



# Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



## The Holy Gospel According to St. Luke

### Chapter 14

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# Introduction

- In chapters 12 and 13 we notice a repeated reference to food and meals in Jesus' sayings and parables
- This trend in His teachings begins after the banquet to which He was invited at the home of a Pharisee that was attended by Pharisees and scribes where Jesus condemned them for their hypocrisy, Luke 11:37-52
- He continues that same trend in chapter 14 after another meal in the home of a leading Pharisee, and He concludes this trend in His teaching with the Parable of the Great Feast



# Introduction

- And of course Each of these references to food and meals in Jesus' teachings should make us think of the heavenly "food" "the bread and the wine that becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist
- It is the "food" we are called to humbly eat at the altar that is the Lord's banquet table but which we must eat with special care so as not to abuse the gift of our divine Master, 1 Corinthians 11:26-29



# Introduction

## Chapter Outline

- A Man Healed on the Sabbath 14:1-6
- Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14
- The Parable of the Great Supper 14:15-24
- Leaving All to Follow Christ 14:25-33
- Tasteless Salt Is Worthless 14:34-35

# A Man Healed on the Sabbath

## 14:1-6



- The house into which he entered this sabbath belonged to one who was a ruler of the Pharisees, probably an influential rabbi, a man of great wealth, or a member of the Sanhedrim
- Even though Jesus had some of His greatest disputes with the Pharisees, He still associated with them – not to be one of them, but to love them and show them a godly example
- *to eat bread on the Sabbath*, As a guest, was a usual practice
- Such banquet on the sabbath day were very usual; they were often luxurious and costly

# A Man Healed on the Sabbath

## 14:1-6



- *they watched Him closely*, This explains the reason of the invitation to the great Teacher by a leading Pharisee, after the Master's harsh rebuke of them, Luke 11:39-52
- The feast and its attendant circumstances were all arranged, and Jesus' watchful enemies waited to see what He would do
- *there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy*, Because this was in the home of one of the rulers of the Pharisees, this man was probably an invited guest
- Some believe that he was invited simply to provoke Jesus into doing something that they could accuse Him regarding

# A Man Healed on the Sabbath

## 14:1-6



- Dropsy was an abnormal accumulation of fluids in the connective tissues or cavities of the body that caused swelling, enlargement and pain
- Jesus does not avoid their trap, but uses the healing of the man as another teaching on the correct interpretation of the Law
- Knowing their intentions, Jesus challenges them by asking two questions
- The first question is; *Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?*
- *And Jesus, answering,* He took the initiative, and answered their unspoken thoughts

# A Man Healed on the Sabbath

## 14:1-6



- What could they say?
- If they had pressed the meaningless restrictions that they added to the sabbath day, they felt they would be crushed by one of the Master's deep and powerful arguments
- They had hoped He would have acted on the impulse of the moment, and healed the sufferer or else failed; but His calm question confused them
- Jesus simply *did it*, and the man was completely well
- This was a remarkable miracle since the man's affliction, *dropsy*, affected the man's appearance, it should be understood that the man's appearance immediately was transformed, indicating health

# A Man Healed on the Sabbath

## 14:1-6



- After healing the man, Jesus challenges them again by asking them a second question, *Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?"*
- Why do not they answer Jesus this time? Jesus' logic was simple and impossible to dispute
- If it was allowed to help animals on the Sabbath, how much more was it right to heal *people* who are made in God's image?
- If they say they would let their son or ox die, they appear to be heartless and wicked; but if they say they would save their son or an expensive animal even on the Sabbath they are proved to be the hypocrites Jesus has accused them of being



# Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

- Dinning at a formal banquet in this period adopted the Greek customs of a symposium, a formal meal where guests recline on couches that are placed around a table
- The placement of the guests was according to the guest's rank or social status
- Jesus noticed that some of the guests were assuming for themselves a status within the company by choosing the best seats at the banquet table
- We may recall Jesus has already condemned the Pharisees for their arrogant practice of expecting the best seats in the Synagogues, Luke 11:43



# Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

- Luke identifies Jesus' comments as a parable and not a teaching so we immediately know there is a spiritual teaching associated with this event
- If St. Luke had not designated this as a parable, it could be mistakenly interpreted as only advice for the guests on proper conduct and humility at a dinner party
- The other hint is that Jesus uses a "wedding" as the occasion in His parable and not an ordinary banquet
- Parables are not *fables*; Jesus did not tell imaginary stories with morals



# Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

- He took real-life situations familiar to all, and used them to bring forth God's truth, especially for those open to hear His truth
- A wedding party was the most important social occasion in Jewish life at that time
- If one takes the most honored place for himself, he may be asked to be removed if the host would rather have someone else sit there
- Jesus reminded them of the *shame* that often comes with self-exaltation
- When we allow others (especially God) to promote and lift us up, then we don't have the same danger of being exposed as someone who exalted himself



# Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

- *the lowest place*, Showing that you are not desirous of distinctions, or desirous of that honor which may properly belong to you
- *you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you*, They who are sitting with you shall treat you with respect
- They will learn your rank by your being invited nearer to the head of the table, and it will be better to learn it thus than by putting yourself forward
- They will do you honor because you have shown a humble spirit



# Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

- Jesus was not merely teaching good manners, but a lifestyle that *in lowliness of mind let each esteems others better than himself*, Philippians 2:3
- When we seek to take honor to ourselves, we will always be humbled – if not on earth, then for all of eternity
- The promise of exaltation for the humble and humiliation for the proud is one ultimately fulfilled in eternity
- We may choose the low place, and act meek and humble, so that others may notice how humble we are
- This is a deceitful form of spiritual pride that is very dangerous



# Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

- As He had given advice and instructions to the guests, so He likewise thought fit to give some to the master of the house
- Observing, very likely, that his guests consisted of such persons who are mostly, if not all, drawn from the upper status of Jewish society, and the banquet was no doubt a luxurious and costly
- What point is Jesus making for His host who is a leader among the Pharisees?
- It is another teaching on storing up treasure in heaven



# Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

- Jesus here told us to not associate with people only on the basis of what they could do for us
- That is self-centered living; we are called to follow Jesus, and He showed others-centered living
- The works of righteousness that God rewards are those in which there is no earthly reward
- Hidden acts of mercy reap eternal rewards
- If His host, who considers himself to be righteous, really wants to be judged as righteous by God and to receive God's blessings, he will invite those who cannot repay him

# The Parable of the Great Supper 14:15-24



- *One of those* who were partaking of the banquet, and had witnessed the whole scene, now speaks
- This quiet observer, noticing that the Master's remarks were touching upon the reward of the just in the world to come and was pleased and affected with them, now breaks in with a remark *Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"*
- The words do not seem to have been spoken in a mocking spirit, but to have been the genuine outcome of the speaker's admiration of the Guest so hated and yet so wondered at

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- No doubt, he was ignorant and his words reflect certain Pharisaic self-congratulation - a something which seems to imply, "Yes, that blessedness to which you, O Master, are referring, I am looking forward confidently to share in"
- "How happy will it be for us, Jews as we are, when the time comes for us to sit down at that banquet in the kingdom of heaven?"
- The Pharisee believed that his destiny is secured
- They judged themselves as "righteous" because of their strict adherence to the Law of Moses, and as descendants of Abraham they judged themselves as the heirs of God's covenant promises

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- The parable with which Jesus answered the guest's remark contains much and varied teaching for all ages of the Church, but in the first instance it replies to the speaker's words, "Yes," said the Master, "blessed indeed are they who sit down at the heavenly feast"
- "You think you are one of those whom the King of heaven has invited to the banquet; what have you done, though, with the invitation?"
- "I know many who have received it who have simply threw it aside; are you one of them?"

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- The kingdom of heaven, under the imagery of a great Banquet, was a picture well known to the Jews of that age
- The guests in the Pharisee's house for the greater part were probably highly educated men
- At once they would grasp the meaning of the parable
- They knew that the supper was heaven, and the Giver of the feast was God
- In the parable, the host (God) has been preparing a banquet to which the first group knew they were going to be invited

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- What is the nature of the invitation?
- ‘*Come, for all things are now ready*’; this is because God the Father is preparing for the inhabitants of the earth in Christ, the talents given to the world through Him, which are the forgiveness of sins, the washing away of every iniquity, the partnership of the Holy Spirit, the glorious adoption as being His children and the heavenly kingdom
- Christ called Israel for these blessings by the gospel commandments before calling anyone else

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- They did not appreciate the great honor and were not ready when the invitation came
- What kind of excuses they had when the invitation arrived?
- The excuses are different, but really all the same
- Who does the first group represent symbolically? Matthew 3:7-12; Luke 7:30
- The first group is composed of the "righteous" descendants of Abraham "the religiously observant Jews who should have been the first to recognize the "invitation" through God's prophets

