



The Gospel of Luke - Chapter Fourteen

V. [Luke 9:51-19:27 - The Journey to Jerusalem \(continues\)](#)

V.b [Luke 13:22-17:10 - The second mention of the journey to Jerusalem \(continues\)](#)

Summary of Chapter Fourteen

Jesus was eating a Sabbath meal with an important Pharisee. All were watching Jesus and were wondering what he was going to do. A man with œdema got up and Jesus noticed him. Jesus asked those at the meal if it was right to heal on the Sabbath or not, but no one answered him. Jesus healed the man and said that if a son or an ox fell into a well on the Sabbath then everyone would pull them out.

Jesus also spoke of humility when a guest was in a house for dinner. He said that the guest should not automatically assume the best seat but should seek the lowest position. From there the host could ask them to move to a more prominent position but if they took the highest place initially and a more prominent guest arrived they would be asked by the host to move down and would feel humiliated. He said, never put yourself above anyone else. Also, never invite those who will invite you back in return but invite those like the poor who cannot invite you back. God will reward your humility.

The Parable of the Great Feast shows that many who are invited will make reasons not to be there and those that finally attend will be those that would not normally be invited to such a feast. Such is the Kingdom of God.

Jesus reminded his disciples of the sacrifices they must make to be true followers including giving up family and home. The disciple will not worry about possessions or clothes but will follow Jesus through love, thus retaining the 'saltiness' needed to be a true follower.

V.b.iii [Luke 14:1-6 - The healing of a man on the Sabbath](#)

This is Jesus' third and last Sabbath healing recorded in Luke. The others were: Luke 6:6-11 <<On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shrivelled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shrivelled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone". So he got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save

life or to destroy it?" He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand". He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus>>, and in Luke 13:10-17 <<On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity". Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath". The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing>>.

¹ One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ² There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy.

[Luke 14:1-2](#)

[Dropsy](#) is probably oedema, where excess fluid gathers in various parts of the body.

³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?

[Luke 14:3](#)

[Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?](#) We have just looked at two instances elsewhere in Luke. There is nothing under the Law of Moses to prevent the healings that Jesus performed on a Sabbath. It was something that had become a Pharisaic tradition.

In rabbinic teaching, numerous regulations defined minute categories of work that were prohibited on the Sabbath, but these legalistic regulations were never God's intent for the OT law. There were 39 things prohibited on the Sabbath in Mishnah, Shabbat 7.2. Jesus' opponents believed that the Sabbath could be broken only in extreme cases of life and death. Since the life of the man with dropsy was not in danger they believed his healing should wait until after the Sabbath. Jesus has previously shown that the Sabbath was a day of doing good things that would bring glory to God. After all, that is what this life is for.

⁴ But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away.

[Luke 14:4](#)

[They remained silent.](#) By now the Pharisees have learned that they can never win when they get into an argument with Jesus, with several examples in Luke 5:30-6:11 alone. Again, we note that healing was instantaneous.

⁵ Then he asked them, If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?

Luke 14:5

A son or an ox. Of how much more value is a man than an ox! Jesus contrasts the value of an animal to that of a human and asserts that the higher principle is not simply refraining from activity on the Sabbath but doing good on the Sabbath.

⁶ And they had nothing to say.

Luke 14:6

They had nothing to say emphasises Jesus' mastery in debate. He has silenced the entire Pharisees' objections and yet they will not believe in him or follow him.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, we had a similar account in Luke 6:10-11, where the man with the withered hand was healed on a Sabbath. Jesus told him to stretch out his hand. Jesus pointedly did not do anything in this situation that could be called work; he did not even touch the man but simply spoke a word and surely speaking is not prohibited on the Sabbath! Nor did the disabled man do any forbidden work, for he simply stretched out his hand. Jesus' accusers on that occasion too were silenced and they were furious, even though the man's hand was restored. Even a mighty miracle cannot change their hardened hearts.

V.b.iv Luke 14:7-17:10 - Various Teachings and Parables

Jesus teaches on discipleship and God's love.

V.b.iv.1 Luke 14:7-14 - Places of Honour

We have met this idea before. The religious leaders loved the status they had in the community and this included being seated at banquets, weddings or public gatherings in the most prominent seating that was allocated according to an individual's perceived social status.

⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable:

⁸ When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited.

⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat'. Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.

¹⁰ 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 honoured in the presence of all your fellow guests. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Luke 14:7-11

The parable of the wedding feast was directed to those who may have been invited to the dinner at the house of the Pharisee (v.1). Similarly, the parable of the great banquet in vv.12-24 was directed to 'the man who had invited him' to that dinner (v.12).

When he noticed. Here, as in Luke 18:1, 18:9 and 19:11, Luke states at the beginning Jesus' purpose in telling the parable. The parable teaches the wisdom of humility: it is better to be humble than humiliated; lowest place; move up to a better place. Solomon confirms this in Proverbs 25:6-7a with: <<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>>.

Humiliated honoured. Jesus provides an example in Luke 18:14 in the account of the Pharisee and the tax collector, where he says of the latter: <<"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted">>. As the parable shows, sometimes this happens even in this life but it will take place most fully at the final judgment. Consider these words: <<But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble">> (James 4:6), or: <<Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up>> (James 4:10), and: <<In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble". Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time>> (1 Peter 5:5-6).

The best way to become high is to start low, as true humility is a great gift; false humility is hypocrisy and an offence to God. Proud ambition leads to dishonour; humility to true honour, which is given to us by God.

¹² Then Jesus said to his host, When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbours; 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.

Luke 14:12-14

Do not invite your friends but do invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. Jesus again emphasises the radical generosity and care that his disciples are to show toward those who are physically impaired and economically deprived.

The 1st Century AD Roman lawyer and author, Pliny the Younger wrote: 'Give to your friends but let it be to your poor friends not to those that do not need it'. King Solomon wrote: <<He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich – both come to poverty>> (Proverbs 22:16a). And do not just put such things on for show, as King Xerxes or Ahasuerus did: <<and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present. For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendour and glory of his majesty>> (Esther 1:3-4). The man sure knew how to throw a party but is it the best use of God's resources?

V.b.iv.2 Luke 14:15-24 - The parable of the great banquet

This is a parable relating to the point in salvation history, when those chosen to be the bride of Christ, his church, sit to dine with him at the wedding feast of the Lamb in heaven or on a new earth, wherever it is that he will choose to hold it.

¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.

Luke 14:15

Blessed is the man who will eat seems to be a common saying, possibly intended here to change the uncomfortable subject, i.e. to shift the focus away from the need to care for the poor and the infirm.

As stated in the brief introduction, in the Kingdom of God points to the future messianic banquet to which the people of Jesus' day would have understood only godly Jews would be invited. Jesus, however, uses the parable to teach his listeners contrary to their expectations that the guests invited originally will miss the banquet (v.24), and will be replaced instead by the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame and the outsiders, i.e. the Gentiles found in the highways and hedges (v.21 and v.23).

¹⁶ Jesus replied: A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready'.

¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me'.

¹⁹ Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me'.

²⁰ Still another said, 'I have just got married, so I can't come'.

Luke 14:16-20

A great banquet refers to the arrival of the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus with its initial present taste of the joyful fellowship with God that will be fully realised in the coming age.

To have invited many shows that two invitations would have been involved. The first would have concerned reservations for the banquet and would have been given well in advance. The second invitation would have been given on the day of the banquet, announcing that the time of the banquet had come and everything was ready.

Although the guests had been invited well in advance, they began to make excuses failing to see that the kingdom is now here and that God is inviting people to participate in its great blessings.

Bought a field, bought five yoke of oxen, have just got married shows that these people have put the business of everyday life ahead of the claims of God and his kingdom, and they are therefore not worthy to enter it. Jesus taught on similar themes in Luke 8:19-21, 9:23-24, 9:59-62, 10:41-42, 12:31, and 14:26-27.

²¹ The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame'.

²² 'Sir', the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room'.

²³ Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet'.

Luke 14:21-24

The streets and alleys were within the city and were where the outcasts of Israelite society, i.e. the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame; would be found (v.13).

The roads and country lanes were outside the city and represent the Gentiles being invited into the kingdom.

Make them come in. The Greek word *anagkazō* usually means to compel or force someone, but a number of interpreters understand a weaker sense here: to strongly urge or persuade. That sense seems better suited to the context and is supported in other examples in Greek literature. When proclaiming the Gospel, we too should use encouraging dialogue rather than relying on threats of eternal damnation. God wants to draw those who want to be with him.

