

An Expository Study of Scripture from Bible Truth

**AUTHENTIC
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
VOLUME II—ITS SEVERITY**

**According to Jesus and His
Doctrines of Grace**

© 2006

The Second Volume in a Series on
AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP,
showing its source to be
Jesus and His Doctrines of Grace,
through expository studies of
**A Miracle and Jesus' Parabolic Illustrations and
Discourses on Christian Discipleship**
as avouched by the Gospel writer.

These studies constitute **Three Chapters** that
expound the Severe Character, Severe Calling, &
Severe Christ-demanded Commitment of
AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
found in His Word,

Luke 14:1-35

as Taught by Jesus and detailed by His
Holy Servant, Luke the Physician.

CONDENSED CONTENTS OF VOLUME II

<i>heading</i>	<i>page</i>
CHAPTER 1—AUTHENTIC SEVERE CHARACTER	5
PREFACE	5
The Character of Authentic Disciples—The Text	7
Introduction to Luke’s Rational Methodology	7
THE SEVERE CHARACTER OF MERCY	<i>Luke 14:1-6</i> 11
THE SEVERE CHARACTER OF HUMILITY	<i>Luke 14:7-11</i> 23
THE SEVERE CHARACTER OF GRACE	<i>Luke 14:12-14</i> 37
CHAPTER 2—AUTHENTIC SEVERE CALLING	49
PREFACE	49
The Parable of the Great Supper—The Text	51
The Kingdom: Entered only by an Effectual Call	52
THE JEWS EXTERNALIZED KINGDOM	<i>Luke 14:15</i> 55
A STINGING PARABLE	<i>Luke 14:16a</i> 56
PREPARATION FOR A GIGANTIC FEAST	<i>Luke 14:16</i> 57
WHAT SERVANT?	<i>Luke 14:17</i> 60
REJECTION OF MESSIAH	<i>Luke 14:18-20</i> 61
BRINGING IN THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL	<i>Luke 14:21</i> 67
CALLING THE GENTILES	<i>Luke 14:22-23</i> 69
Irresistible Grace—Effectual Calling of Sinners	70
EVENTUAL JUDGMENT	<i>Luke 14:24</i> 72
The Spirit’s Severe Effectual Calling	73
CHAPTER 3—AUTHENTIC SEVERE COMMITMENT	74
PREFACE	74
The Severity of Christian Discipleship—The Text	77
The Sword and the Trowel: The Battles and Building of Christ	78
CHRIST DECLARES HIS SEVERE TERMS FOR DISCIPLESHIP	<i>Luke 14:25-27</i> 83
CHRIST JUSTIFIES HIS SEVERE TERMS FOR DISCIPLESHIP	<i>Luke 14:28-33</i> 93
CHRIST APPLIES HIS SEVERE TERMS FOR DISCIPLESHIP	<i>Luke 14:34-35</i> 101
Sold-out Disciples,	<i>Luke 14:33</i> 101
Powerless Disciples,	<i>Luke 14:26, 27, 33</i> 103
No Power	106
The “Of Mine” Disciples	107
Savorless Disciples,	<i>Luke 14:33-35a</i> 109
A Hearing Ear,	<i>Luke 14:35b</i> 110

PREFACE TO VOLUME II

This publication is part of a larger series on Authentic Christian Discipleship. Volume I is published, dealing with the strictness or narrowness of Christian discipleship, being an exposition of Christ's teaching in *Matthew 7:12-27*. It is the summary and challenging summons to all hearers of His Sermon on His Kingdom's designs and intentions found in *Matthew Chapters 5, 6, and 7*. The entire series is laid out in its several Volumes and Chapters on the inside front cover of this book. It is hoped that upon the publication of the entire series that the whole will result in the publication of all the expositions in one book. The series rests upon its being *According to Jesus and His doctrines of Grace*. With the exception of the final Addendum Chapter, all the expositions are the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel narratives.

This Volume II is an exposition of *Luke Chapter 14*. It contains the teaching of Jesus on one Sabbath day following His pronouncement against Jerusalem for her failure to attain the status of mature sonship offered her in her Messiah. The failure of Israel as an elect nation to fulfill at that time her destiny as God's witness to the Gentile world, and her failure to embrace her Messiah, led to a denouncement of her as God's witness to the world. Luke in the arrangement of his Gospel, then sets to show the failed severity that God had demanded from Israel and what now would be required from Christ's disciples. *Chapter 14* is the primary expression of what authentic discipleship really is from Christ's pragmatic position of need. Volume II deals with Christ's teaching in *Luke Chapter 14* as vitally attached to *Luke 13:31-35*.