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- They are likely represented by the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees
- However, their earthly/material concerns for possessions and personal relationships caused each to put their interest in these things before God and so they declined the invitation
- These are the Jews who rejected St. John's baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming Kingdom proclaimed by the Messiah
- We may learn from this that sinners sometimes plead that they are under a "necessity" to neglect their relationship with God

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- The affairs of the world, they pretend, are so pressing that they cannot find time to attend to their souls
- They have no time to pray, or read the Scriptures, or go to church, or keep up the worship of God, in this way many lose their souls
- God cannot accept such an excuse for neglecting their spiritual needs
- He commands us to seek "first" the kingdom of God and His righteousness, nor can He approve any excuse that people may make for not doing it

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- These excuse makers condemned themselves; their excuses were only a thin veil hiding the fact that they did not *want* to come
- There is no *rational* reason why someone would not want to be part of this feast; they just didn't *want* to
- Three excuses, given as examples of the rest, "the care of this world" verse 18, "the deceitfulness of riches" verse 19, and "the pleasures of this life" verse 20
- Each differs from the other but all come to the same result: "We have other things to attend to, more pressing just now"
- Nobody is represented as saying, I will not come; but truly, all the answers imply that but for certain things they would come, and when these are out of the way they will come

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- *that servant came and reported these things to his master, We have here a shadow of the complaints and lamentations of our Lord over the stiff-necked stubbornness of the Jews in rejecting Him*
- The master of the feast must have been surprised at the response; he was certainly *angry*
- It was strange and offensive that so many made excuses when given such a wonderful invitation
- If those first invited to the feast refused, there would still be a feast, because the master would not prepare a banquet in vain

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- Christ resented the apathetic and unbelief of the Jews, who were favored with His ministry and miracles; and looked upon them with anger, and was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts
- *the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind*, The despised and outcasts of the nation, the publicans and sinners
- We see that Jesus responded to the man's exclamation *Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!*, Luke 14:15 by asking, "You admire the Messianic Banquet; yet are *you* ready to receive the invitation to come? Will you make excuses?"

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- Since there is still more room at the banquet, what is the third group to whom God's servants extend the invitation of grace and eternal salvation, even though this group did not expect to be invited?
- The third group is not part of the community as were the first two groups
- They are outsiders
- This third invitation symbolizes the evangelization of the Gentile nations of the earth by the servants of the Son of God

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- *still there is room*, While these words are necessary to complete the picture, still in them we have a hint of the vast size of the kingdom of God
- The master of the feast was determined that *some* would enjoy what he had prepared
- Our God, with His burning love for souls, will never accept or plan a half-empty heaven
- If those originally invited made excuses, the master commanded his servants to use all persuasion (*compel them to come*) to fill the feast

# The Parable of the Great Supper

## 14:15-24



- Jesus said *compel* to indicate God's great desire to fill His house, and because these wanderers and outcasts needed to be *convinced* that they were welcome, compelled by love
- In summary, the host of the banquet represents God; His home is the heavenly Kingdom; the banquet is the banquet of the righteous at the end of time; the servants are God's prophets and servants; the first invitation was for the Jews; the second invitation was for the disadvantaged Jews who were the outcasts; and the third invitation was for the Gentiles who have been outside the covenant but are now included
- None of those men who were invited and rejected the invitation and made light of it will enter His Kingdom

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- As Jesus continued toward Jerusalem, many went with Him
- *He turned and said to them*, He then spoke an appropriate word to these
- These great multitudes were made up now of enemies as well as friends
- Curiosity doubtless attracted many
- He wanted clearly to make it known to all these multitudes what serving Him really signified - entire self-denial and real taking up the cross

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- *If anyone comes to Me*, Not barely to hear Him preach; but come as a true believer in Him and desires to be a disciple of Him
- Previously, Jesus said that coming to God was like accepting an invitation, Luke 14:16-24
- Jesus was careful to add that there is more to being His follower than simply accepting an invitation
- In this teaching Jesus uses exaggeration *hating* to stress the total commitment required of the men and women who take up the path of discipleship

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- And to show how great the difference must be between our commitment to Jesus and our loyalty to everyone and everything else
- Jesus is asking for a complete detachment from the old life that might in any way compromise the priority of one's commitment to Jesus and His Kingdom
- The Lord's teaching throughout, in parable and in direct saying, boldly said that the true disciple comes to Him without reservation, setting Jesus first
- Other relationships are definitely of lower priority than faithfulness and obedience to Jesus

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- No home love, no earthly affection, must ever come into competition with the love of God
- His teaching here is similar to the teachings He gave in Luke 9:23-24 and 57-62
- This teaching also recalls His warning concerning the division He is bringing to families where some will reject His Gospel and others will embrace His promise
- Then He tells them that being a follower of Jesus is something like bearing a cross

