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Luke 13:18 - 14:35



Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In this teaching by Steve Gregg, he dives into the parables and teachings of Jesus in Luke 13:18-14:35. Gregg explores the context and meaning behind each parable, emphasizing the importance of humility and recognizing one's place in the kingdom of God. He also touches on the impending judgment that Jesus is warning his listeners about and the need to count the cost of following Christ. Throughout the teaching, Gregg provides insights and explanations that help shed light on some of the more challenging passages in this section of scripture.

Transcript

We left off in the midst of Luke chapter 13. In fact, in the exact middle of the chapter. We got through 17 of the 35 verses and we pick it up then at verse 18.

Then Jesus said, Matthew 13 has a collection of parables. Matthew 13 is a parables discourse. It has about 8 different parables in it, including these two.

It also includes the parable of the sower, which Luke includes in Luke chapter 8. This is one of the things that gives people the impression, I think probably rightly so, that Matthew has collected material topically. There's these different parables of the kingdom of God that Jesus told on these different occasions. Luke has them on different occasions, different settings.

Matthew has gathered them into a single discourse in Matthew chapter 13. Of course, it's always possible Jesus did give the same parables on different occasions. But the evidence appears to be that Matthew, in all of the discourses of Jesus, has gathered things topically.

This seems to be an instance of that. These two parables are found in that collection of Matthew 13. They also illustrate that when Jesus used the term kingdom of heaven, he also meant the same thing as kingdom of God.

Because in the parables in Matthew 13, he says the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed and the kingdom of heaven is like leaven. But here it's the kingdom of God. This we

see to be consistent throughout the comparison of the Synoptic Gospels.

Matthew, when he uses the term kingdom of heaven, is paralleled in other Gospels as saying kingdom of God. So the kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are interchangeable terms. Now, this is not talking about heaven, obviously.

I'm not sure anyone could read a parable like this and think that the kingdom of heaven refers to heaven. Because how is heaven like a mustard seed that starts out small and grows big? Or how is heaven like leaven in a lump of dough? Obviously, the kingdom of God is Christ's movement, Christ's messianic campaign. Where he as the king, the Messiah, has landed in hostile territory and is building a loyal following who are his kingdom.

And so those who are following Christ are his kingdom and collectively are seen as the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus' disciples, for example, had already joined and more would join as the kingdom would expand. When a person becomes part of the kingdom of God, that means they change their loyalties from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God.

They were formerly under another king. In another place, Jesus talked about how if Satan casts out Satan, his kingdom cannot stand. But if I cast out demons by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

That's in Matthew 12. And we see that, and also Luke had a parallel to it earlier, but he says there's a kingdom of Satan which cannot stand if it opposes itself. And there's a kingdom of God which has been advanced by Christ.

And this kingdom's advance is likened to the growth of a seed or the spreading of leaven in a lump of dough. Now, this particular couple of parables has popularly been interpreted in just the opposite manner than they should be. There's a very intuitive way to understand it, and there's a very counterintuitive way to understand these parables.

And the counterintuitive way has dominated evangelical exegesis from the dispensational point of view, which is what you hear most often. Now, the dispensational view is that the church is ultimately going to be corrupted and fail. That Jesus is going to accomplish his work through Israel.

The church has been sort of something that God's been using while Israel's been being bad. While Israel's been apostate, God has gone out and drawn in Gentiles and created a church, and he's been doing some work through the church until Israel turns around and repents, and then he'll do all his big works through Israel. But the church has done some good works, but they think it's going to end up corrupted.

And they believe these parables are parables that predict the utter corruption of the church. Because the tree, once it is grown, once the mustard seed is grown, it is infested

with birds. Now, according to the dispensational way of interpreting things, the birds represent evil.

Now, why would birds represent evil? Well, they say in Matthew 13, where these parables appear, the parable of the sower also has birds in it. Some seed falls on the wayside, and birds eat it. And when Jesus interpreted that parable, he said, these are those who, when they hear the word of the kingdom, they don't understand it, and the devil comes and takes it away from them.

So the birds snatching the seed in the parable of the sower represents Satan snatching the word away from the mind and the heart of somebody who doesn't understand it. So the birds in that parable are evil, they're Satan, or the work of Satan. Now, the pastor I was raised under, in the early part of my ministry, taught that there is a law of biblical interpretation called the law of exegetical constancy.

Now, I don't think there is such a law, and I'm not sure where he heard about it, but it certainly shouldn't be considered to be factual. He said that the law of exegetical constancy is that if a symbol is used one way in one place, it must always be interpreted the same way in every other place. Now, that being so, since you can find a place where birds are bad, then the birds must be bad all the time.

However, Jesus talked about birds lots of times, and most of the time he didn't say anything bad about them. He said, consider the birds of the air, how they don't plant crops, and they don't harvest, but your father feeds them, and not one of them is forgotten by God. He's not indicating that birds are bad things.

Now, in one parable, they're seen as bad because they're a problem to a farmer. He throws seed, and he wants the seed to grow, but birds eat the seeds, and therefore they're the enemy of the crop. To a farmer, the birds can be a pest, but only in the context of seeds and birds, not in the context of birds making nests in trees.

Trees are made for birds to live in. God intends for birds to live in trees. It's not a corruption of the tree or a destruction of the tree in any way when a bird builds a nest in it.

This is not a negative thing. If we were comparing birds with worms, and the worms were the good guys, we'd say the birds were the bad guys. But in this case, we're not dealing with birds as bad guys.