CHAPTER 1 CONTENTS

<i>Heading</i>	<i>page</i>
PREFACE	5
The Character of Authentic Disciples—The Text	7
Introduction to Luke's Rational Methodology	7
Narrowing Down to <i>Chapter 14</i>	9
Analysis of <i>Chapter 14</i>	10
I. THE SEVERE CHARACTER OF MERCY, <i>Luke 14:1-6</i>	11
Jerusalem's Failure in Loving Mercy	12
Loving Mercy	13
THE OCCASION FOR MERCY, <i>Luke 14:1-2</i>	14
A QUESTION OF MERCY, <i>Luke 14:3</i>	16
THE ACT OF MERCY, <i>Luke 14:4</i>	17
THE EXPLANATION OF MERCY, <i>Luke 14:5</i>	18
THE REACTION TO MERCY, <i>Luke 14:6</i>	19
Concerning Responsibility	21
II. THE SEVERE CHARACTER OF HUMILITY, <i>Luke 14:7-11</i>	23
Humility—The Elusive Moral Rectitude	23
AN OCCASION FOR A PARABLE, <i>Luke 14:7</i>	24
THE WAY OF SHAME, <i>Luke 14:8-9</i>	25
THE WAY OF HONOR, <i>Luke 14:10</i>	29
THE AXIOM OF THE PARABLE, <i>Luke 14:11</i>	32
Exalting Self and Abasement	33
Humbling One's Self and Exaltation	34
Authentic Lessons and Warnings for Authentic Disciples to Hear and to Learn	36
III. THE SEVERE CHARACTER OF GRACE <i>Luke 14:12-14</i>	37
Why A Feast?	38
Is This A Parable?	40
THE DANGER OF A RETURN, <i>Luke 14:12</i>	41
NOTHING TO RETURN, <i>Luke 14:13</i>	43
A BLESSING OF RETURN, <i>Luke 14:14</i>	46
The Life of Grace	47

CHAPTER 1
AUTHENTIC SEVERE DISCIPLESHIP
AND CHARACTER
ACCORDING TO JESUS AND
HIS DOCTRINES OF GRACE
AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF
Luke 14:1-14

PREFACE TO CHAPTER 1

These incidents occurred on a particular Sabbath day during Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem during what is known as His Great Perea Ministry. Luke covers a great deal of Jesus' activities on that day, beginning in *Luke 14:1* and concluding in *Luke 17:10*. This entire section of Luke's Gospel—the recorded activities and teaching of that one Sabbath day—pivots on the immediately preceding lamentation of Jesus over Jerusalem's deficiency in His Kingdom's earthy ministries. The nation, which centered in and was represented by Jerusalem, was guilty of a dereliction of duty as God's people, which in the past had declined to fulfill its prescribed destiny as God's intermediary to all the world. Added to that, of course, was their traditional Jewish rejection of God's representative, this time the Messiah, which was conformable to their historic treatment of all the true prophets of Israel's God.

Luke means for his readers to associate the events of this Sabbath day with Christ's complaint of the Jew's deficiency concerning their duty to receive Him, and to fulfill Jerusalem's task to evangelize the entire world (Jews and Gentiles) and thus glorify God.

³⁴*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!*

³⁵*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

Luke 13:34-35

Luke follows Jesus' lamentation over Jerusalem first with these incidents and teachings of Christ that will illustrate the characteristics that should have exemplified Israel, and will be required of Christ's new disciples in the Kingdom. Christ will not have a repeat of Israel's failure to represent God accurately to the world, and so fail in God's love in ministry and vitality. Christ's disciples will be especially loving, humble, gracious, called, and devoted. Their authenticity will show such.

A Note on Severity

If we should take the three chapters of Volume II in reverse order, perhaps one would grasp what severity is involved in the "Severe Character," as required by Christ of His disciples.

In Chapter 3 (*Luke 14:25-35*) Christ obligates all men, who purport to be His disciples, to a strict, harsh, even unsparing and stern, dedication of life. One is to refuse oneself of any other priority apart from Jesus Christ's will for one's life, one's activities, one's distinctions. That is indeed a severe commitment!

Chapter 2 (*Luke 14:15-24*) illustrates God's stern spiritual call to discipleship, which call conforms strictly to a certain rule, method, standard, wherein man's hesitant and unyielding and rebellious will must be addressed through stern and forceful measures. Without such severity in God's calling to salvation in Christ, no man would respond affirmatively. That is a severe calling!

Here in Chapter 1 (*Luke 14:1-14*) Christ requires what proves to be for natural men a severe character. The dictionary defines severe as "unsparing, stern, conforming strictly to a rule, method, standard"; and the word "severe applies to a person or thing that is strict and uncompromising and connotes a total absence of softness, laxity, frivolity."⁰⁰ That describes the reality of Christ's required character in His disciples. The love—mercy, humility, and graciousness—in Christ is strict and uncompromising with no laxity or frivolity. His love required in His disciples is similarly severe in that sense and additionally stern in that it goes contrary to the human tendencies of a fallen nature. That is the severe character, severe moral strength, and severe essential quality of authentic Christian disciples!

⁰⁰Dictionary of the English Language (New York:World Publishing, 1957), p.1335

The Character of Kingdom Disciples as Illustrated by One Miracle and Two Parables

Luke 14:1-14

¹And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched him.

²And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

³And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?

⁴And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;

⁵And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?

⁶And they could not answer him again to these things.