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- The hearers of Jesus didn't need an explanation of the cross; they knew it was an unrelenting instrument of torture, death, and humiliation
- If someone took up *his cross*, he never came back
- It was a one-way journey
- *His cross*, Jesus chose this phrasing instead of saying, "The cross" or "A cross"
- The idea is that there is a cross suited to each individual, and one person's experience of the cross may not look just like another person's experience of the cross
- Jesus made it clear that only cross-bearers can be His disciples

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- Jesus used two examples of the importance of considering what the "cost" of discipleship will be before taking up the mission
- The example of building a tower and a king pursuing war, attempts that require planning and good decision making
- A tower was a place of defense or observation, erected on high places or in vineyards, to guard against enemies
- It was made "high" to enable one to see an enemy when he approached; and "strong" so that it could not be easily taken
- The *build a tower* image rather points to the *building up* of the Christian life in the heart and life

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- The tower reminds us of the house in Matthew 7:24-27, *“a wise man who built his house on the rock”* the structure of a holy life raised on the one Foundation
- It is a serious thing to be a disciple, therefore consider well before you begin—the denials required, the cross to be borne—as you would, if wise, consider before *building a tower or engaging in battle*
- The second is the image of the warfare to which' every Christian man must wage against the world, its passions, and its lusts
- The warfare brings to our remembrance the conflict described in Matthew 12:29, *“How can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man?”*

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- The Christian person's life is a warfare; he is engaged with many enemies; the corruptions of his own heart within, and the world without; and especially Satan, who is to be resisted, and by no means to be yielded to
- *This man has begun to build but is unable to complete the building*’ The evil powers look scornfully on us, saying that
- As St. Cyril the Great says, “We have many enemies who are been on mocking us, whether they be evil spirits or the law of sin and the physical lust...etc.”

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- Unless we accept the cross, we carry Christ's name without His life in us; we will then have the appearance of the cross, yet without its power
- The adversary wrestles since he is king, and he wishes to devour everyone to his dark kingdom
- This is why St. Cyril the Great says: What does this mean? Our struggle is not with flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12) "But against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- But through our fellowship with our Lord Jesus, we become by Him a protected tower which the enemy cannot invade into our sanctified inner self
- The enemy will find no place of rest for him in us
- Taking the highest application of the parable, He who spoke it had counted the cost, and therefore carried on the war with evil to the last, and would make no terms with it

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- In the same way that building a tower and a king waging war requires good decision making and strategies for success, the disciple has to take into account anything in his old life that is a hindrance to traveling the narrow path and entering the narrow door
- He must separate himself from those things or people who will not help him advance in faith and spiritual maturity, especially the attachment to material possessions that encourage reliance on self and not dependence on God

# Leaving All to Follow Christ

## 14:25-33



- Many from those who followed Jesus in these last months of His work were not truly sincere
- The strict, uncompromising picture of what ought to be the life of His real followers was painted especially with a view of getting rid of these useless, purposeless supporters
- The way of the cross, which He was about to tread, was no pathway for such light-hearted pretenders

# Tasteless Salt Is Worthless

## 14:34-35



- This teaching illustrates the condition of the person who is not able to demonstrate total commitment and dedication to discipleship that Jesus called for in the previous teaching
- Salt that loses its “saltiness” is of no use
- Salt is only useful when it has the nature of salt
- A Christian is only useful when he or she has the nature of Christ
- A half-hearted disciple is like salt that has lost its flavor in that he cannot fulfill the purpose for which he was intended

# Tasteless Salt Is Worthless

## 14:34-35



- The lesson was a general one - it was meant to sink into each listener's heart
- But perhaps the Master's sad gaze was fixed, as He spoke the sad truth, on the people of Israel whom He loved, and on the temple of Jerusalem where His glory-presence used to dwell



# Discussion

- What additional religious habits, rules, traditions do you put in the place of ministering to the needs of others in Jesus' name?
- How often do you eat with someone whose needs you can meet rather than with someone who can repay you? Why?
- Who are you inviting to "Dinner"?
- What excuses do you use not to do Christ's work?



# Discussion

- What loyalties and relationships have you surrendered to follow and obey Jesus?
- What did Jesus mean when He said, “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.”?
- What is the cost you must pay to be a disciple of Jesus?



# Discussion

- Can you give specific examples of how your life is flavoring the world with a taste of Jesus?
- Has your life lost its saltiness so you can blend in with other worldly flavors?