, but he was hardly done. He has ruined their dinner party but he doesn't leave. He actually comes at them for something else.

V. V7: When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

A. Apparently the important places were not marked with *This spot is reserved* signs, and some of the “most important people” showed up late, and when they did people of “lesser value” were often sitting in their seats, which would cause the host to intervene, escort them to the nice spots and tell the others to stand in the corner.

B. And this was a culture long on shame and honor – where you sat mattered a lot. We are, of course, far beyond this kind of nonsense. Sure, somethings do matter, like:

1. What kind of phone you have
2. Or what kind of car you drive.
3. Whether you have an assigned parking spot.
4. What school you went to. (Or what school your kids are going to)
5. Who made your watch.
6. Whether you belong to a club and, if so, which one.
7. Where you vacation.
8. Who made your purse.
9. Are you an intern and employee or an associate? Are you a Vice President? Senior Vice President or Executive Senior Vice President?

C. I hope it's obvious that I am joking. There are lots of very insignificant things that can send us into a tizzy. In their culture it was who sat in the seats of honor at the big social events. In ours it is other things. Let me pause here to say, if the stuff I listed matters to you – if being slighted about one of these things makes you mad or sad or keeps you from sleeping well at night – you need to lean more fully into the Gospel of Jesus. Men and women, our value, self-esteem, self-perception should be overwhelmed by three big ideas:

1. One: God is amazing. He is awesome, powerful, holy, loving, gracious, beautiful and breathtaking in ways we cannot begin to grasp, but as we get a glimpse of it it makes many, many things unimportant.
2. Two: We are broken people. Sinners. Our best efforts are ugly messes. Our motivations are compromised. We can't get it right to save our life. We cannot do what needs to be done to earn God's favor. Most days we do not even want to. So, we are not better than other people. We do not deserve great things.
3. And three: God loves us in spite of this. Jesus did for me all that needed to be done. In Christ I have been forgiven and justified. I'm not going to get what I deserve, I am going to get what Christ has secured for me. And that will play out for eternity. The worst things that could ever be said about me were said about me by God when he called me a sinner. And the best things that could be said about me were said when God called me his child. So who cares about the rest? Who cares where I sit at the table? Given what I have been given by God, I'm secure enough that what I want is for other people to get the good seats.
4. Men and women, if you are wrapped up in titles and clubs and logos. If you grieve when you think someone has slighted you, then you are doing something wrong. The Gospel frees us from that.
5. The Pharisees were doing something wrong. And Jesus keeps pointing this out. They kept elevating themselves. It showed a very misguided understand of what really matters.
6. And by the way, Jesus brings this up a lot.

a) In Matthew 23:5 he says, "they do all their deeds to be noticed by men. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues. And they loved to be called rabbi and teacher and father and leader."

b) In Luke 11:42, he says, "Woe to you Pharisees, you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, but you love the front seats in the synagogues."

c) Later in Luke 20:46 we get more of the same. "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes and love respectful greetings in the marketplaces and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets... and for appearance sake offer long prayers."

7. For them it was all about appearance. So here they are in a mad scramble to get the best seats nearest the host. Jesus offers some practical counsel which clearly has a lot more to do with their soul than where they sit.⁷

D. As a quick aside let me note that as college student I made a big fool of myself over this very issue. I was involved in student government. And because of that, at one point I was invited to attend some kind of reception on Homecoming Weekend, which would include various members of the Board of Trustees and the Alumni Board and the President of the University and his cabinet and the like. This was all very intimidating to me. These were not circles I moved in. In hindsight it was no big deal, but that is not how it felt at the time. So I worked very hard on my 3 minute presentation and then I arrived early to take my spot at the foot of this long conference room table – which is where I got in trouble.

1. I had attended a few meetings in this room before and when I did the north end was where the chair always sat. I took my place at the south end, at what I thought was the foot of the table, but it was not.

2. After a few minutes one of the Vice Presidents wandered in, we chatted for a second and he said, "Mike, I think it would be best if you moved to the other end of the table." Now take in mind, I thought I was at the foot of the table and that he was suggesting that I move to the front. I was actually at the front and he was suggesting that I move to the foot. Which makes my comments painful even thirty years later. I said things like, "No, I'm not comfortable doing that. I really think I should be where I am. I know my place. I'm not willing to move there." It's still painful to think about.

3. In this instance I was not being vain (although I can do that!), I was just being an idiot. I can laugh at it now, but about thirty seconds before the meeting started, when the President of the University sat down next to me and I realized what I'd done, it was too late. I tried to move, but the Provost, who was left standing, said, "No, Mike, you sit. I'll just stand in the back." I wanted to throw up, especially since I couldn't even stay through the meeting. Part of the reason I was so adamant about not moving to the front of the room was that I needed to slip out as soon as I gave my report.