⁷And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

⁸When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him;

⁹And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

¹⁰But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

¹¹For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

¹²Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, or thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

¹³But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

¹⁴And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Introduction into Luke's Rational Methodology⁰

According to Luke's method of a topical arrangement of his Gospel, he inserted the teachings and incidents of these chapters for effect. In fact, a quick comparison of Christ's lament over Jerusalem in *Luke 13: 34-35* with the chronological placement of it in *Matthew 23:37-39* will show that Luke placed this pronouncement of judgment against Jerusalem out of chronological order. He did that for effect. Actually, scholars consider this entire section of Luke's gospel as out of time sequence. From *Luke 9:51* to *Luke 18:14* the order is often topical.¹ Our study chapters fall into that section of Luke's account. This would, therefore, seem to suggest that *Luke 13:34-35* did not occur just prior to what immediately follows in *Luke Chapters 14-17*. But Luke means to emphasize some truth by this arrangement. That truth would seem to be in keeping with his overall theme of Christ Jesus being the complete or perfect man, as he emphasizes that by displaying the stark contrast of His character, calling, and demanded severity with that of Jerusalem's. In this section, Luke means to show exactly why Jerusalem was being rejected and ultimately would be judged by God as being unworthy to remain the capital of His Kingdom on earth.

Jerusalem was to have been the center of Kingdom activities, as it had been in Israel's past under David's reign. Luke is presenting Jesus as the ideal and perfect subject of God's kingdom. In order to help present this, he shows those excelling virtues in the Perfect Man which alone singles Him out as the Kingdom Ideal. Luke presents in *Chapter 14* the excellence of Kingdom virtue that had been missing in

⁰ We have purposely been somewhat redundant in clarifying Luke's orderly arrangement of his Gospel. The key to understanding Scripture is the whole situation, background, and environment relevant to each portion of God's Word, hence the importance of understanding Luke's methodology. Great error arises from misinterpretation of Scripture, and from *Luke 14* particularly when failing to discern Luke's intent in arrangement, as well as his precise choice of words. Q.v. p. 72, fn. # 36, and v. 33 as considered on pp. 95-96 with fn. # 5.

¹ A. T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels.

Jerusalem. Not only do these virtues excel in Christ, but they are to be in every true subject of the Kingdom. That Kingdom will be, throughout this age of grace, a rein of God in the hearts and lives of men on earth. This kind of reign will be established in earth when God will have established His reign in the hearts and lives of the Jewish people, and hence in the nation as a whole. Luke picked out, by inspiration of God, one particular Sabbath day in the life of our Lord, which would contrast this Kingdom excellence that Jerusalem had failed to fulfill.

Luke follows Jesus' lamentation over Jerusalem with these teachings of Christ that will illustrate the characteristics which should have exemplified Israel, and which will be required of Christ's new disciples of the Kingdom if they are to succeed where Israel failed.

Narrowing Down to Chapter 14

In Luke's first recorded incident on this Sabbath day, *Luke 14:1-6*, mercy is pictured in the healing of a dropsied man. The second incident finds Jesus teaching humility at the Sabbath day feast, *Luke 14:7-11*. He used that occasion also to teach grace as a most fundamental trait for those who have received grace, *Luke 14:12-14*. Accordingly and taken together, love is this fundamental trait now required of authentic disciples of Christ. Christ showed this failure in love by specifying the three greatest characteristics of love as the qualities that Jerusalem failed to possess—mercy² toward others, humility of self, and grace in all human relations—concerning which simply marked Jerusalem's failures in true love. That dereliction in love subsequently removed them from active participation in the earthly manifestation of the Kingdom. It is through these incidents that Luke emphasizes what character Christ most requires of disciples in His Kingdom, namely love—mercy, humility, and grace.

² Mercy in the Old Testament, and hence for Israel, is generally what in the New Testament is named as love. The idea of mercy in the old Hebrew Scriptures in its various forms such as *lovingkindness*, *tender mercies*, et al, are equivalent practically to love in the Epistles of the New Testament.

Analysis of Chapter 14

First, on this particular Sabbath day, Christ's teaching illustrated the basic virtues that must permeate the successful realization of His Kingdom on earth. In the first recorded incident after His formal renouncement of Jerusalem, *Luke 14:1-6*, mercy is pictured in the healing of a drowsy man. Following that is the teaching of Jesus concerning humility at the Sabbath day feast, *Luke 14:7-11*. He used that occasion also to teach grace as a most fundamental trait for those who have received grace, *Luke 14:12-14*. Thus Christ showed the three greatest of qualities which Jerusalem failed to possess—mercy, humility, and grace—which failure subsequently removed them from active participation in the earthly manifestation of the Kingdom at that time. In this manner Christ (Luke) is relating what is required in disciples of His Kingdom.

Secondly, in *Luke 14:16-24* and on the same Sabbath day, Jesus teaches the spiritual calling which enables His true disciples to participate in these kinds of difficult but required exercises of Kingdom life. In this teaching parable, He answers prospective questions such as, how can mortal men respond when such high qualities are required, and who can respond when such character is expected and demanded of us? Jesus used a parabolic illustration of a supper to show the spiritual entrance into the Kingdom, and the supernatural enabling for the Kingdom's true disciples.