They may be the bad guys with reference to eating the seeds the farmer wants to see grow, and in that context, we can say they're bad. In the context of a tree growing and birds nesting in its branches, there's nothing bad, there's nothing sinister or ominous about that. In fact, the language is taken directly from three different passages in the Old Testament, all of which are innocent enough.

In Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar is seen in a dream as a tree that has birds nesting in its branches. That's good. He's cut down eventually because of his pride, and then he regrows afterwards, but when the birds are nesting in his branches, that's when he's doing what ought to be done.

That's before he gets proud and gets cut down. Likewise, in Ezekiel 31, the Assyrian is seen as a great tree with birds nesting in its branches. In Ezekiel chapter 17, the kingdom of God itself, in the final verse of Ezekiel 17, is seen as a tree with birds nesting in its branches.

In none of these passages does the kingdom that is seen as a tree with birds in its branches, is it ever suggested these birds are something bad. A good tree is going to provide a good shelter for birds, and that's what it's for, among other things. In one of the passages, I think it's the one about the Assyrian, in Ezekiel 31 it talks about how not only the birds nest in its branches, but the woodland creatures bring forth their young under its shade.

Is this like a sinister looking image? You've got a tree and there's birds with their nests and their babies in the branches, and you've got the deer having their fawns in the shade of the tree. Boy, does that look scary. Boy, is that a sinister image, right? No, it's not a sinister image.

It's a pleasant image. It's basically saying the tree grows and does what trees are supposed to do. It provides food and shelter for living creatures.

And the kingdom of God is like that. It starts out small, like a mustard seed. The movement Jesus started started with just him, and then his few disciples, and then 3,000 on the day of Pentecost, and then more and more and more until it spreads out its branches to the whole world, and it has taken in helpless creatures.

It has taken in and provided shelter for people. It's become a refuge for people all over the world, even though it started out so small. What Jesus is saying is his movement is small, but it's going to grow big.

Just like the trees that had birds in their branches in the Old Testament that are described in those passages I mentioned. Now, likewise with the leaven. It is said by the law of exegetical constancy that leaven must be a bad thing because Jesus says beware of the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees.

It's bad. And Paul said, a little leaven leavens a whole lump in 1 Corinthians 5 where he's talking about sin as leaven. And so, since you have leaven used to represent something bad in a few places, it must be bad in all places.

Well, that doesn't make any more sense than the other suggestion that birds are always bad in stories. No, they're not. And leaven isn't always bad either.

Now, Jesus clearly is not saying that leaven is bad because he said, what is the kingdom of God like? It is like leaven. Now, what does a dispensationalist do with that? Well, they say, well, this is talking about the kingdom of God is a lump of dough and somebody puts leaven in it and it gets corrupted in the final days. In the last days, the church will be corrupted by the insertion of evil which will permeate it and its final state will be thoroughly leavened with evil.

Well, that makes a nice narrative, but it doesn't have anything to do with this parable. This parable doesn't talk about the kingdom of God as a lump of dough and someone putting leaven in it. It says the opposite.

It says the kingdom of God is like leaven and it gets put into a lump of dough. So, it's obvious that somebody is taking a very counterintuitive approach to these parables apparently because they have a doctrine they want to support in spite of the fact that the parables teach you the exact opposite. These parables are not teaching about the failure and the corruption of the church, of the kingdom.

These are talking about the ultimate advance and spread and influence of the kingdom for good. The kingdom of God has been inserted into the world like leaven into a lump of dough and it has spread just like the mustard seed spreading its branches to fill the whole earth. So, it has leavened the whole of human society and it improves it, by the way.

It raises it like leaven raises a lump. So, Jesus is talking about a positive thing about his kingdom and its destiny is to become much more influential, much larger than it was at the time that he was standing there talking about it. Verse 22, And he went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.

Then one said to him, Lord, are there few who are saved? And he said to them, Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able, when once the master of the house has risen up and shut the door. And you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open for us. And he will answer and say to you, I do not know you, where are you from? Then you will begin to say, We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.

But he will say, I tell you, I do not know you, where you are from. Now depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. And there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

And they will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last. On that very day, some Pharisees came saying to him, Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill you.

And he said to them, Go tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected, or finished, completed. Nevertheless, I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. I personally believe that in this section, Jesus is still focused on the judgment that's coming on Jerusalem and on his listeners.

It says he was going through cities and villages, journeying toward Jerusalem. His focus was on Jerusalem, and the villages were in route to Jerusalem. And I believe that he has something to say about what's coming upon Jerusalem.

And it is destruction. Now when he says, someone asked him, Are there few saved? This is another time when someone asks a question, his answer doesn't seem obviously to be a direct answer to it. Like when Peter said, Did you say that just for us or for all people? And his answer is kind of, it does answer it, but it's kind of not a direct answer.

You kind of have to read his answer in between, in the lines. So here also, the man says, Are few saved? And instead of saying, Yes, few are saved, he says, There will be many who are not saved. There will be many who will try to get in and will not be able to get in.

But there will be many from the east and the west, that is the Gentiles who will come in. So when he is asked, Are there many or few that are going to be saved? He says, Well, you just make sure you strive to enter in. Don't worry about what the total number will be.

You better make sure you're among them. You strive to enter into the narrow gate, because if you don't, you'll be one of the many who are outside. But he says, Many will come eventually from all other places, from the east and the west.

Now, here he says in verse 29, They will come from the east and the west. But in the parallel to this statement in Matthew 8, he says, Many will come from the east and the west, meaning Gentiles, and they'll sit down in the kingdom of God. That is, they'll be part of this movement.

They'll be saved. But those who are the children of the kingdom will be cast out. He says, You'll be, in verse 28, he says, You yourselves will be thrust out.

