

Week Beginning: 24th March 2019

Worship Series: #4 in series



lifegroups
live life abundantly

living sharing growing

Theme Verse

For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Luke 14:11

Remember This Week

God loves you just because. Until you live knowing that you are simply loved by God and you don't have to give to him to get something back, you will always be a Pharisee. Jesus invites you not only to engage with him but participate with him at the table, for it's there that his gracious presence will totally transform you.



The Lord guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

Psalm 25:9



A place of
HUMILITY



Hospitable God, you invite us to a banquet where the last may be first, and the humble and the mighty trade places. Help us to respond to your gracious invitation and feast at your table of abundance where your love and grace never end. Make us humble and ready to put the needs of others before our own that we may set many tables where all people may come and find a grace-filled sanctuary and gracious welcome in your name. Amen.

1. *Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.*
2. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *What the best /most frequent excuse you have heard for someone not doing something and what is the worst excuse you have ever given to turn down an invitation?*
4. *What were the power games played in the school yard/bus when you were a child?*
5. *What kind of social interactions make you tense and how do you normally respond?*

Food has often been used as means of persuasion, coercion or behaviour control. We see it in families - a mother trying to coax her child into believing that if they eat their 'vegies' they will grow up big and strong and smart. Or the 'carrot-and-stick' approach that if they don't eat their vegetables, they will miss out on dessert. We see it in the school yard where only the 'populars' are allowed to sit in a certain place and anyone who dares to defy that unwritten rule is dealt with quickly. As for politics and the workplace, food has been a staple when it comes to doing business for centuries. Meals are often a place where power is exercised and games are played. Jesus is confronted by these power games at a meal today. Yet he refuses to play by the established rules, breaking the power games with love and expanding the table to all who are willing to sit down at a place of humility.

Read Luke 14:1-14



6. *What were your first thoughts/observations/questions when hearing this passage?*
7. *Why do you think Jesus chose to heal the man with dropsy on the Sabbath?*
8. *What does Jesus mean by "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"? What is Jesus exposing about the Pharisees' (and our) natural approach to life?*
9. *What do we learn about the character/heart of God in this passage?*

In this passage, Jesus is having a meal with some religious leaders at the home of one of the leading Pharisees on the Sabbath because He was invited. His ministry had been picking up steam, and so the Pharisees had been **watching** Him closely. The man with dropsy could



just be another opportunity for Jesus to heal, which he does, and the man disappears. Or he could be a plant by the Pharisees to see what Jesus would do...will he play our game and be part of our group or will he show that he's not one of us? Willi Braun in a book called: Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14 has found texts where dropsy/edema was used as an image of insatiable desire, inspired by the ancient observation that dropsy sufferers craved water although their bodies retained water. He also highlights that Greco-Roman philosophers used dropsy as a metaphor for extreme greed. So the healing of the man with dropsy sets the scene for Jesus identifying the insatiable desires of those who come to the meal, those who are jostling for the places of honour, to show how these desires can hinder and even distract people from full participation in the feast of God.

10. *Does this insight change/help/confuse your understanding of this text? Discuss.*
11. *How important is it to you that people treat you with proper respect and honour?*
12. *How does an insatiable desire for more, whether it is wealth, power, status, security, honour or something else stop us from fully engaging with Jesus and participating in the life he desires to give us?*

In this week's sermon, it was mentioned that there are four power games that were played at the table from ancient times, down to today; games which Jesus refused to play.

Power game #1 Like eats with like. (Are you allowed to sit/converse with the cool people, the 'populars' or do you go unnoticed, are you seen as insignificant, not worthy of time?)

Power game #2 Where you sit shows where you fit (Are you seen as a person of influence, do you have the ear of the host? Think of where we sit children at meals, or who we place where at wedding receptions)

Power game #3 Inviting those who can give something back. (Are you someone I invite so I can ask for a return favour. My relationship with you is transactional. I put you into my debt, so you owe me - quid pro quo.)

Power game #4 What I serve shows what I think of you. (how much effort do I put in to making people invited feel special, honoured?)

13. *How does Jesus break these power games in this passage and what can we learn from that in our own lives?*

Read Luke 14:15-24

14. *What kind of excuses do people give today when it comes to trusting in and following Jesus?*

Salvation is a free gift from Jesus that he invites us to receive. But it is so easy for people to put themselves and their desires ahead of his invitation and so keep Jesus at a arms distance rather than engaging with him and letting his life transform ours by his presence with us. The point that Jesus makes here is that people who have received the invitation can sometimes fail to prepare for the banquet. They knew this day was coming, and so they should have been ready for it, but when the day came they put it off.

15. *How are you preparing for the 'great banquet' in your living at the present time? Or what excuses are you offering up?*
16. *How often have you invited someone to the banquet? Why are we sometimes hesitant to do this?*
17. *What is the one thing ythat as a result of this study that you will do/change/begin in the week ahead? Share with group.*

- * Praise God for inviting us to his banquet. Thank Jesus for showing us what living and serving from a place of humility looks like. Ask the Holy Spirit to help our church be a people who willingly humble themselves, show hospitality to all people, and invite all people to enter the kingdom.
- * Pray for 'The Gathering' service that begins on April 28th that it may be a place where all in the community may come and find a place where they are loved, accepted and invted to the feast
- * Pray for each other that your lives may be a living invitation to others and that you may be prepared to enter the banquet when God calls you to come.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

Name, Jesus loves you...just because. Amen.