Thirdly, in *Luke 14:25-35* and on the same Sabbath day, Jesus checked the thoughtless and misled crowd following Him to His crucifixion in Jerusalem. Most followed Christ for mistaken reasons, supposing His fame and power would bring political, social, and economic recompense to them. Christ means to make clear that authentic discipleship would include losing one's life in commitment and service to personal crucifixion as He was about to forfeit His life to a personal crucifixion.

I. THE SEVERE CHARACTER OF MERCY

Luke 14:1-6

¹*And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched him.*

²*And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.*

³*And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?*

⁴*And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;*

⁵*And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?*

⁶*And they could not answer him again to these things.*

Luke 14:1-6

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

James 2:13

Christ had just pronounced judgment upon Jerusalem in *Luke 13:34-35*, and now Luke in his sapient style places before his readers a day out of the life of our Lord that revealed in a rather unqualified way the reasons for this severe judgment against Jerusalem. This one Sabbath day (*Luke 14:1-17:10*) with its incidents and subsequent teaching by our Lord, displays the radical lack of the kingdom ideals within Jerusalem's confines. The source or root of this lack was in its leaders, rabbis, and religious politicians. The Pharisees best represented this group because they were the worst, being spiritually ignorant of the ways of God; and, as a result, Christ's main controversies were with that particular sect of religionists of the day. The first reason for this judgment against Jerusalem as given in Luke's order was their deficiency in loving mercy. They neither understood loving mercy, nor practiced loving mercy.

Jerusalem's Failure in Loving Mercy

Israel exhibits the inevitable failure of a people when they are void of true love. They became *as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal* by not having love. They had the oracles of God, and possessed great knowledge. They had the gift of prophecy, and understood great mysteries. They had fathers of faith who removed mountains and bestowed goods to feed the poor; and even gave their bodies to be burned for the furtherance of their religion, but they had not love. It profited them and God nothing! They had been carried away captives by the ungodly Babylonians, who judged them for seventy years, because they would not receive into their lives of ministry the love of God. They failed to glorify the true God among the world's gods, because they did not possess, or live, or exhibit, or love the love of that true God.

You might say, "But it was their disobedience to the Law of God for which they were judged and exiled into foreign lands." But I reply, "Yes, however, *love is the fulfilling of the law.*"² When asked, *Master which is the great commandment in the law?* Jesus summed up the Law thusly,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, And with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets.

Matthew 22:37-40

It is conclusive, therefore, that what rendered Israel a failure at representing God, at obeying God, at testifying for God, at manifesting God, at glorifying God, was its failure to love with the love of God as prescribed by their own Law.

³ *Romans 13:10*

Loving Mercy

And what is this loving mercy? “Loving mercy” is really just mercy, because love void of mercy ceases to be love and mercy void of love ceases to be mercy. In this episode out of the life of Christ, this loving mercy, or just mercy, is the active exercise of a good work toward one in need. Jesus actually accomplished relief for this dropsied man because He was inwardly compelled to alleviate a suffering fellow being. In this act of loving mercy there is clearly evident the mercy of God in Christ. He expressed God’s goodness and love for this guilty and miserable sufferer. This loving mercy has been defined theologically as including pity, compassion, gentleness, and forbearance; and while this is true, it is the active exercise of these inner virtues which characterizes true mercy. In other words, godly mercy requires an outward act as well as an inward goodness. It is love in another form; consequently just as with love, mercy must find outward evidence in action else it is *sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*.⁴ Just as love is a continuing energetic exercise of personal effort and cultivation, even so this loving mercy is a pitiable reaching out to the hurts of others. Grace and mercy are very closely related, but quite distinct. Christ bestowed a grace upon this man in that the man was guilty and not deserving. That “not deserving” or guilty aspect is the distinguishing work of grace. But mercy has respect to man’s wretchedness as a suffering, poor, hurting soul. Grace emphasizes goodness toward the guilty; mercy emphasizes goodness toward the suffering and needful. Grace is what is granted in spite of deserts, while mercy is granted because of hurts from deserts. Jesus knew that the Pharisees were watching him closely that they might *find an accusation against Him*.⁵ But the pity, compassion, gentleness, and forbearance—love—within Himself caused Him to act upon the hurt, to heal the misery, and to disregard the foolishness of the Pharisees.

⁴Corinthians 13:1 ⁵Luke 6:7, cf. Luke 11:53-54

Consequently, we can conclude that just as the King possesses this inward and outward virtue of mercy, so also must the subjects of His Kingdom. Authentic disciples feel the misery of human hurting, and then bestow the help they possess in order to alleviate the hurt, irrespective of either the deserts of the recipient or the assessment of it by onlookers.

THE OCCASION FOR MERCY, verses 1-2

And it came to pass as He went into a house of a Ruler—a Pharisee—on Sabbath day to eat bread, even the same group was closely, carefully, and constantly watching Him.