The point he's making here is this. You Jews are under obligation to respond, and you're not responding. And therefore, you're going to be thrust out.

There will be Gentiles who will respond, where you did not. And that will mean that they will be included, you will not. If you want to ask me, Are many saved or not? Well, ultimately, many will be saved, mostly of the Gentiles.

But you can be saved too. There will be many who are not, many of your number who will not be, but you can strive to enter in and be saved. We know there will be many saved, of the Gentiles and Jews, but mostly of the Gentiles, the Bible says, because in Revelation 7, verse 9, John said, After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, primarily then not Jews, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

These are clearly saved people, and it's a great multitude, which no one can number, from every nation and tribe and people and tongue. So, yes, there will be many saved, but most of them Gentiles. The Jewish people thought the Messiah was coming primarily to save the Jews, and he's saying, well, some of you are not going to be saved.

In fact, some of you are going to want to be saved, it'll be a little late. Now, is he talking about saved in the sense of going to heaven after the Judgment Day? Possibly. When there's a similar statement made at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7, there's even mention about the narrow road, or the narrow gate and the hard road, and things like that, similar languages used by Jesus.

It seems to me that there, he is talking about the ultimate Day of Judgment. That's when he says, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons in your name, we did mighty works in your name, else I never knew you. Now, those people are people who were apparently within the ranks of Christianity.

Those are people who were seeing themselves as Christians, doing things in Jesus' name, but on the Day of Judgment, it'll become clear they weren't. Now, this is different, although some of the same imagery is used, I think he has a different judgment in mind, because he says, in verse 25, they will, verse 26 says, then you will begin to say, we ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets. These are the people that Jesus taught in their villages, in their streets, and they came to the feast where he was eating.

These are his contemporaries. These are not people saying, we cast out demons in your name, and did mighty works in your name, which would be people who thought themselves Christians. These are just Jewish people who say, hey, we remember when you came to our town.

You were teaching in our streets. We went to one of the feasts you were at with the tax collectors and sinners, or maybe even the house of the Pharisee. You were among us.

How come you don't know us? Well, obviously, it's because they didn't become his disciples, and it does seem like it's a different situation than that which Matthew talks about, though there's, in both cases, emphasis on the need to take the less traveled

route, the harder path that leads to the narrow gate, rather than this simple or easy path, which is broad and leads to a broad gate of destruction. Destruction, ultimately, is threatened to all people on the Judgment Day, and I personally think that Matthew 7 is talking about that when it uses this language. This case, seemingly on a different occasion, Jesus is talking to Jews near Jerusalem in villages as he approaches Jerusalem, saying, you're going to have your time, but you're going to wish you responded to me.

It's going to be ugly. And you're going to say, hey, save us. We were yours.

We were your countrymen. We were your neighbors. You were in our streets.

And he's going to say, I'm going to say, I don't know you, where you're from. Depart from me, all you who work iniquity. And there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, he says.

Because you're going to see, ultimately, Gentiles coming into the position you were in. You are the physical offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore you'd expect to be at their family table, at the kingdom with them, at the feast. But he says, you're not going to be there.

You're going to be thrust out, and you'll see these Gentiles from the east and the west and the north and the south, all the lands outside of Israel, coming in large numbers into the kingdom. And they'll be sharing table fellowship with your ancestors, and you won't. That's what he's saying.

And of course, this is primarily a prediction that there'll be more Gentiles saved in the church, in the kingdom of God, than there will be Jews. Now, the Pharisees came to him, in verse 31, and said, you need to get away from here, because Herod wants to kill you. Apparently, he had stepped into Galilee at some point here, although a lot of these activities were not in Galilee.

But apparently, he was in Galilee, which was Herod's jurisdiction. And the Pharisees, who have more power in Judea, want him to go there and leave Galilee. Now, was Herod trying to kill Jesus? We have no idea.

This could have been a lie, or it could have been true. It could have been a lie, because we know a time came when Jesus did stand before Herod after this, and Herod was delighted to see him, and just wanted to see a miracle. And he didn't condemn Jesus to die.

He just sent him back to Pilate. We don't have any evidence, except for the report of the Pharisees, that Herod really wanted to kill Jesus. I have a feeling he was pestered in his conscience about having killed John the Baptist, and might have been loath to add any more of those kinds of crimes to his conscience.

So, whether Herod was really trying to kill Jesus or not, we don't know. But what motive

did the Pharisees have for saying this, whether it's true or false? Jesus was not in their territory. Now, they found him pestilent, so you'd think they wouldn't want him in their territory.

They'd want him to stay in Galilee instead of Jerusalem. But in Jerusalem, they could get their claws into him. They could arrest him.

They had more control down in Judea, outside of Herod's territory. And that's what Jesus understands them to be motivated by. And he says, go tell that fox, meaning Herod.

In the Greek, this is the feminine word for fox, vixen, a female fox. And it is speculated that the reason he called Herod a female fox is because he was a henpecked husband. He was not manly.

He killed John the Baptist at his wife's insistence. And he was a lot like Ahab, who persecuted Elijah because of Jezebel. And Herod was more evil than he otherwise would have been because of his wife and being more or less controlled by her.

So that might be why Jesus referred to him in a feminine form. He says, tell him, behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Now, this statement, the third day I shall be perfected, has tempted many readers who aren't looking at the context to say Jesus must be talking about the resurrection on the third day.

When he rose up from the third day from the grave, he was perfected. But the word perfected, of course, I think we know in the Greek means completed. Now, it's funny, the New King James actually puts a marginal reference that says resurrected.

