

Session 23 The Cost and Rewards of Discipleship (Lk. 13-16)

I. THE NARROW DOOR OF SALVATION (LK. 13:23-30)

- A. Luke 13-18 describes what Jesus did and where He was just before entering Jerusalem in Luke 19. He was in Perea, on east side of the Jordan River, right after the Feast of Dedication in December (Jn. 10:22, 40). Then He passed through Samaria and Galilee before going to Jerusalem (Lk. 17:11). He had about three more months of ministry before dying on the cross in Jerusalem in April AD 30.
- B. Jesus went on a preaching tour through Perea on His way to Jerusalem (Lk. 13:22; Jn. 10:40-42).
²²And He went through the cities and villages...journeying toward Jerusalem. (Lk. 13:22)
- C. Jesus exhorted the people to strive to enter through a narrow gate to the kingdom (13:23-26). The command to “strive to enter” is not a call to earn salvation, but to overcome the desires and fears that hinder embracing Jesus’ leadership, including overcoming the bias and threats of the Pharisees.
²³...“Lord, are there few who are saved?” And He said to them, ²⁴“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many...will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵When once the Master of the house has...shut the door, and you...knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer..., ‘I do not know you.’ ²⁷Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.” (Lk. 13:23-27)
- D. This passage is a solemn warning for many “liberal Christians” who prefer their personal theology over the true gospel in context to the popular assault on the biblical view of salvation and the sanctity of life, marriage, and sexuality—by accepting issues like salvation outside of Jesus, along with abortion, heterosexual immorality, gender deception, same-sex marriage, and more. On their blogs they introduce their false theology with, “*But my God would never ...*” They have created a “god in their own image”—one according to their personal theology. Some of these liberal Christians are involved in a local church, some in leadership or serving on worship teams, in houses of prayer, on outreaches, etc. We must stand strong for the Jesus of the Bible, not the Jesus of popular western culture. Jesus is the only one qualified to define and defend love—we stand with His leadership
- E. Those who refuse to enter by the narrow gate will not be saved and thus will not participate in the messianic banquet at the end of the age (13:28-29; cf. Isa 25:6-9). Weeping and gnashing of teeth describes eternal punishment in hell (Mt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).
²⁸There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. ²⁹They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.” (Lk. 13:28-30)
- F. ***Last and first:*** The “last” here refer to Gentiles whom the Jews regarded as the least likely to enter the kingdom. The “first” refers to the Jews who considered themselves spiritually superior to Gentiles. They were the first to know Jesus’ ministry as well as God’s covenants and promises (Rom. 9:4-5).

II. JESUS HEALED A MAN WITH DROPSY (LK. 14:1-6)

- A. In Luke 14, we see three occasions related to a meal or feast in which Jesus spoke to the Pharisees (14:1-24). Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath while dining with a leading Pharisee (14:1-6). They continued to watch Jesus closely to find reasons to accuse and reject Him (14:1).

¹...as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. ²And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. ³And Jesus...spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” ⁴...He healed him...⁵He answered..., “Which of you, having...an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not...pull him out on the Sabbath day?” ⁶And they could not answer Him... (Lk. 14:1-6)

- B. The man with dropsy sitting before Jesus was probably a plant, in hopes that Jesus would heal him (14:2). Dropsy is a condition where an excess of watery fluid collects in the cavities of the body.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING HUMILITY (LK. 14:7-11)

- A. Jesus taught a parable about not choosing seats of honor (14:7-11). Jesus noticed how the guests at the Pharisees’ house maneuvered (14:1) to sit in positions of honor.

⁷So He told a parable...when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: ⁸“When you are invited...to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place...¹⁰But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that...he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’ Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. ¹¹For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Lk. 14:7-11)

- B. There is an unchangeable law in the kingdom of God—that the humble will eventually be exalted (14:11; cf. Mt.18:4; 23:12; Lk. 13:30; 18:14). This principle operates both in this age and in the age to come. Believers are not to maneuver or push to be in positions of status, but are to wait with humility before God. Jesus spoke of a wedding feast in this parable because the exaltation that He promised (14:11) will find its ultimate expression at the messianic banquet in the Millennium.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING GENEROSITY (LK. 14:12-14)

- A. Jesus taught a parable about inviting the needy to dinner— those who cannot repay you (14:12-14).

¹²Then He also said to him who invited Him, “When you give a dinner...do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. ¹³But when you give a feast, invite the poor...the lame, the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” (Lk. 14:12-14)

- B. Jesus challenged them to bless not only people who are able to reciprocate the blessing, but those in need as well, knowing that the Lord will reward or exalt them in the age to come.