And look at this, a certain man with dropsy was before Him.
Luke 14: 1-2 ADT⁶

Luke introduces this day in a most general way, the place and time is very vague as being of secondary importance. Luke's arrangement of his Gospel is of primary importance, not the time sequence. Obviously Christ was invited to the Sabbath day feast as with all formal and festive gatherings in private (*vs. 7,12*). It was a tradition with the Pharisees to hold a special feast on each Sabbath day.⁷ Since the host was a Pharisee, the food had been prepared the day before; and now even those who prepared could rest and enjoy the magnificent entertainments for this day. But while such a seeming genial invitation and occasion was offered to Jesus, the motive was sinister, because Luke adds *that they watched Him*.

The Greek word translated *watched* is significant, for it reveals the wicked reason for inviting Jesus. Just as in *Luke 6:7* the Pharisees are said to have watched Him, whether He would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against Him; and again in *Luke 11:53-54* the Pharisees are represented as His enemies, seeking only to *accuse* Him, so also the Greek word for *watched* portrays them

⁶ADT = Author's Distinctive Translation and so designated throughout.

⁷Cp. *Neh. 8:9-12*, and compare *Neh. 8:2, 18* to confirm its occasion on a Sabbath day

similarly. It is in the middle voice, which gives intensity to the action as having been engaged in peculiarly for themselves. In other words, they watched in order to benefit themselves as a group to gain an advantage for the Pharisees against this new Teacher. Also, the word is in the imperfect tense, which suggests a persevering preoccupation with the watching. They relentlessly continued their attempt to catch Jesus in a chargeable miscue, in order to discredit His teaching and influence. The invitation was given to effect that purpose. It seems noteworthy that the word prefixes also the preposition that suggests closeness to Jesus. That is, they were right up against Jesus, closely following Him, always in the crowd, constantly dogging His steps. How outlandishly evil are men by nature that even when personally next to Jesus and His teaching they seek only to find fault with Him.

In *verse two* Luke begins with a *Behold*. This use of ἰδοὺ in the original signals a surprising development. *Behold* (KJV) means, “take note, look at this,” being a particle serving to call attention to this turn of events. While the Pharisees have set things up in order to *watch* Him for a mistake, the perfect opportunity presents itself. The *Behold* would suggest that this man was not there by invitation, since also in *verse four* Jesus is said to have *let him go* (Lit. dismissed him). Luke is saying in effect, “Lo and behold, what a turn of events. They invite Jesus to catch Him in a supposed error, and now have the opportunity to do just that.” That the Pharisees allowed the man to present himself before Jesus in hope of a cure is apparent. But this “open door” policy at meals was a cultural habit of the day.⁸ Even at meals strangers were allowed free entrance into homes as uninvited observers or guests. Oftentimes they would line the walls of the dining hall to watch or even carry on conversations with the invited guests. This is likely to have happened on this occasion. This was all before the reclining at the meal, while still standing, perhaps just before beginning to take their proper places.⁹ Suddenly a man with an abnormal accumulation of water or body fluids (dropsy) presented himself before Jesus hoping for a cure from this merciful Teacher.

⁸ Cp. Luke 7:36-38. ⁹ Cp. v. 7.

A QUESTION OF MERCY

And Jesus responding [to this circumstance] spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful on the sabbath to heal or not [to heal]?
Luke 14:3 ADT

Although nothing had been said to Jesus, He answered their accusing minds by putting forth a question to them. He included the Scribes or lawyers, as they were often called, because they were supposed to be “conversant with the law,” or jurists of the religious law. They were students, interpreters, and teachers of the Old Testament Scriptures. Consequently, Jesus challenged them with their own supposed knowledge of the law, as well as confronted the Pharisees with the legality of doing good on the Sabbath. Since verse four tells of their silence, it would seem that their silence would be a “No!” In other words, if they had thought it was good to heal and help sufferers on the Sabbath, they would speak up with a “Yes! Yes! By all means help this poor sufferer.” But their silence suggests disagreement with healing on the Sabbath, as is stated plainly by one of the Rulers of the synagogue in *Luke 13:14*.

This question had shut them up to a startling alternative: not to do good when it is in the power of one’s hand to do it is to do evil. This was taught in the Wisdom Literature of the Law, *Proverbs 3:27, Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.* These experts of the Law were thus caught in a dilemma. To say yes would be an admission of error in their own traditional Sabbath law. To say no would be to contradict the very plain statements in God’s own Law. Therefore, *they held their peace* as on another occasion.¹⁰ Thereupon, Jesus with this question has opened the door of mercy to this dropsied man and silences the hard-hearted critics.

¹⁰ *Luke 20:1-8*

THE ACT OF MERCY, verse 4

And they were silent. And having concerned Himself [with this man's suffering condition] He cured him and dismissed him.
Luke 14:4ADT

Jesus feels with this man the pain and torture of a grievous condition. This is mercy, to be helping the hurting, to do good for those in need when it is in the power of one's hand to do it. This power was certainly in the hand of Christ, and this mercy was/is ever in His Person. This verse says that Jesus did three things: He took him, He healed him, and He dismissed him.