But that's not what the word means. That's the editor's interpretation. They want you to think that Jesus is talking about his resurrection because that's what they think.

But that doesn't make an awful lot of sense. I'm going to perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day, which is apparently the day after tomorrow, I'm going to be resurrected? I mean, Jesus wasn't performing cures and casting out demons the three days before he rose from the dead. He was dead.

So, I mean, this is not a reference to his resurrection. He's talking about the completion of his work in that region. He is in Herod's jurisdiction, but not for much longer.

If Herod's after me, just tell him I won't be here for long. I've got a couple more days of work and I'll be done here. I'll be completed.

My work will be done here, and I will go down to Judea because I have to die. He says I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following. Apparently, that's how long it would take him traveling to get out of Herod's jurisdiction into Jewish jurisdiction.

He says, because it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem. This is sarcastic, of course. There have been prophets who perished elsewhere.

Lots of prophets died in Galilee in the Old Testament. Elisha did, and so did that Judean prophet who was killed by a lion. And so, no doubt, were many others.

In fact, Jezebel killed lots of prophets, and she was not in Jerusalem. She was up in Samaria. So, Jesus is not being literal.

He's not saying it can't be that a prophet would perish outside Jerusalem. He's being sarcastic. Like, don't worry.

I'm going to die, so I have to come to Jerusalem because they kill all their prophets. You'd hardly expect a prophet to be able to die anywhere else. Those Jews are so vehement about killing all their prophets.

It's ironic because Jerusalem is the city that's supposed to be the city of peace. It's supposed to be the holy city. It's supposed to be the city that's responsive to prophets, that listens to their prophets.

I mean, it's supposed to. That's what their status was, to be God's holy city. They should be listening to the prophets.

Instead, they kill prophets so consistently that one could argue you'd hardly expect a prophet to die anywhere else. Jerusalem almost has the monopoly on killing the prophets. And Jesus had already said that in Luke 11 earlier.

The same thing said a different way. He said in Luke 11, verse 50, that the blood of all the prophets, which were shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the temple, yes, I say it should be required of this generation.

I guess in this place he didn't mention Jerusalem, but when he said the same words as these in Matthew 23, he did mention Jerusalem as the place it would be. Because he said, Matthew 23, 37, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

See, your house is left to you desolate. So he speaks of Jerusalem as the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. He's speaking of Jerusalem that way too.

It has a reputation of killing all the good guys and tolerating all the bad guys. And so Jesus says, if Herod wants me dead, he can just wait a few days. I'm going down to Jerusalem.

And of course, that's where prophets always get killed. So he won't have to kill me. Verse 34, Luke 13, 34.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets. Oh, he does say it here. I should have looked ahead, shouldn't I? Instead of having to go over to Matthew to find these words.

And stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing. See, your house is left to you desolate.

And assuredly I say to you, you should not see me until the time comes when you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Now this last statement, you will not see me until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Some have understood this to be a prediction that Israel or Jerusalem will someday acknowledge Jesus as their Lord.

And they're just predicting that time. You're not going to see me anymore for a while until the time comes when you guys all acknowledge me. And the dispensational view is that in the end times, Israel will.

Actually, it's not really clear what they believe. And in many cases, they don't all speak consistently because most dispensationalists will argue that not all Jews will come to Christ. They recognize that two thirds of the inhabitants of Israel will be wiped out by the Antichrist in their theology.

And those Jews may or may not ever come to Christ. Even when Jesus returns, most dispensationalists who believe in the restoration of Israel in the end times would say that only really, not all, not every last Jew is going to be saved. But the mass majority of Jews will acknowledge Jesus in the tribulation time.

So some of them say. But when they want it, but. But they take a passage like this, as if it means the whole of Jerusalem is going to acknowledge Jesus.

You see, if you don't have Jesus here predicting that the whole of Jerusalem is going to acknowledge Jesus, then there's no reason to put this off till some future time, because some in Jerusalem have acknowledged Jesus right from the very beginning. If you're going to settle for some Jews in Jerusalem are going to say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord and be saved. Then that happened at Pentecost.

And for years following Pentecost, when the apostles were evangelizing in Jerusalem, many thousands came to Christ in Jerusalem and fulfilled this prophecy. But dispensationalists say, no, there's a time coming when all of Jerusalem will. But when you really press them on it, they never will say every last Jew.

Just the faithful remnant will. Well, isn't that what was happening in the early chapters of the book of Acts? Weren't the faithful remnant of Israel coming to Christ? There's, to my mind, there's no real strong arguments for the dispensational view. And when pressed, it seems like they say mutually contradictory things.

They would say, well, the time in the New Testament when many Jews came to Christ, that can't be it because there's got to be a more general turning to Christ. But then they, and they use something like this. The day will come when Jerusalem will say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, as if Jesus is making that prediction about the city.

But there were Jews who said, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even at this time, frankly. In fact, this statement that Jesus makes is found in Matthew 23 after, several days after the triumphal entry. And what did the people say in the triumphal entry? They said, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Didn't they? And so Matthew actually has Jesus making this statement after the triumphal entry. And many of them already had said that. And he's just saying to the rest of them, unless you do this too, you're not going to see me anymore.

The only way I'm going to reveal myself to you beyond this point is if you become my followers, I think he's saying. Until you, as any number of individuals will acknowledge me, you won't be seeing me anymore. He's not predicting that the whole city, that every Jew in the future is going to say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Although that's the dispensational vision of the future. It really doesn't make sense to interpret his words that way. In chapter 14, it says, now it happened as he went into the house of one of the rulers, the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched him closely.

