**‘Guess who’s coming to dinner?’**

**Luke 14vv1-14**

**Getting started**

1. **Can you ever think of a dinner, or any social occasion, where a fierce row about some aspect of the Christian gospel, has broken out? What caused it, and how did it end?**

***In Chapter 13, Jesus has been teaching Jews that not everyone will get to eat at the banquet in Heaven that God has been preparing for his people. (13v24) This will have played very badly with Jews brought up over the centuries to believe that they were the ‘real deal’, children of Abraham. Jesus is invited to dine with a prominent Pharisee, but it becomes clear pretty soon that he is to be ‘on the menu’!***

**Into the passage**

**Let’s think of the meal that evening in 3 courses:-**

**‘The starter’**

**2) How would you describe the attitude of the fellow guests to Jesus in v1?**

**3) Why do you think this ill man is suddenly produced? (v3)**

**4) How does Jesus expose the hypocrisy of the guests? (v5)**

**5) Can you think of modern day examples of people who are hypocrites before Jesus?**

**6) How do you think the atmosphere in this room would be affected by Jesus’ words?**

**The main course**

**7) What has Jesus noticed about his fellow guests’ behaviour in v7?**

**8) How true to life is this of people in your own experience, not just at dinners, but generally?**

**9) How does the parable expose the folly in this sort of behaviour?**

**10) What spiritual principle does Jesus draw in v11?**

**11) How much do you need to hear Jesus’ warning here?**

**12) What affect would Jesus’ words have on the spiritual temperature of the room?**

**The pud**

**13). What is it about the host’s behaviour that Jesus criticises in v12?**

**14 ) How true to life is this in your experience of others, even of yourself?**

**15) What can correct our behaviour – see v14, and onto next week’s passage (14v21)?**

**The atmosphere in the room will be well below freezing by now….**

**Getting personal**

**16) What warnings does this passage contain for others you know, and indeed for yourself?**

**17) What encouragements to follow the model of Jesus do you find in this passage?**

***In the prayer time at the 10am, we responded each time ‘Give us your compassion, your humility, your generosity, O Lord’. Maybe these could be used in your groups’ prayer time?***

**Luke 14vv1-14 (sermon)**

~ I’m sure that - like me – you enjoy being invited out for meals… These can be lovely occasions where we enjoy the food, and the company of others….

But have you ever been to a dinner party that has gone **badly wrong**? (Image of people at a dinner) A friend of mine went to one where -over drinks - one guest asked him about his Christian faith. *‘You’re not one of those bigoted people who believes the only way to God is through Jesus, are you?*’ he asked. ‘*Well, yes, I am’* my friend honestly replied.

Well things really ‘kicked off’ from then! A furious row erupted over the canapes, the first course was eaten in almost total silence. The main course was a bit easier, but the tension was still obvious, and the tearful hostess then asked my friend to leave, and so he missed out on the profiteroles😊

Today, we are going to look at **even more** tense meal some 2000 years in Israel, one to which **Jesus** had been invited, and where the atmosphere could be cut with a knife!

This meal is recorded in the Bible because the issues at stake that night are **SO** important. Jesus has been teaching the vast Jewish crowds truths they needed to hear. The Jews assumed that they were **all** children of God, destined one day to enjoy a feast in Heaven, hosted by God for his people. And yet Jesus has **dented** their confidence, teaching that there is a narrow door into that Heavenly feast, and **not**

everyone would get in…

**That** news was unwelcome to **Jews then**, indeed it’s **still** unwelcome to people today, as my friend learnt at that recent dinner party.

So, here in Chapter 14 In Luke’s gospel, Jesus has been invited to dinner by a prominent Jew, a leading Pharisee, to be quizzed on his views. Jesus is going to be ‘on the menu’ at this dinner 😊

So come with me to pXXX and let’s ‘tune in’ to what Jesus has to say.

Jesus wants to give a strong warning to people he knows to be in spiritual danger

The first group are the ‘hostile watchers’ in vv1-6

These are his fellow dinners who are **carefully watching** (Image of person) all that Jesus says and does.

To test him, they suddenly produce a man who had ‘dropsy’ which meant his body suffered from unusual swellings.

*‘Let’s see if Jesus will heal this poor fellow’ they said*

Why was this such a big issue for them? Well, because it was a Sabbath, and on that day of rest, no work - not even healing the sick, was allowed according to the Pharisees.

Jesus turns the tables on his fellow dinners and asks them the question ‘*Is it* ***lawful*** *to heal on the Sabbath?’ .* ‘Is it really a day when you should **refuse** to heal a person in acute need?’

The fellow diners refuse to engage with Jesus’ question , so Jesus takes hold of this man, heals him and sends him on his way.

No doubt the guests were delighted- ‘Gotcha’ they must have thought, licking their lips bout the prospect of reporting Jesus to the Jewish authorities as a Sabbath breaker!

But Jesus doesn’t leave it there. In v5, he challenges them to say what they would do if one of their children, or even one of their animals, fell into a well on a Sabbath day. Would they pull them out? Of course they would! **And yet** they were criticising Jesus for doing what they would do for their own kid, their own animal.

Their attitude **stinks**. It is sheer **hypocrisy** (Image of Jesus and word ‘hypocrite’)

Can’t you feel their discomfort as Jesus exposes their hypocrisy? They hoped to show Jesus to be a lawbreaker, but it is their hypocrisy that is being laid bare.

Jesus is warning these hostile watchers- they need to admit that **they** are in the wrong, not Jesus, and change – for hypocrites, hostile to Jesus, will not enter through the narrow door into Heaven.

