



# *The* ROAD LESS TRAVELED

## The Road Less Traveled (Luke) Sept 24: The Upside-Down Kingdom

**Series Summary:** In the middle section of the Gospel of Luke, we see a unique aspect of Jesus' ministry- his life and ministry on the road. We see him interact with strangers, answer difficult questions, and teach with boldness. Along the way, Jesus teaches his disciples —and us as well —what the Kingdom of God is and what it means to follow Him.

**Big Idea:** The Pharisees failed at loving others, and even just caring for others. We need to live out of humility. This means loving others, and seeing non-believers as the mission field to who we should share the Gospel with.

**Schedule:**

- Live teaching
- Small group

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## LIVE TEACHING

**Series Lead in:** In the middle section of the Gospel of Luke, we see a unique aspect of Jesus' ministry, his life and ministry on the road. We see him interact with strangers, answer difficult questions, and teach with boldness. Along the way, Jesus teaches his disciples —and us as well —what the Kingdom of God is and what it means to follow Him.

**Luke 14:1-2** 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 abnormal swelling of his body.

It may be surprising to see Jesus on the Pharisees' turf after he had denounced them so many times. Perhaps this Pharisee actually wanted to learn from Jesus or was interested in a discussion with him. But the fact that Jesus was being watched seems to reveal that the religious leaders were hoping to trip up Jesus. **Because it**

**was another Sabbath, perhaps they again hoped to find Jesus violating their Sabbath rules, for it seems quite suspicious that a man was there in front of Jesus whose arms and legs were swollen.<sup>1</sup>**

**Luke 14:2-3** Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" **4** But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

**Jesus was well aware of their not-so-hidden intentions.** Rather than running from the confrontation, he leaned into it and beat them to the punch.

**Luke 14:5-6** Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" **6** And they had nothing to say.

**Notice the change in the question;** it went from 'is it lawful to help someone' ( a stranger, a hypothetical person) to 'would you help someone you cared about?' The answer is obvious. "Of course I would help someone I loved and called my own." That was the issue.

**The Pharisees legalistically refused to help people on the Sabbath because they, in fact, did not care about people.** They did not love them. Obedience to the law was their cover for a heart of stone that viewed people as burdens or, at best, means to an end. They did not love the man struggling with swelling. They did not even care about him. But now everyone in the room knew it due to their silence (vs 6).

**Transition** - Why did they do this? We must be cautious of the potentially dangerous assumption that the same mindset and hard heart can also guide our lives. That is what Jesus points out next.

**Luke 14:7-11** When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: **8** "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. **9** 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. **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 honored in the presence of all the other guests. **11** For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Barton et al., Life Application New Testament Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 316.

**If we are consumed with exalting ourselves, our decisions and lives will reflect it.** We will have the constant striving to advance our own agenda and get what we want. But if we choose to have a heart of humility, we will stop with the never-ending striving to make everything about us.

**The Pharisees and the story are linked:** He used this parable (story) because the guest in the story and the Pharisees have the same issue. **They both thought much of themselves and little of others.**

Jesus used this common image of a wedding feast to convey **two key points.**

- 1) **Worship of self is a common problem.** Selfishness is part of the fallen human condition of sin. It is dangerous to assume we are the exception to the rule.
- 2) **The signs of a selfish life are far more subtle than we realize,** while the consequences are far more damaging than we realize.

**Luke 14:12-14** 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.”

If we are going to be followers of Jesus, we must view people the way Jesus viewed people. We must view people as more than just obligations, a nuisance, or even means to an end. Instead, we must truly love people, not just those who are easy to love, or even those who have something to offer in return. We must love people with a sacrificial love that Jesus showed towards us. **Much like the poor, crippled, and blind had nothing to offer the banquet host, we likewise have nothing to offer God. Yet he loved us anyway.**

**Segway to Small Group:** The key to loving people who have nothing to offer us is first realizing that Jesus loved us when we had nothing to offer Him.