And behold, there was a certain man before him who had dropsy. I have to say, I'm not very familiar with this disease. So I'm not sure what the symptoms are or whatever.

Maybe someone else here knows more about it, but it was obviously a sickness that had visible symptoms that were recognizable just by people looking. And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and the Pharisees saying, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? But they kept silent and he took him and healed him and let him go. Then he answered them saying, which of you having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day? And they could not answer him regarding these things.

Now, this is almost like a duplicate of an earlier miracle Jesus had done in a synagogue, which is healing the man with the withered hand. And we've encountered that previously in the Gospels. And it was the same story, really.

I mean, but different sickness, different occasion. Jesus went into the synagogue and there was a man with a withered hand in the other case. And the Pharisees were watching him to see if he'd heal.

Here also they were probably watching to see if he'd heal this man of dropsy. It was a commonplace for them to be watching Jesus to try to find fault and usually wanting to see him do something on the Sabbath that they could accuse him of. And Jesus gave the same comments that he has here on that other occasion.

And that's not too surprising. So it's a parallel situation, probably a different group of people in a different synagogue. And he makes the same observations.

You guys, when a lamb falls into the ditch, you don't just leave it there to die because it's the Sabbath day. You lift it out. And so here's a man more valuable than a lamb and his condition requires healing.

So I'm going to do for him on the Sabbath what you would do for an animal. Same kind of point he's made before that they put their animals and livestock ahead of other people. Why? Because your livestock is your money, is your property.

It's a selfish thing. You don't lift a lamb out of the ditch because you, you know, are an animal rights advocate. You lift the lamb out of the ditch because that's your money.

That's your property. You're going to be poorer if that lamb dies. You rescue it for yourself.

You'll do things for yourself on the Sabbath that you object to things being done for other people who have greater needs than that on the Sabbath. And Jesus is continually pointing out this inconsistency. So he told a parable to those who were invited when he noted how they chose the best places, saying to them, When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him.

And he who invited you and him come and say to you, Give place to this man. Then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place so that when he who invited you comes, 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. For whoever exalts himself will be abased and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Then he also said to him who invited him, When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends or your brothers, your relatives or your rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will

be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you shall be repaid in the resurrection of the just. Now, Jesus is, of course, doing this on an occasion where he's at a feast and he uses the occasion to basically teach some lessons, parables regarding behavior with reference to feasts. If you're a host, you have certain guests of honor that you've invited and other people are just your friends.

Now, certain seats at the table were honorable seats, probably seats near the head of the table, just like in some situations where there's a gathering they put notable people up on the platform. Even if they're not going to say anything or do anything, they just have seats of honor. Even Billy Graham crusades have done this.

They put the local pastors of the area on the platform with Billy Graham just to sit there. They're not going to do anything, but it's to give some kind of respect to them, some acknowledgment. Billy has come into their turf and he's not trying to eclipse them.

He's trying to serve them, so he brings them up to show that he's honoring them, not just going behind their backs and coming into their territory and working their field. To give people seats of honor has been done in many societies in many kinds of situations and feasts were that way. They did have special seats for the more honorable citizens.

You want to honor someone by putting them in certain seats that they'd be recognized by others as being of higher rank than those in the other seats. Now, Jesus said, when you go to a feast, don't take the seat of honor. It's so hard to imagine people being that gauche as to walk into a feast and assign himself to one of the seats of honor.

And Jesus said, if that happens, what if someone more honorable than you comes and you have to be bumped? And the host says, sorry, someone more honorable than you is here. We're going to have to move you down to one of these lesser seats. He says, and with shame, you have to move down.

It's like in front of everybody, you've exalted yourself and now you're getting publicly humbled. He said, no, you take the lowest seats, a seat lower than what you deserve. And then you'll have respect shown to you.

You'll be honored. People get to watch you be promoted to a better seat. And Jesus, of course, is the greatest example of that very thing, because though he existed in the form of God, he emptied himself and took on himself the form of a servant.

And it says in Philippians 2, because he did that, God has highly exalted him and given him a name above every name. So one humbles themselves, then they will be honored later on. Actually, if you humble yourself and put yourself in the lowest place, it's almost impossible that you won't be respected later on, because there's very few people who really deserve the very lowest place.

And someone will recognize you're not taking all the privileges that you deserve. But the

point here is not to get yourself exalted in the eyes of men. It's more of a parable too, because the way you behave at feasts and the way that you're treated at feasts by the host has some reflection on the way that God's going to treat you.

If you humble yourself, he'll raise you up. And that's what it says in verse 11. Whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

This is something that Jesus is saying will happen at the feast, because the host of the feast will exalt you. But of course, it's, in a sense, a parable too, because we're told twice in Scripture that God will exalt the humble. In 1 Peter 5, verses 5 and 6, Peter said, Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders.

Yes, all of you be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time. Now, this same instruction, of course, is given in James.

And it's in chapter 4, verse 6. It says, But he gives more grace. Therefore, he says, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. He says, Therefore, submit to God.

Resist the devil, he'll flee from you. Draw near to God, he'll draw near to you. And then down in verse 10, he says, Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Jesus always teaches, and the apostles after him teach, that the way to be honored by God or by man is to put yourself at the lowest place. Then men will recognize that you're not getting the honor you deserve. And if they don't notice it, God will.

And God will exalt you if you humble yourself. But if you're proud and exalt yourself, God humbles them. God puts the proud down.

He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Now, this other short teaching is given at the feast also. He turns to the host of the feast, he says, Listen, when you give a supper, look who you've invited.

You've invited all your friends and family and so forth, and now they're going to be obligated. They'll invite you back. You can count on it.