That warning against hostile hypocrites is **STILL** valid today. I meet lots of people who are quite convinced that **they** are upright, moral and wise, and yet show little love to people in need, and hostility to the Jesus who came from Heaven to reconcile people to God.

‘*Wake up’* says Jesus. ‘*If you don’t change, you will not get through the narrow door to Heaven.’*

* We can imagine the atmosphere at that dinner beginning to chill😊

But Jesus’ warnings don’t end there. He keeps his eyes on the diners, and criticises them for their sharp elbows! (sharp elbowed guests) in vv7-10

In Jewish meals, the tables were often shaped like a horseshoe, with the host and honoured guest at the very centre, and there would not be a fixed seating plan, but people would jostle to get as near to the host as possible.

Jesus had seen his fellow guests ‘elbow’ people out of the way, so that they could be in one of the top places near the host.

He’d then seen the ones who had got the top places looking smug (image of man at a banquet) hoping that everyone would notice where they were sitting, and be impressed!

To reinforce his point, Jesus tells a story

‘*Imagine a wedding’* , he says, *‘and someone has barged their way onto top table. But then the master of ceremonies comes up and tells that person to quit their place because another deserves that place more. What a red face that person will have as they do the walk of shame down to a place behind a pillar next to kitchen!’*

‘Rather’, says Jesus, ‘*you should be like the person who goes for a lowly place and is then summoned by the host: ‘****Friend, move to a higher place’***. ‘That will lead to **honour** rather than **humiliation** before others…’

~ Many of the guests would have felt embarrassed by Jesus’ words. For they loved getting the places of honour. It mattered to them, and they were zealous in getting them

They might have justified their behaviour by describing themselves as ambitious, determined, industrious. Jesus though calls it out for what it is – **sinful**- wanting glory for themselves, not others.

And this ‘Me first’ attitude matters – for it reveals us to be proud people, rather than those who are humble and entrust ourselves to the place God, the host of Heaven, graciously gives us.

Look how Jesus draws out the importance of our attitude in v11

11For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled,

and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

The only way **up** in the Kingdom of God, the only way **through the narrow door**, is through **humility,** by bowing our head low and accepting we don’t deserve even to be in Heaven, let alone to be in the places of honour there…

As Jesus spoke, perhaps we can imagine the temperature in that grand dining room dropping a few degrees lower! For respectable people – like the guests that evening – care about positions of honour. They feel they have a right to them, and are eager to secure them.

Jesus is saying that simply doesn’t work in the Kingdom of Heaven. We have to be humble, and accept with gratitude and wonder that Jesus was willing to humble himself, even to die on a cross, to deal with our sin. Spiritual pride is ugly, and unproductive, faced with our sin, and what it required for the Lord of glory to deal with it.

~ I wonder whether you need to hear this warning given to sharp-elbowed guests today? It was given by Jesus for our good, so we don’t spend our lives puffing ourselves up, but rather gladly bow before Jesus, hearing his amazing words – *‘Friend move up higher’*

 Well, let’s hear one final warning from Jesus - this time addressed to the host. Jesus addresses his warning to hosts, who are eager to be repaid…

 Some of the buzzwords in society today are i**nclusivity** and **diversity**. Rightly, people want schools, companies, parliament that are made up of people from a whole range of backgrounds.

As Jesus looked at his fellow guests that evening, there was very little diversity! The host had invited his mates, the people he admired, the people who would make good guests, and be likely to invite him back to their houses in the future ….

The host was a bit like the arch snob in Bridgerton Lady Danbury (image of lady) , very socially well connected, careful that she should only invite the glittering in society to her parties, people who’d invite her back in due course

‘But you shouldn’t be like that!’ says Jesus – ‘Don’t only invite those who will invite you back.’

13But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame,

the blind, 14and you will be blessed.

Although they cannot repay you,

you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Jesus wants this host – he wants us – to think about who we invite to our home. Yes of course, it’s fine to invite family and friends – it would be weird if we didn’t! But do we stop there? What sort of other people do we invite? Is it the impressive, the witty, the wealthy, people who will make our parties go well, and who are likely to invite us back?

Or do we consciously think about inviting those who have big needs? If our guest lists are limited to PLU (People like us) it shows how little we have grasped of God, who sent his son to bring salvation to the **whole world**…

~ It’s quite a thought isn’t it- that the people we choose to entertain is **one** indication of whether we’ve embraced the gospel, whether we have truly entered through the narrow door ourselves…

The temperature would have sank below freezing as Jesus issued this 3rd warning!

But if you have felt convicted by these warnings do please realise that they come from a Jesus who **loves** you. He loved you enough to come down from Heaven for you. He loves you enough to warn you about hypocrisy, pride and limited vision. He would love you to bow low and enter through the narrow door into Heaven

But I’d like to finish with the other side of the coin in this passage. Jesus wants not just to warn people about their sin, he also wants to give his people an encouragement . An encouragement not to follow the crowd, but to follow in his steps in the way that leads to glory

Jesus (image of Jesus with his disciples) wants us

1. To Be compassionate to people in need- unlike the way the fellow guests treated the man with dropsy
2. To Be humble rather than those sharp-elbowed guests, jockeying for positions of power
3. To Be generous , as God is, rather than like that host eager to be repaid

My prayer for myself, for you, for our church, is that we might be a **compassionate, humble and generous** community of believers

If we embrace **this** path, we will have learned the lessons Jesus taught at this dinner party, and will show us to be those who have truly entered the narrow door into the Kingdom of Heaven.

[Prayer]