The mercy of Jesus took him. This means much more than just physically taking hold of the man although this is also meant. The word translated *took* is in the Greek middle voice which connotes "taking to oneself," or to be concerned about personally.¹¹ Jesus perhaps put His arm about his shoulders in a gesture of the caring love of mercy. He felt in His spirit the malady of this man and sought to bring immediate comfort to him. So it is always with Christ Jesus. He puts loving arms about His own who suffer in any way and feels with them, and just because they are hurting, He deals with the pain. That is His mercy.

The mercy of Jesus healed him. This healing was not performed just to prove something to the Pharisees. Indeed, it did do just that, but quite apart from the lesson it taught the Pharisees, it came from the mercy of Christ. He helped this man because the man needed help, and Jesus' compassion, pity, gentleness, and forbearance reached out to heal. This is Jesus. His grace reached out to a guilty sinner, but His mercy reached out to a suffering man. We must never forget that mercy doesn't look for reason or theological correctness, but simply does good for others simply because they need it. This is Jesus and this is His mercy.

¹¹ Cp. *I Tim. 6:19*, where Timothy is told to *lay hold of eternal life*, the same grammatical construction as in Luke.

The mercy of Jesus also *dismissed him*, that is, *let him go*, (KJV). This also was an act of mercy to help him escape from these critics. Surely, they would condemn him for receiving help on the Sabbath.¹² Yet Jesus never leaves recipients of His mercy, but guards them and protects them continuously from the enemy. After the healing Jesus would have this man suffer no pain of any kind from the enemies of His mercy; therefore Jesus *let him go* from the scene now a healed man. We who know His mercy must not allow men to part our company without sharing that mercy. Oh, to know Him Who concerned Himself with me, then healed me and still protects me, only then to fail to pass it on. . . . God forgive me for failing to share in His altogether lovely mercy by having failed to be merciful to people in my life.

THE EXPLANATION OF MERCY, verse 5

And He said to them, Who of you, if your son or your ox falls into a well, will not immediately pull him up on the Sabbath day?
Luke 14:5ADT

Jesus uses an analogy which fits well the circumstance of the just healed dropsied man. First, He used an illustration of water. The word rendered *pit* means literally a well of water. This corresponds with the dropsy just healed. As dropsy is a “drowning” in water, so to speak, Jesus used a possible incident of a Pharisee’s own son or ox “drowning” in a well of water. Secondly, He referred to a “son.”¹³ The man just healed was as a son to Jesus as well as a servant. The Pharisees had sons whom they loved and had oxen that served them, who, when in a time of personal peril, would deliver them immediately. Thirdly, He referred to the authority and responsibility *of* ownership. The *of you* (KJV) is an emphatic word in the original. The Pharisees had sons who were their own and had oxen who were their own. Likewise Jesus is saying, “I am owner *of* this man; he belongs to Me by way of Creator-Redeemer.” The emphasis is on your son or your oxen, and the point of comparison is the ownership and consequent tender care of those belonging to Christ. In effect Jesus is saying,

¹² Cp. *Jn. 9:1-30* ¹³ *Ass* KJV, but later manuscripts read “son,” q.v. NIV and NAS.

If you care enough for your sons and your oxen to be merciful to them even on the Sabbath, how much more must I keep from drowning this my son and now my servant whom I own by right of my coming redemptive work and already present possession of all things. My mercy must reach out to him because as your son or oxen would be suffering fear, pain, and anxiety in such a condition, and just as you would use your every opportunity and resource to rescue them, even so must I alleviate the suffering of my own son and servant. I am merciful to this sufferer because he belongs to me and I must care for him.

THE REACTION TO MERCY, verse 6

And they were not able to return an argument against these things.

Luke 14:6ADT

Silence was the return or reaction of the Pharisees—the humbugs of mercy—to Jesus’ display of merciful love. Impotence of argument and utter defeat awaits always all the merciless. Christ’s mercy limits all legalism from returning an argument against it. The word rendered *answer* (KJV) refers to a return or to talk back. Mercy is like that. It frustrates the legalist. Jesus cares for those in pain of body and soul and spirit. Determined prejudice against the reality of the mercy of Jesus is only irritated and increased by its conclusive evidence. Right before them, the Pharisees and Scribes had God’s mercy to the suffering of man exhibited in His Son. Yet they worshipped not, knew not, cared not. Oh, how properly is Jerusalem’s house left desolate. For Jerusalem to look right in the face of mercy and fail to grasp it is to be branded as “without mercy” from God.

Mercy Versus Man

In this incident mercy overcame man’s attempted merit by law and self-sacrifice. Mercy is an alternative to law and to self-sacrifice; it contrasts both.

Mercy overcomes law and triumphs. The legalist feels that the Law, or any and all rules of right, are to be obeyed more than helping people in need. Mercy takes a back seat to supposed obedience. But no obedience to any law will fail to extend mercy, because the spiritual fulfilling of the law is to love God and to love man. That love extended in acts of compassionate concern is the law of God. Jesus says in effect; “My law is that ye love one another, and so fulfill the Law of our Father.”¹⁴ Nothing can stand against the mercy of our Savior. His mercy overcame the Pharisee’s legalism and brought relief to a suffering soul where the rules of the Pharisees forbade it. The Pharisees reasoned thusly: “This man should suffer today and be healed tomorrow in order to sanctify the Sabbath.” But mercy says: “Be healed right now from thy suffering, poor sinner. I extend to you now cessation from pain.”