You have done a kind, hospitable act to people who can reciprocate, and no doubt you've done it partly because they can and will reciprocate. And you're going to be repaid for your generosity. This is costing you something to throw a feast, but they'll throw a feast for you eventually, and it'll all even out.

You might even come out ahead. You might have all these people invite you over. You might get a lot of feasts out of this deal.

You are throwing feasts for people who can repay you, and therefore there's no particular generosity or hospitality in it. He said, when you throw a feast, when you do something generous or kind like this to invite people over, invite people who will not be able to repay you, because then God will count himself indebted to you. It says in Proverbs, He that has mercy on the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord will repay him what he's given.

If you help the poor, they can't repay you, so God will count it his debt to do. And that's what Jesus says. They can't repay you, so you'll be repaid in the resurrection of the just.

Now notice this. Jesus has indicated that you're cheating yourself if you get repaid in this life. If you do kindness to people who will repay you, you're cheating yourself.

You'll just be repaid in this life. But he said, you're better off if you don't get repaid in this life, then God will have something to repay you. And this is the same teaching as laying up treasures in heaven.

You lay up treasures in heaven by giving to the poor. Well, they're not going to give anything back to you. They can't.

So you're laying up treasures in heaven, and you'll be repaid with those treasures when you go there. So this is really a rule of life for Christians to do all we can for people who are poor, even though they can't repay us, or even primarily because they can't repay us, because this is what pleases God and what will put God in his own mind, in our debt. I have never had any problem with the fact that almost everywhere I teach, well, I mean, some places where I teach, they give me an honorarium, but the majority of people I teach, they've never given me a penny.

On the radio, people who get my teachings on the website, or even people who come to my schools, I don't usually get a penny from them. Not one in ten of them ever give me anything. And that's okay, because I'm not looking for that.

I would much rather die and having people indebted to me than me dying and being indebted to someone else. Because if I die and people have received from me, but I've never received anything back from them, God will repay me. That's what Jesus said you should seek for.

And I've always marveled at these people who, when they think the end of the world is coming, because some false prophet has told them a date, and they go run up their credit cards. They want to die or leave in debt. I can't imagine wanting to face God when the last thing I did was cheat a bunch of creditors.

You know? Oh, I'm going to leave you guys holding the bag for my debts. I'm going to borrow money I'm not going to repay. That's a real good way to go out of this world to face God, robbing people.

Never have understood that. Much better to go out of this world with people indebted to you instead. Debts that you've done things for them, they've never repaid you for.

That's desirable, Jesus said. That's what you should aim at. So, you'll be blessed when they can't repay you.

And it says you'll be repaid in the resurrection of the just. That's, of course, treasures that wax not old, a bag that doesn't decay. Treasure in the heavens.

Thieves don't break through and steal and can't corrupt. Verse 15, Now when one of those 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. Now that's what somebody at the table said.

Blessed is he who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then Jesus said to him, A certain man gave a great supper and invited many. So, again, he's now telling another teaching that's based on the setting of this feast.

And he sent servants at supper time to say to those who were invited, Come, for all things are now ready. But 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.

I ask you to have me excused. Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.

Still another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed, and the lame and the blind.

And the servant said, Master, it is done as you have commanded. There is still room. Then his master said to the servant, Go out into the highways and the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say to you, that none of those men who were invited shall taste of my supper. Now this story is very similar to a story Jesus told in Matthew 22. And in that case, the man inviting people to a feast was a king.

In this case, it's just an ordinary man inviting friends to a feast. And it follows on Jesus' statement, Don't invite your friends, but invite the poor. Here's a man who invited his friends, but they didn't come.

So he went out as a second wave of invitations, invited the poor and the maimed and those, the very ones that Jesus said should be invited. And even they didn't fill it up, so he said, Go and get everyone you can, compel them to come in. Now this story has a slightly different, or should I say, lesson, but it's no doubt intended to be mostly the

same lesson as what Jesus told about the king.

The difference is the king was inviting his friends to the wedding of his son. And those who made excuses and didn't come made him angry, as in this case, this man was angry. But the man made angry in the other case, in Matthew 22, was a king.

And you don't say no to your king. You can say no to your friend if he invites you to a feast. You can say, there's some things more important to me than to be with you.

I'd rather be with my oxen. I want to see how these plow. I want to see, you know, I've got these other things I had in mind to do, and frankly, they're more important to me than coming to your feast.

So, I'm not coming. Well, when it's an ordinary man that invites, you have every right to say no. But he still has the right to be angry that you put something else above his request, and therefore he goes out and invites others.

And of course, Jesus' message here is that the people who were first invited to the kingdom of God, the Jews, and the privileged who would have had the first opportunity to respond because they should have known and recognized Jesus, well, they're making excuses. They're not coming, so the lower tiers of humanity, including Gentiles, are coming in. In the case of the feast of the king's wedding, king's son's wedding in Matthew 22, when the king got mad, he sent out his armies and destroyed those men and burned up their city.

This man didn't have the authority to do that, so we don't read of that in this parable, but the king can do that. You insult the king, you can expect reprisals. And in the story Jesus told in Matthew 22, their city got burned up, and this represents, of course, Jerusalem being burned down because of the Jews' rejection of Christ.

And after the burning of the city in Matthew 22, it says he sent his servants out to invite people further away, which would be, of course, the Gentiles. And then the feast was filled with guests, Gentiles primarily. So, same kind of a parable.

Some details are different. The one in Matthew 22 has more detail that would point it very specifically toward the destruction of Jerusalem because of the Jews' rejection of Christ and the inclusion of Gentiles. Here it's not so much a focus on the inclusion of Gentiles as the inclusion of people you would not necessarily invite as the first group, the maimed and the blind and so forth.