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## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**Get them talking: What do you think is the hardest part about putting others before yourself? Or just simply the hardest part about loving others in general?**

**Set Up The Passage:** The tie between this parable and the previous one is the resurrection. The host who invites the poor, crippled, lame, and blind will be rewarded at the resurrection. Jesus went on to explain that God himself, the heavenly host of the messianic banquet, would offer the same invitation..... This Pharisee assumed that he and his fellow Pharisees and other leaders would have the privilege to share in the Kingdom of God. They counted on their ancestry and their law-keeping to have reserved places for them. Jesus would shatter this preconception.<sup>2</sup>

### Read Luke 14:15-24 as a group

**What sticks out to you about the excuses that people gave for not going to the banquet?**

**Leader Note:** “All the excuses reek of insincerity and selfishness.

- One does not purchase property without seeing it first. And since the purchase was already complete, there was no legitimate reason to go to the land. The land would still be there after the banquet.
- Likewise (v. 19), one does not purchase oxen without first testing them. That would be like saying “I just bought a car, but I need to go test it out first.” Or “I just bought a new house, but I need to go see what it looks like on the inside”.
- The man who had recently married (v. 20) was excused from business travel, or serving in the military (Deut. 24:5), but there was no legitimate reason for newlyweds to avoid such a social engagement.”<sup>3</sup> Some people find enough meaning and purpose in their spouses (or even who they date).
- Regardless of how valid (or ridiculous) the excuses were, Jesus wanted to point out that any excuse for refusing to believe and follow Him would ultimately prove to be foolish. As is true today, if we are not careful, we will allow good things in life (possessions, relationships) to keep us from our devotion to the greatest thing (Jesus).

**Vs 21 - Whenever you read a parable, it is essential to identify who or what the parable is representing. The first guests (those in vs 18-20) to be invited**

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce Barton et al., Life Application New Testament Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 317.

<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1544.

**represented the Jewish leaders of the day, including the Pharisees, whose gathering Jesus was attending. The second invitation goes out to the poor, lame, and lowly (those in vs 21). Who is this referring to?**

**Leader Note:** The second invitation goes out to the poor, lame, and lowly of the community to the banquet. They gladly accepted the invitation. Jesus was making clear to whom the Good News of the Gospel was going to be made available to in this parable. The poor and lame in this parable refer to all the people the Pharisees looked down upon and felt would be unworthy or incapable of being in communion with God. This would include: sinners, tax collectors, and even the poor and lame, as it was assumed that their problems were due to their sin (John 9:2-3).

- Those who reject the invitation are likely going to be those who found their necessities elsewhere- such as in money, relationships/other people, social status, or just simple worship of themselves. These people still have the invitation, but their understanding is clouded because they don't see the need for Jesus, or saving, in general.

**Vs 23 - In verse 23, a final invitation is given for anybody who could be found to be invited to the banquet. Who is this invitation referring to?**

**Leader Note:** Most Bible scholars agree that this invitation is in reference to the Gospel invitation going out to Gentiles (those who were not Jews). *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile - Rom 1:16."*

- This means that your friend that you've been trying to invite to church, but they haven't come yet- this invitation is still there for them. Keep pursuing them!
- That family member or friend that you've been praying would come to know Jesus? Keep praying, and don't give up on them! The invite is still there.

**What was Jesus trying to teach the Pharisees with this parable?**

**Leader Note:** Jesus was trying to teach the Pharisees that they were not highly esteemed and welcomed at God's great heavenly banquet. Instead, they are the ones who have rejected their invitation by rejecting Jesus. They did so because they could not see past their own pride and self-righteousness.

**As believers in Jesus Christ, how should this parable shape how we view ourselves?**

**Leader Note:** In short, we should remember where we are going to be one day. As believers in Jesus Christ, we can rest assured that we will one day all be at the

marriage supper of the Lamb described in Revelation 19:6-9. Yet this parable reminds us of how and why we received that invitation.

- It is not because we are impressive. We're not, and we have no one to impress.
- It is not because we bring something to the table that would benefit Jesus.
- Quite the opposite! We are the poor and crippled as described in verse twenty-one. We have nothing to offer Jesus, yet he still freely gives us the invitation, and gave all of himself to save and redeem us. Therefore, humility and gratitude must mark our relationship with Jesus.

### **How should this parable shape how we view other people?**

**Leader Note:** How we view fellow believers- through the eyes of brotherhood since we are truly all sinners saved by grace.

- As for those who are not yet believers in Jesus- we view them as the mission field. They have the invite...we have to help them see that it's worth accepting.