Jesus could not isolate Himself from grieving humanity, not for an hour. His mercy goes where it is needed. While the Pharisees stood aloof and in effect, *passed by on the other side*, mercy approached right to the diseased man and extended healing. Oh, what a victory will mercy bring to those who will saturate others with Christ’s compassion, gentleness, and pity through the Holy Spirit. Let all His children run right into the camp of the sufferers and dispense His mercy to alleviate pain.

The mercy of Christ defeats legalism and self-sacrifice. No supposed or actual obedience to a rule or law must keep Christ’s followers from helping those in need. Nothing is as important to Jesus as the alleviation of suffering. Preach the gospel in word and deed even when it violates one’s own rules of habit; and no “doing without” will make up for failure to be merciful. There is no accreditation of penitence to be dispensed to others. If one denies the body, or fasts for forty days, or smashes one’s TV, that will not substitute for showing mercy, nor will it extend any profit to others. Extend mercy to others; that is the activity of positive good. To share Christ’s mercy that has been received is far more important than

¹⁴ Cp. *1 Jn. 3:23*

self-sacrifice. Reach out with mercy where it is needed. Invite sinners into life's dynamic in order to communicate Christ's mercy to them. Personal nonconformity with the lost cannot reach the lost; therefore seek out and socialize the lost. A separated life-style is required for authentic disciples, but never a separated life from those most needful of mercy. Mercy must enter even the Pharisee's domain and dispute their challenges against loving mercy, for then they are left speechless and in awe of the mercy of Jesus Christ. As the man who was drowning was delivered from excess water, so will mercy save the entrenched and saturated (*dropsied*) sufferers of sin from excess sin, and bring glory to our Father in heaven.

Concerning Responsibility

Oh dear Christian brother of mine, hath thou this mercy toward fellow suffers around you? Dost thou feel the pain of the sin-burdened neighbor, associate, fellow-worker, or relative? If thou be in God's kingdom, mercy will reach out from thee. Thou hast the gospel truth of a blood bought redemption that will free many such woeful and wretched suffers. Grace that determines salvation thou hast none to bestow; that is God's department. He alone saves guilty men, but thou hast mercy within and opportunities for mercy without. It is mercy for the wretched that the preaching of the Cross exhibits. So, let us together be merciful and we shall not be as Jerusalem, but we shall be as Mount Zion, the city of the Living God. We His subjects can actually be merciful. We have opportunity to help the sufferers under sin. *Blessed be the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.* Oh, Jerusalem, thou city of all cities, thou couldst have escaped that fatal judgment of desolation and utter destruction by being merciful to the needful. If thou hadst only shared your Jehovah with the multitudes, thou shouldst have escaped His wrath, because *mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* Why is it so Jerusalem, city of the Living God, that thou hadst opportunity to be merciful with the knowledge of the true God and His coming redemption, but ye would not. May we believers in mercy never similarly fail!

Dear believer, be thou an authentic disciple of merciful Jesus. But beware, *He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.* Your accountability to your Savior calls you into account for mercy, either for your profit or for your loss. But let concern about accountability not be so prominent, but may the heart-felt desire to obey our Lord and to help other men be our compelling motivation. May the compassion of Jesus fill our lives that we are truly Christians—like Him Who has such mercy toward the sufferers. He died for sufferers. Our desire for kingdom excellence through authentic discipleship must first contain endeavors to acquire more of this merciful love and feeling compassion of our King.

All Christians have a responsibility to extend this “mercy of the King” to the physical suffering of men as well as to the spiritual suffering. Surely, all agree that the eternal verities are more important, but the real mercy of Christ reaches out to alleviate physical suffering as well. In fact, our text is a prime example of it. We, as Christians, cannot help but reach out in mercy to those for whom Christ Himself would be moved with compassion to help. Let us love not just in word or tongue but also in deed and in truth. This means money for the poor, food for the hungry, and care for the sick, as well as the Gospel for the lost. Thus did Jesus always extend His mercy because mercy helps those who feel pain in any area of need. Authentic discipleship to Jesus requires no less.

II. THE SEVERE CHARACTER OF HUMILITY

Luke 14:7-11

If the Pharisees best depict the worst of Jerusalem, they certainly were the worse in humility. Arising in the Maceabean inter-testament period to preserve the one-God concept of Israel, the Pharisee's and their orthodoxy had grown to a spiritually barren sect of religious zealots who prided themselves for their guardianship of the oral and written law. But their conservatism grew to an outlandishly prideful separationism, which knew nothing of the broken, contrite spirit of humility. Their concept of the Lord God of Israel was filled with a self-esteem and vain dignity that made of none effect the true way of salvation as far as the nation as a whole was concerned. It was against that spirit of haughtiness that Christ pronounced the doom of Jerusalem and will one day similarly judge all sons of Adam for being sons of pride. Therefore, Messiah will require humility from all authentic disciples.