But the point here is that God has invited all of Israel to come, and the privileged ones are the ones who are more or less rejecting the invitation. And so the ones who are disenfranchised, the ones who are handicapped, the ones who are poor, they're the ones coming in larger numbers. His feast is largely going to be peopled by those.

But even those in Israel didn't feel the feast, so he sends them out further, out to the highways and so forth, which is out where you go to other countries on the highway and you bring in the Gentiles. So the more or less the poor and the disenfranchised Jews as well as Gentiles will be the ones who come to this feast. And those who had the opportunity but they were too good in their own minds to come to Christ, they won't be tasting a bite of that supper.

Verse 25, And great multitudes went with him, and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, in his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it? Lest, after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish.

Or what king going to make war against another king does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand. Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Now the obvious feature of this pericope is the line repeated three times. He cannot be my disciple. In verse 26, in verse 27, and verse 33, these verses all end with cannot be my disciple.

So Jesus is thinning the ranks. There were many people still probably following in his train, but he wanted to make it very clear that most of them were not qualified to be disciples and those who were would have to be somewhat fully committed. Somewhat, I guess, forsake all that you have, carry a cross, hate your father, mother, wife and children and your own life also.

Now, some of this could be seen as certainly the normal hyperbole. When it talks about hating your family members, certainly Jesus is not saying anyone should really hate anybody. The Bible does not actually authorize us hating anybody at all.

But the Jews often spoke of love and hate as different degrees of favor shown to somebody. That's when God said, Jacob, I have loved, Esau, I have hated. This doesn't mean that God had utter contempt for Esau, but it means that he favored Jacob over Esau.

He chose Jacob and he did not choose Esau to be the one through whom the Abrahamic promises would be fulfilled. And this is not a hatred of Esau, like we might talk about hating somebody. It's rather favoring Esau less than Jacob.

He favored Jacob more, thus he loved Jacob and is said to have hated Esau because that's just the way the Hebrew idiom worked. Now, this case, Jesus talks about hating father, mother, wife, and children. And yet, we find a similar statement in Matthew chapter 10, where in verse 37, Jesus says, He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Obviously, not worthy of me in these three instances is the same as cannot be my disciple in Luke 14.

And there are similar statements. You've got to take up your cross and follow him or you can't be his disciple. You're not worthy of him.

You've got to hate your father, mother, wife, and children or you can't be a disciple. Or, the way it's put here, you can't love father or mother more than me and be worthy of me. The point here is that hating father, mother, wife, and children is really simply meaning you don't place them above Christ.

If Christ calls you to do something, the disapproval of family or friends, no matter how close, or even your own disapproval because you have to hate your own life also. You can't put even yourself above Christ. You have to put him above all if you want to be a disciple.

You can't be a disciple if you don't do that because others will have different opinions about what you need to do. Different opinions than Christ's opinion. You can't serve two masters.

You've got to have one master only. You can't please everybody, but you can please God and that's who you have to please even if it displeases everybody else. And that's what he's saying about hating father, mother, wife, and children.

You don't please them first. You don't put them ahead. You don't favor them above Christ or else you're not going to be able to be a disciple.

Whoever does not bear his cross and come after me, he says, cannot be my disciple. Now, by the way, he said these things to the Jews who were following him. These were followers.

Great multitudes went with him and he turned and said to them these things. They're following him, but they're not disciples or at least they may not be. They have to count the cost.

Am I willing to put Christ above all others? Am I willing to bear a cross? That means basically take on the shame and the contempt of the world in order to be a follower of Christ except the persecution and the trials and so forth that come with following Jesus.

Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to forsake all that you have? And by this, I understand him to mean not so much that you sell and get rid of all that you have, although Jesus does tell some to do that, told the rich young ruler to do that and perhaps some others. But forsaking all that you have, I believe means to disown it for Christ's sake.

Peter is said to have forsaken all that he had. We're told that when Jesus called him from his nest, they forsook all and followed him. And yet on another occasion, when the rich young ruler refused to sell what he had, Peter said, we have forsaken everything.

What shall we have? And Jesus didn't say, you haven't forsaken everything. He accepted, yes, these disciples like Peter were people who had in fact forsaken all. The Bible affirms that they did.

And yet what did they have? They had a house. Peter had a house. Peter had a fishing boat still all through his life with Jesus.

He had a boat. He transported Jesus around in it. He hosted Jesus and the disciples in his house.

He had fishing nets. He had his equipment from his old job. He didn't sell these things.

Maybe eventually he may have, but he hadn't at the point that it says he forsook them. He forsook them in the sense that he turned his back on those things toward Christ. And basically all that he had was now Christ's.

He had a boat, but it was now Jesus's boat. He had a house, but it was now Jesus's house. When you forsake all that you have, it means you forsake everything, including yourself, your ownership of it.

And it now becomes Christ's and you become the steward of what is his. And that's what forsaking apparently means in the case of the disciples and in the case that Jesus is referring to here. If you're not willing to do that, you can't be a disciple.

In the midst of that, he says, it's like building a tower. You don't start building a project unless you know you have enough to finish it because you don't want to start and not be able to afford to finish the project or else it'll just be embarrassing. It'll be a monument standing there, an unfinished building, a monument to your poor planning and poor foresight.

People will mock you for it. So you either don't start at all or you make sure you're going to get the job all the way done. You don't go somewhere in between.

There's not a half commitment thing that's okay here. And same with being a disciple. You don't want to start being a disciple and then when you backslide because you

weren't willing to pay the cost to the end, everyone's going to mock you and say, oh, you started to follow that Jesus guy and look, you're back with us again.

