Dinner with Jesus

Read Luke 14:7-18a, 22-24

Key verse: “All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up” (Luke 14:11).

In one of his sermons, Bryan Wilkerson told the story of an international student who came to study at Taylor University, a Christian college in Indiana. The student was smart and gifted, and the college was very glad to have him. When he arrived on campus, the President of Taylor University personally took the new student on a tour and showed him all of the dorms. Then the president asked him where he would like to live.

The young man replied, “If there is a room no one wants, give that room to me.” Bryan Wilkerson said, “The president turned away in tears. Over the years, he had welcomed thousands of Christian men and women to campus, and none had ever made such a request.” Wilkerson continued, in his message, to describe what Christian humility might look like:

“If there’s a room that no one wants, give that room to me.”
“If there’s a job no one wants to do, I’ll do that job.”
“If there’s a kid that no one wants to eat lunch with, I’ll eat with that kid.”
“If there’s a parking space that’s far away from the church, I’ll park in that space.”
“If there’s a sacrifice someone needs to make, I’ll make that sacrifice.”

“When Jesus noticed how the guests sought out the best seats at the table, he told them a parable. When someone invites you to a wedding celebration, don’t take your seat in the place of honor. Someone more highly regarded than you could have been invited by your host. The host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give your seat to this other person.’ Embarrassed, you will take your seat in the least important place.

“Instead, when you receive an invitation, go and sit in the least important place. When your host approaches you, he will say, ‘Friend, move up here to a better seat.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up” (Luke 14:7-11).
Jesus had directed those words to all the guests at the dinner party. Next, he spoke to their host: “Then Jesus said to the person who had invited him, ‘When you host a lunch or dinner don’t invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. And you will be blessed because they can’t repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected’” (Luke 14:12-14).

In his book, *Outlive Your Life*, Max Lucado shares the following experience: “A few months ago I was sitting at the red light of a busy intersection when I noticed a man walking toward my car. He stepped off the curb, bypassed several vehicles, and started waving at me. He carried a cardboard sign under his arm, a jammed pack on his back. His jeans were baggy, his beard scraggly, and he was calling my name, ‘Max! Max! Remember me?’

“I lowered my window. He smiled a toothless grin. He said, ‘I still remember that burger you bought me.’ Then I remembered. Months, maybe a year earlier, at this very intersection, I had taken him to a corner hamburger stand where we enjoyed a meal together. He was California-bound on that day. ‘I’m passing through Texas again,’ he told me. The light changed, and cars began to honk. I pulled away, leaving him waving and shouting, ‘Thanks for the burger, Max.’

“I’d long since forgotten that meal. Not him. We never know what one meal will do…. When we provide food stamps, we stave off hunger. But when we invite the hungry to our tables, we address the deeper issues of value and self-worth.”

“Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind” (v. 13).

The dinner party takes yet another turn with the following conversation: “When one of the dinner guests heard Jesus’ remarks, he said to Jesus, ‘Happy are those who will feast in God’s kingdom.’

“Jesus replied, ‘A certain man hosted a large dinner and invited many people. When it was time for the dinner to begin, he sent his servant to tell the invited guests, “Come! The dinner is now ready.” One by one, they all began to make excuses…. The servant said, “Master, your instructions have been followed and there is still room.” The master said to the servant, “Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will taste my dinner”’ (Luke 14:15-18a, 22-24).

Jesus used this man’s remark [v. 15] to warn that not everyone will enter God’s kingdom. Many Bible scholars believe that Jesus’ words in Luke 14:15-
24 were a warning to the Jewish people of his day: If they refused to accept God’s invitation, then God would offer the kingdom to the Gentiles instead.

To us today, Jesus’ words remind us of the danger of responding to Jesus’ invitation by saying, “maybe later,” or by making excuses for why we will not follow Christ now. “Excuses,” said D.L. Moody, “are the cradle that Satan rocks men off to sleep in.”

Jesus’ gracious invitation is for “whosoever will.” He invites all to come and dine with Him. But ultimately each person must say “yes” to Jesus—He will not force us to come to Him.

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