The kingdom will be full but many of those originally invited will be excluded.

The feast was clearly offered to all Israel: <<On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines>> (Isaiah 25:6). Again, we see the tendency for us to reject the Gospel through excuses, even though we may consider some of them to be good ones. From the time Adam made an excuse in the Garden: <<The man said, The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it>> (Genesis 3:12).

This parable once again indicates that it will not primarily be the Jews but the Gentile believers who will have the biggest share of the kingdom supper, and the majority of those will be those who are just ordinary people and particularly those under-valued in human society. However, it is not for us to gloat over this, as it is through no achievement of ours but is just part of free grace. We should just rejoice in the reality of our salvation and do what we are called to, in order to share what we have.

Note how abused is mercy through the refusal of such a gracious invitation to dine with a host that has paid so much. The refusal results in justified anger that leads to wrath.

We can also see that Christ has a large house and that it will be filled. When all those the Father has given him arrive, the time for the feast will be upon us. John records this for us: <<My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand>> (John 10:29), <<In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you>> (John 14:2), and: <<Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world>> (John 17:24).

V.b.iv.3 Luke 14:25-35 - The cost of being a disciple

Jesus does not misguide anybody and neither should we. Coming to Christ is not a blissful utopia that some would have others believe. There is a cost to discipleship and that is for us to commit to sharing in the death and suffering of Christ so that we may rise to new life beyond this one.

²⁵ Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:

Luke 14:25

Large crowds continue to follow Jesus because: <<And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area>> (Luke 4:37).

²⁶ If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:26

If anyone comes to me represents a promise that has a cost or condition attached as we find in Luke 9:23-24 <<Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it>>.

Those who would be Christ’s disciples must:

1. Love their family and themselves less than they love Christ (v.26).
2. Bear their cross and follow Christ (v.27).
3. Relinquish everything as required (v.33).

These are complementary ways of describing the complete commitment necessary to becoming a follower of Jesus.

The first condition for discipleship is to hate one’s father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and their own life as stated in Luke 18:29-30 <<“Truly I tell you”, Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life>>.

Hating is a Semitic expression for loving less as confirmed in Genesis 29:30-31 (ESV): <<So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years. When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren>>, in Deuteronomy 21:15-17 (ASV): <<If a man have two wives, the one beloved, and the other hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the first-born son be hers that was hated; then it shall be, in the day that he causeth his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved the first-born before the son of the hated, who is the first-born: but he shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the hated, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath; for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the first-born is his>>, and in Matthew 10:37 <<Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me>>.

Once again the promise is for anyone. To the Pharisees and scribes he preaches about the need for humility and charity; to the zealous he preaches the true cost of discipleship, so that people may know what they are agreeing to.

Jesus always draws a crowd. Those who truly love him and his message, and are willing to give up comparatively everything to serve him are a key component of the crowd. There are also those who oppose him and would wish to spread dissent among the church; there are those who want the miracles and the healing; and there are those who just want to be part of the crowd. This remains in evidence in most churches today.

²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:27

For the second condition for discipleship, carry his cross and follow me, we must realise that crucifixion is a shocking metaphor for discipleship. A disciple must deny himself or die to self-will, take up his cross, i.e. embrace God's will no matter the cost, not matter what has to be sacrificed, and then follow Christ.

The goal of self-denial and taking up one's cross is not pathological self-abasement or a martyr complex but being free to follow the teachings and will of Jesus. Self-denial means letting go of self-determination, especially our desire for wealth and possessions for the wrong reasons, for it is written: <<those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches? No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them – the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough>> (Psalm 49:6-8), and replacing it with obedience to and dependence on the Christ of God.

Abraham gave up his country and would have sacrificed his son. Moses gave up the benefits and influence of being part of Pharaoh's court. The OT prophets and NT disciples gave up their comfort, reputations, and in many cases, their lives. All those who profess Christ must be prepared to do whatever God calls them to do. For most of us, the cost is relatively low.