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING JESUS (LK. 14:15-24)

- A. Jesus taught a parable about the great feast (14:16-24). There are serious consequences for not responding to His invitation to the great wedding supper in a timely and appropriate way.
- ¹⁵Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" ¹⁶Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, ¹⁷and sent his servant...to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' ¹⁸But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it...' ¹⁹Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them...' ²⁰Another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹...Then the master...being angry, said to his servant... ²³'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"* (Lk. 14:15-24)
- B. This parable was also given during that same meal in the home of that Pharisee (14:1). A man was moved by Jesus' comments on being rewarded in the resurrection (14:7-14); he understood this to find its ultimate fulfillment in the blessing of the messianic banquet (14:15; Rev. 19:7-9).
- ⁹..."Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (Rev. 19:9)*
- C. Jesus responded to his statement by clarifying who would participate in it and describing the excuses that people make, resulting in their not being included. Those giving excuses assumed that these were acceptable reasons to the Master for neglecting to respond to His great supper. The three excuses here are representative of many others. One person recently purchased new property and needed to stay focused on it. Another bought oxen to improve the work production on his farm.
- D. **Angry:** The Lord is angry when His gracious invitation is neglected, especially because it cost Him so much to provide salvation and, thus, the great supper that celebrates it. He was speaking specifically to the Pharisees who had witnessed Jesus' miracles and heard His teachings.
- E. He decided to open the great supper to anyone who would come, not just the people of Israel who had received such great promises and privileges from God (Rom. 9:4-5). The people the host invited corresponds to the self-righteous Jews who saw sinners and Gentiles as disqualified for salvation.
- F. The rejection of the gospel by Israel's leadership would not thwart God's plan. The first were last (13:30); those who exalted themselves humbled (14:11).
- G. **Highways:** The master sent servants out into the countryside to find anyone who would respond. Those who slept near a highway or took refuge against the hedges spoke of the destitute and poor.
- H. Jesus was making it clear that those who would eat bread in the kingdom (14:15) were those who responded to God's invitation of salvation through Jesus—those who refused to make excuses.

VI. THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPONDING WITH A DEEP COMMITMENT (LK. 14:25-35)

- A. Next, Jesus taught a parable about the cost of true discipleship (14:25-35). Here He defined what He meant by responding to the invitation to participate in His kingdom without making excuses. At this point Jesus was on the road heading toward Jerusalem with a great multitude following Him.

²⁵Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ²⁶“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children...yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it... ³³So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” (Lk. 14:25-33)

- B. Jesus taught what responding and believing on Him meant practically. While salvation is free, discipleship is costly, but non-discipleship is even more costly. We respond as disciples with strong commitment to Jesus out of gratitude and affection for His generous love shown to us.
- C. ***If anyone comes to Me:*** Jesus defined what it means to be committed to following Him in three practical ways (14:26-27, 33)—being loyal to Him more than to our family and other relationships (14:26); bearing the cross, which includes dying to desires that are in conflict with His leadership as well as being willing to lose our life (14:27); yielding our possessions to His leadership (14:33).
- D. Being a Christian is not primarily only about accepting forgiveness, although that is essential; it is about embracing a deep relationship with a Bridegroom God who expects our obedience (14:27).
- E. ***Hate his father and mother:*** He meant hate in a *relative* rather than *absolute* sense (14:26). Jesus was not contradicting the fifth commandment—to honor our parents (Ex. 20:12; Lk. 18:20).
- F. ***Bear the cross:*** This includes dying to all desires that are in conflict with His leadership (14:27).
1. Being Jesus’ disciple is a commitment to give our primary allegiance to Jesus. There is no such thing as “cheap grace”—it cost Jesus His life on the cross. He is worthy of our wholehearted love, obedience, and service along with our commitment to give everything to Him, even our lives in martyrdom—bearing our own cross.
 2. This is the place of freedom for our hearts, to gain eternal rewards, and to have a life that God considers great (Mt. 5:19). We must not reduce this part of Jesus’ teaching in our presentation of the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
- G. ***Forsake all:*** He unashamedly called His disciples to relinquish everything to His leadership (14:33).
- H. ***Count the cost:*** Jesus did not call for an impulsive decision to follow Him. He called people to think deeply about what commitment to Him involves. Following Jesus involves being willing to sacrifice anything to complete that project successfully.