4. So, don't be vain and don't be an idiot.

VI. OK, back to the text

A. Jesus was invited to a dinner party. One of the first things he does is create a scene by healing a man and then letting everyone there know that they were pompous jerks for not attending to this man's needs because of their stupid rules.

B. He then attacks their seating chart, accusing them of being vain in addition to wicked.

C. He is not done. He's ruined the dinner party but he has not yet personally confronted the host, who was the only one there who didn't choose where he sat. As the host he was at the head table. It was his party. So Jesus goes after him.

VII. *V12: Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid."*

A. By the way, this does not mean you cannot invite friends to dinner. This is a Hebrew idiom that means, do not only invite them.

V12: Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid."¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

B. Jesus says to the host, "This is a bad party because you invited the wrong people."

C. This statement shouldn't surprise us. This is classic Jesus. He always cares about the poor and oppressed. When John the Baptist send his disciples to ask if Jesus was the one, Jesus says, "Go back and tell him that the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor."⁸ In other words, while Jesus was preaching the Good News to all, he shows particular interest in poor and oppressed. Whatever town he enters he seems to immediately gravitate to those on the margins – the poor widow, those who are sick, the prostitute. He bypasses the racism of his day to make the Samaritan the hero. Here he is challenging people to open their homes and welcome in the have nots. He challenges the patronage system of the day and says, "Don't help those who can return the favor. Help those who cannot, thereby earning a reward from God."⁹

VIII. So, what is going on? What is the big point? What are our take-aways?

A. Is Jesus just offering a lesson on etiquette here? Is this something we'd now read from Emily Post? Or is he giving counsel about how to seize power ala Machiavelli? Or is this advice about how to gain power without looking like a jerk, less Machiavelli and more Dale Carnegie, "How to win friends and influence people?" No on all fronts. This is a parable. There is some decent business counsel here. You do not want to get moved from the head table to some other spot.

1. But that advice is already available in Proverbs 25:7¹⁰
 2. Jesus is not offering business advice.
- B. What is happening here is that He is telling a parable – He is using something familiar to make a point. He is inviting us into a setting in which we can explore our own thoughts and perhaps see somethings we might otherwise not be able to see.
- IX. The big topic here is pride.
- A. Which is a huge topic for several reasons. And we've looked at in numerous times in the past because it shows up so often in the Bible. And in the past I've made a few points:
1. First, pride is complicated because the word is used to describe everything from obnoxious racial pride and clueless narcissism at one end, and patriotism and the joy a parent feels when their child makes a good decisions at the other. And on top of this lots of people conflate pride and self-esteem (which is itself a complicated topic. I believe ht that some people have too little self-esteem and end up depressed because they think they have no value, but some people have way too much self-esteem and are depressed because they are so consumed with themselves.) This is not today's topic, I only mention it to say, pride is complicated because the term is used and confused in a variety of ways.
 2. Second, it's also complicated because it is so difficult to address. As soon as you start to defeat pride you end up being proud about your efforts to combat pride.
 - a) I regularly make fun of a friend who sent me a sermon he did on pride, telling me that it was a great sermon and I could feel free to borrow from it the next time I preached on pride. He was not able to see what he was saying. Pride is like that. It's insidious.
 - b) I've shared this before, but I've been encouraged when I take ground fighting pride, realized what was happening – how I was growing proud of my efforts to fight pride – and then as I am confessing that, find myself thinking, but it is good that I was so quick to spot it and confess it.
 - c) At one level there is nothing to do but say, “God, it runs so deep I cannot get rid of this. All I can do is say, “I'm guilty and I need help. And while I am at it let me acknowledge that I am pretty proud of myself for asking for your help.”
- B. So, the topic of this parable is pride; pride is tricky and vexing. We've covered all of this before. What do we uniquely gain from this parable? Nothing less than a way forward. In this parable Jesus is teaching us what we need to know, which is: we need to humble ourselves or God will.
1. If we humble ourselves, God will exalt us. But if we push ourselves forward, we will eventually be humbled by God.