We knew it wasn't real. You bring reproach on Christ and on yourself. He's basically saying, if you're not willing to pay the price that it takes to be a disciple, don't begin because it's worse to begin and stop than otherwise.

And of course, it says that in the book of Hebrews that when a person has fallen away from the faith, their latter state is worse than their first. Peter says that too in 2 Peter 2. It's worse to have started and fallen away because then you bring reproach on Christ as a disciple who is unfaithful and who has backslid. Christ's name is impugned.

If you never become a disciple of Christ, his name is never attached to you in the first place. So your own shame is your own, not his. Now there's also the king who has 10,000 soldiers and he's being approached by a hostile king who has 20,000.

Jesus says, what are you doing in a case like that? You've got the 10,000. The enemy has 20,000. What are you going to do? Well, you decide if you can go out there and fight and win with your 10,000.

It could happen. A person with 10,000 might defeat one with 20,000 if God is on his side. He's going to have to put all his effort into it.

It's going to have to be a fully committed engagement because you've got one guy for every two of your enemy, but it could still come out in your favor. You just have to decide if that's going to be the case. If not, you go out and make conditions of peace with your enemy.

Now when you come to be a disciple, you're entering a war with the enemy, with Satan. He's got more folks than you've got on your side, although God's got more angels on his side and yours than the devil has. Yet in the world, you are outnumbered by those who do not follow Christ.

Do you really want to fight that battle? Do you want to choose that battle? Do you want to become a follower of Christ and be outnumbered two to one or more? And, you know, in order for you to survive, you're going to have to put out every... You're going to have to put out twice the effort your enemy has put out. Are you going to be that committed? If not, might as well surrender to the enemy. Might as well go out and make peace with him.

Say, okay, you can have me. Let the devil take you. You either have to let the devil take you or you've got to fight against his forces and he's got more men than you have, but you could still win.

The question is, are you willing to put out the amount of dedication and effort it takes to

win under those circumstances when you're so much outnumbered? Now, the last two verses here. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its savor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor fit for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Now, in this statement, Jesus doesn't explain what he's talking about. He just talks about salt. He says, salt's good, but if it's not salty, it's not good for anything.

Okay, what does that mean? Well, we have some help because this also comes up in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount where he says, you are the salt of the earth. If the salt loses its saltiness, it's worthless. It'll be trodden underfoot by men.

And he's basically saying, you have a certain quality. You disciples have a certain quality like salt does. Salt has value as long as it has its unique quality of saltiness because it can preserve meat from rotting.

It can flavor food. It can even dress a wound and prevent infection. Salt has some characteristics that make it valuable.

Valuable enough, in fact, that they used to use it for money in some cases. The word salary comes from the word saline, salt. It is said that Roman soldiers sometimes were paid their wages in salt because salt was so valuable.

But salt's not valuable at all if it doesn't have its unique salty character. If it would lose that, it wouldn't be worth anything except to walk on. It wouldn't have that value.

So he says, he doesn't explain it here, but he does in the Sermon on the Mount. You're the salt. I'm talking about you.

You have value to this world. You have, as disciples, a unique character, a unique contribution that you make toward inhibiting the decay of the world and if you have your saltiness, you're of great value. Salt is good.

But if you lose that distinctive character, if you lose that distinctive contribution that you can make to the world, then don't expect the world to appreciate you. They'll just walk all over you. Now, I believe that losing its distinctiveness is something that has characterized the Church in our country in recent times.

And I believe we see the world trampling on the Church. We see treating the Church with disgust and disdain and disrespect because they don't see the Church as making any kind of a valuable contribution to society anymore. Why? Because we've conformed to society too much.

We've compromised too much. We've lost our saltiness. We've lost the distinctive character that the Church is supposed to have.

We're not really bringing about the benefits to society because we're compromised too much with society. The Church has done better in the past and can and has and is currently doing better in some parts of the world. But in our part of the world we see great disdain heaped upon the Church because it professes to have value but it doesn't do anything of value.

Christians just mostly stay in their little cloistered, you know, meetings and sing songs and talk in a way that no one else understands but we're not changing the world much outside. We're not even living very differently than they are. There's nothing distinctive about us.

And when I say us, I don't mean every Christian. Obviously there's exceptions. I hope that we in this room may be exceptions to that.

But the Church as a whole needs to be an exception to that and unfortunately it's not. It has lost its saltiness, its distinctness. Salt, when it's put in a wound, can heal it but it stings.

And we don't like to sting the world because they react violently. We don't like to convict them of their sins. And so we conform to their sins and we compromise and the Church has done that tremendously and because it has, it has lost all respect.

We think that by conforming with the world, we make the world happier with us. The world just disrespects us when we conform because they know we're hypocrites then. They know we're supposed to stand for something different but we don't stand for it.

And therefore they only see us as hypocrites and they disdain us and they tread the Church underfoot. This happened in the French Revolution. This happened in the Bolshevik Revolution.

The Church had become so compromised and evil that the secularists rose up and persecuted the Church, destroyed it in France and in Russia. And we may not be very far from that here, although there are perhaps more uncompromised Christians in this country now than there were in those places at that time. But the Church at large does seem to be compromised and certainly going the direction that will lead to the world trampling us under their feet.

Where instead, Paul said in Romans 16 that we should be trampling the devil under our feet shortly. But that's not the way things are going. We're getting trampled because we are compromised.

And Jesus warned about that. Salt isn't worth anything if it's not salty. It just gets trampled on.

So we close that chapter with those cheery remarks.