VII. THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING GOD'S TENDER HEART OF LOVE (LK. 15:1-32)

- A. Jesus taught three parables—the lost sheep, lost coin, and prodigal son (15:1-32). These parables are essential to understand for anyone seeking to walk out the commitment of discipleship in Luke 14. This chapter gives one of the most significant revelations of God in the Scripture as Jesus revealed the Father here (Lk. 15). The theme is living with the assurance that God enjoys us (Lk. 15).
- B. In these parables, Jesus revealed God's personality and how He pursues us, enjoys us, shows mercy to us, and feels affection for us, His people. He rejoices as He restores His people (15: 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 23, 32). He enjoys relationship with His people even in their weakness. Our greatest emotional need is to have *the assurance that we are enjoyed by God* even in our weakness. A stronghold in many today is related to the fear of rejection and the trauma of shame.
- C. There are three parables in Luke 15 that speak of something being “lost.” The first parable concerns a lost sheep; the second, a lost coin; and the third, a lost son. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Triune God—each have a specific work in restoring all that is lost. The first parable concerns the Jesus the good shepherd restoring a lost sheep. The second is of a woman who lit her lamp to seek for a lost coin. She typifies the work of the Holy Spirit who enlightens us that we might receive Jesus' redemption. The third is about the Father who rejoices in the return of His lost children.
- D. The parable of the lost sheep (15:3-7; cf. Mt. 18:12-14): We see Jesus taking initiative and having great joy in rescuing His lost sheep.

⁴What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing... ⁷...there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. (Lk. 15:4-7)

- E. The parable of the lost coin (15:8-10): A woman typifying the work of the enlightening work of the Spirit shines light on our heart and path so we can see. The homes of most people normally had no windows, so she needed to get a lamp to help her see clearly to recover what was lost. This parable also emphasizes the joy that God feels when one person repents and returns to Him.

⁸Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp...and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹...saying, “Rejoice...I have found the piece which I lost!” (Lk. 15:8-9)

- F. In the third parable, Jesus described how His Father responds when His people repent. This parable is not primarily about a son who lost his inheritance, but about a father who lost his son. It is also about how he responds to his son to restore him. The father had tender feelings, not anger, towards his prodigal son. The father embraced him instead of being disgusted and angry. That he ran to his son and kissed him signified the restoration of favor to the son who returned home.

¹⁷When he came to himself [repentance], he said, “...¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned’...²⁰He arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father...had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. (Lk. 15:17-20)

VIII. THE IMPORTANCE OF USING OUR MONEY TO GAIN ETERNAL RICHES (LK. 16:1-13)

- A. Jesus taught the parable of the shrewd steward (16:1-8). This steward or manager took advantage of his temporary status to enrich his future. The master did not commend him for his dishonesty, but for being “shrewd” in preparing for his future after he was fired.

¹...There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods ...²“Give an account of your stewardship...”³The steward said..., “What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me...”⁵So he called...his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, “How much do you owe my master?”⁶And he said, “A hundred measures of oil.” So he said to him, “Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.”⁷Then he said to another, “And how much do you owe?” So he said, “A hundred measures of wheat.” And he said to him, “Take your bill, and write eighty.”⁸So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.⁹...Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. (Lk. 16:1-9)

- B. Everyone must give an account to Jesus for our lives and how we spent our time and money (2 Cor. 5:10). We should make decisions that benefit our future in the kingdom of God. This parable is spoken to believers (16:1), calling them to make choices that impact their life in the age to come. The day of our dismissal from our stewardship in this life is sure to come. This parable is a solemn promise, with a warning to use our money now to enhance relationships in the age to come.

- C. The shrewdness was in using his money and position to enhance his future. The sons of this age are unbelievers who live for this life and invest only with this life in view. The sons of light believe in the age to come and thus should live with it in view. Jesus’ point was that unbelievers are more shrewd or wise in preparing for the world that they believe in. The saints believe in the age to come, but many of them do not make decisions now that enhance the future they claim to believe in.

- D. The implications of using our money right in this age (16:10-12): Faithfulness in the use of money does not depend on the amount of money. If disciples squander the money God entrusts to them now, who will give them resources to manage in the age to come?

¹¹Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own? (Lk. 16:11-12)

- E. **True riches and what is our own:** This refers to heavenly treasure and reward (12:21, 33; 18:22). All our riches in this age are on loan from God— a temporary stewardship that ends at our death. On earth a person cannot really possess anything of “what is their own” because they will lose it when they die. But those who are faithful in this age receive true riches which are theirs forever. In this sense, it is “their own”— because it will never be taken away (Lk. 12:33).

²¹So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God...³³Give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail... (Lk. 12:21, 33)