Over 3,000 years ago, Joshua summed up discipleship and the impact of backsliding: <<Joshua said to the people, You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you. But the people said to Joshua, No! We will serve the LORD. Then Joshua said, You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD. Yes, we are witnesses, they replied. Now then, said Joshua, throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel. And the people said to Joshua, We will serve the LORD our God and obey him. On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD. See! he said to all the people. This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God>> (Joshua 24:19-27a). We too are called to 'throw away our foreign gods', those worldly things that we seem to want to cling on to so tightly: our money, our possessions, our lifestyle. They are all gifts from God, which we should accept with thanks and enjoy with thanksgiving but which we should be prepared to let go of if called to do so.

We should also note that it is better not to begin than to fall away. This is the essence of the following verses.

²⁸ Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish'.

³¹ Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send

a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

Luke 14:28-32

Two parabolic illustrations involving building (vv.28-30), and going to war (vv.31-32), both warn against making a hasty decision to follow Jesus. Potential disciples must first estimate or count the cost to see if they will persevere in the faith as confirmed in Luke 8:15 <<But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop>>, and Luke 21:19, which simply says: <<Stand firm, and you will win life>>.

The tower we should build is obedience to Christ. We should not start what we cannot finish. We should not make excuses for our failings but repent of them before God. In truth, none of us has the resources to complete the tower; that is the work of grace. But we should at least build a firm foundation, based on the word of God and then persevere through the tough times by remaining in communion with God, otherwise all will be in vain: <<Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully>> (2 John 1:8), and: <<Have you suffered so much for nothing – if it really was for nothing?>> (Galatians 3:4).

Life is a battle. Those who choose to fight for Christ face a formidable earthly and spiritual army. However, we need not fear, as God has a much more formidable host to fight with and for us. We saw this when Elisha and his servant were trapped in Dothan by the Arameans. His servant feared the overwhelming forces arrayed against them and was losing heart: <<And Elisha prayed, O LORD, open his eyes so that he may see. Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all round Elisha>> (2 Kings 6:17). Of course, those who sin presumptuously choose war against God. Solomon states: <<Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance>> (Proverbs 20:18).

³³ In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:33

The third condition for discipleship (v.26) involves renouncing everything and is confirmed in Luke 5:11 <<So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him>>, in Luke 5:28 <<and Levi got up, left everything and followed him>>, Luke 12:33a <<Sell your possessions and give to the poor>>, and in Luke 18:22 <<When Jesus heard this, he said to him, You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me>>.

³⁴ Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?

Luke 14:34

We find this passage recorded also in Matthew 5:13.

If it (salt) loses its saltiness can it be useful again? Most salt came from the Dead Sea and contained impurities, such as carnallite and gypsum. If not processed properly, it would have a poor taste and would be worse than useless, being unusable for food and creating a disposal problem. If the conditions of discipleship (vv.26-27 and v.33) are not kept, the disciples likewise will become just as worthless. As Jesus instructs John to write to the Laodiceans: <<I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So,

because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing’. But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked>> (Revelation 3:15-17).

Many commentaries on this message to Laodicæa refer to the warm water springs that are a feature of the area but I believe it is more about their spirituality. In Revelation 3:1, Jesus calls the church in Sardis ‘dead’ and you may think that surely a ‘lukewarm’ church has to be better than a dead one! The problem is that, although a dead church has no impact on anyone, a lukewarm church has an impact on a lot of would-be followers of Jesus and it is usually a negative one!

Salty Christians are those who add savour to those they meet, serve, converse with and proclaim the Gospel to. Salt is a preservative; a cure for worldliness and corruption. Those who give up on the commitment they made to Jesus by faith, and subsequently return to worldly desires, not only become of no use to others, but can actually damage those who might otherwise have sought God!

Those who lose their saltiness cannot usually be re-seasoned: <<It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace>> (Hebrews 6:4-6). Although we must remember: <<with God all things are possible>> (Matthew 19:26b).

³⁵ It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure heap; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Luke 14:35

Although his disciples are not yet crucified, they all have to bear their cross and must bear it in the way of duty. Jesus advises us there are both cost and peril to being a disciple, which could come from the world or from within.

Matthew Henry writes: ‘May we seek to be disciples indeed, and be careful not to grow slack in our profession, or afraid of the cross; that we may be the good salt of the earth, to season those around us with the savour of Christ’.