- C. Let me read the key part of this again, starting in verse 8. Remember, this is not just good advice, Jesus is teaching about the kingdom of God. This is how things ultimately work in light of eternity:
1. “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”
- D. Please note: there is nothing wrong with honor and exaltation.
1. We are told to honor our parents and we are also told to honor God. In Heaven we will exalt Christ. But if we seek honor and exaltation and claim it for ourselves then we are doing it wrong and we will eventually be knocked down.
 2. God hates pride. God hates self-righteous jerks. God hates people who think they are better than others or more deserving than others.
 3. The way forward is to humble ourselves. The way forward is to take last place. Go to the end of the line. Push others ahead. This is a message Jesus modeled and one He preached over and over. Humble yourself. Humble yourself. Take the lowly place and God will lift you up.
- E. Men and women, the way up is down. And as we seek to serve we secure long-term gain. There is a reward for this in heaven.
1. We are never asked to do something against our own best interest. We are never asked to make sacrifices that ultimately undo us. We just do not understand what is in our own best interest.
 2. We are asked to sacrifice – to put the needs of others ahead of our own, to serve, to give our money – but those things are things God will honor.
- X. Men and women, we need to humble ourselves. We are being given the test questions to the final exam. There is no reason to get a bad score. How can you humble yourself? Here are a few ideas that might help:
- A. Build a few minutes of reflection into the end of your day in which you prayerfully look back over the day, asking, “Where did pride win? Where did I assert myself instead of serving others? How could I be more like Christ?”
 - B. Spend time meditating on God. We cannot defeat pride by focusing on humility, we need to focus on Jesus. When you get a clearer picture of who He is, you automatically become small and pride is exposed as the wrong plan. This may sound like a painful exercise. It may be for a moment, but it is very freeing to go back and rehearse the Gospel. He knows the worst about me and all is well because God is that loving and good.

- C. During a time of prayer and reflection, try to identify a list of things that do no matter. Things you simply need to learn to be indifferent about. They will not matter in 5 years, certainly not in 50. They shouldn't matter now.
- D. I suppose if neither of those approaches work, and if you are married, you can simply ask your spouse for examples of your pride. They usually have a list.
- XI. In 1 Peter 5:5 we are told to: clothe ourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." This is not just good advice, it is a path towards a life that works and eternal spiritual gain.
- XII.
- XIII. Possible transition verses out of the sermon and into worship
- A. Proverbs 16:5 reads: "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord and it will not be unpunished." God judges the proud and God blesses the humble.
- B. In Luke 1:46 – a passage known as the *Magnificat* – Mary, the Mother of Jesus says: "My soul exalts the Lord, my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior for His regard for the humble state of His bond slave." And then down in verse 51, "He's done mighty deeds with His arm. He scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts and has brought down rulers from their thrones and exalted those who were humble and filled the hungry with good things and sent away the rich empty-handed."

XIV. Announcements:

A. In his very good book, *Humilitas*, John Dickson tells about a big research project he worked on with lots of other ancient historians. The question that was vexing them was the dramatic repositioning of humility in society.

1. Under the Romans and Greeks, everything was about honor. You did not want to be humble. Humility was a sign of weakness. But then everything changed. How had everything changed so quickly? That was the question that had been posed to a group of secular historians.

2. They went off to do their research and when they came back they all agreed, it was Jesus. And not his teaching but his example.

3. Everyone around Jesus agreed, He was amazing – better than anyone else who had ever lived. And he was humble. So, although they thought humility was bad, if it was something Jesus embraced, it must be good.

4. We are called to follow his example.

5. In fact, that is the set up for the great hymn we find in Phil 2. Let me read this for you.

a) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

b)⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

c)⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

1. ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. The way up is down!

B. Other announcements

¹ C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Kurt Vonnegut and others wrote about their experiences in World Wars, but were unable to write about it directly. The facts alone did not capture what went on.

² We are exposed to many different forms of communication today: ads, music, TV shows, political speech, etc. But most of this is designed to appeal to our desires for self-promotion. They confirm our views and self-perspectives. Parables set us up for a very different view of ourselves.

³ Earlier in his ministry, Jesus had employed a lot of graphic analogies, using common things that everyone could relate to like salt, bread and sheep. And their meaning was pretty clear in the context of His teaching. Parables required more explanation, and at one point in His ministry, Jesus began to teach using parables exclusively.

⁴ Matthew 13:10

⁵ In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it"

⁶ See 2 Timothy 3:7. Also, Parables contain great volumes of truth in very few words. They are a blessing to those with willing ears. But to those with dull hearts and ears that are slow to hear, the parable is also an instrument of both judgment and mercy.

⁷ If you go down in verse 15, He even says "Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom." This is one of the guests who says this and he knows that Jesus has been talking about the kingdom. I mean, his people got the message. The people sitting around. One of those reclining at the table says to Him, "Blessed is everyone who eats bread in the kingdom." They knew what He was talking about. These illustrations had to do with the kingdom of God and they knew it.

⁸ Matthew 11:24-5

⁹ John Newton, the 18th century hymn-writer and author of Amazing Grace, writes, "One would almost think that Luke 14:12-14 was not considered part of God's word, nor has any part of Jesus's teaching been more neglected by his own people. I do not think it is unlawful to entertain friends; but if these words do not teach us that it is in some respects our duty to give a preference to the poor, I am at a loss to understand them." (Newton, cited from Keller, *Generous Justice*, p. 46).

¹⁰ Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among his great men; it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here," than for him to humiliate you before his nobles.