Humility—The Elusive Moral Rectitude

There is no virtue so elusive as humility. And while its rarity among men is so pronounced, yet it is the supreme need of all men, because, while it eludes man with an almost unreal mockery, it is the absolute requirement of God for His creatures. It is essential in order for the kingdom ideal to be effected in man. No other avenue will lead to the celestial city. But no other avenue is so difficult to steer. If one manages temporarily to stay within the lanes of its thoroughfare, he quickly finds that he suddenly has veered to the left or to the right and is traveling the abasing road of pride. Charles Spurgeon put it wisely: "You may labor against vain glory until you conceive that you are humble, and the fond conceit of your humility will prove to be pride in full bloom."¹⁵ Oh, to be carried along by the power of the indwelling Christ! He alone can take us up to the "height of humility," while keeping our conceit of its presence in check, because, you see, Jesus is

¹⁵ Charles H. Spurgeon, The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Sermon unknown.

the constant reminder of the lowliness of man and the loftiness of God. He traveled the road ahead of us and His constant presence checks our self-esteem.

This Sabbath day feast to which the Lord had been invited, provided an opportunity for Him to teach us, who are by nature sons of pride, some principles concerning this elusive virtue of humility.

AN OCCASION FOR A PARABLE

And to those who had been invited He spoke a parable as He was observing how they were choosing out the most honorable places, saying to them. *Luke 14:7 ADT*

Jesus had been invited to a Sabbath day feast.¹⁶ While standing, awaiting taking His seat, one dropsied man had presented himself before Jesus, been healed and dismissed.¹⁷ Now, just as the guests were about to take their places at the table, there arose a commotion among the guests. They were choosing out for themselves their places and all were striving to seat themselves in the most honorable position. To understand this, it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the customs of those times.

At a feast such as this the guests were placed around a U-shaped table on couches with their bodies in reclining positions, their feet out away from the table. Each guest was provided a pillow to lean on with his left elbow for a support. The center of the U-shaped area was left clear to allow servants to serve the meal. This arrangement was called a tricinium. At the head of the U in the center position, the host or guest of honor was placed. A place of special honor would be on the right of the host, and the next highest place on his left. John undoubtedly was in the number one spot next to Jesus at the last supper with our Lord,¹⁸ and in that position would be said to be leaning on Jesus' breast. The two sides of the U were also numbered as to honor. The left side center place was number 4, to its right was number 5, and to its left was number 6.

¹⁶ Luke 14:1 ¹⁷ Luke 14:1-6 ¹⁸ Jn. 13:23-25

The right side of the U followed similarly. With such a numbering system of honoring guests down to the last one, it becomes clear why these guests at a Pharisee's Sabbath day feast sought out a particular place. They all wanted the highest possible honor.

As Jesus fixed His attention on this vulgar scene, He was moved to speak a parable to those who had been invited and had become seekers of self-honor. Luke tells us that Jesus spoke a parable, hence defining this story clearly as a parable. This is a surprising appraisal of this lesson from our Lord. A parable literally is a "casting or throwing beside." That is, a parable is a placing of one thing by the side of another. The word is a compound word, made up of παρὰ, "beside" plus βάλλω "to cast or throw." In *Mark 4:30* the word is translated *comparison* (KJV). What Luke does in classifying this as a parable is to open up the application of Christ's teaching on a social function and proper manners concerning it. This application is by way of a comparison with spiritual functions in the Kingdom ideal. This means that a spiritual lesson should be gleaned from the parable that will be pictured in the ethical-social standard that it teaches. Luke alerts us to apply its parallelism to the spiritual kingdom of God by calling this teaching a parable. Consequently, this *parable* teaches the authentic spirit, temper, and demeanor of authentic disciples of King Jesus.

Verse 7 sets forth the reason for this parabolic teaching, as being *when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms*. Christ was appalled at this conduct. He Who certainly was the most honorable one present is the very essence of this humility which He taught and required of His disciples. He stood to one side while these glory hogs rooted each other to the side for a place of honor. How like the natural man! Ignorant of the true Glory and seeking his own. How foolish! Mark says that they *chose out the chief seats*.¹⁹ That is significant because literally Luke says that they "elected" their own positions or at least were attempting to make their own choice of

¹⁹ KJV *rooms*, lit. "places."

their place of honor. The Greek word is *εκλεγω*, usually rendered to choose. The noun form is the word for the elect.²⁰ The verb was used by Jesus, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.*²¹ Luke's use of this word suggests a parabolic reference to fleshly attempts of the natural man to choose out for himself positions in the kingdom of God, but for self-promoting reasons. Man is forever attempting to substitute his will over God's will or choices. The principle applies to the accurate estimate of one's own abilities or gifts. Only God can accurately choose man's place at His supper, and only God will choose who is to be invited.

The *chief seats* are the positions of honor at His Kingdom table, but for every individual the high position is where God places him. That is the *chief seat*. That is the place of honor. One might not consider his station in life to be very much, but if he belongs to *Him*, the ultimate station in life is to take one's place according to His invitation and seating arrangement. Nothing is better than the perfect will of God. The ultimate station or place of honor is that place where one will be best fulfilling one's real value to God—namely, to serve, glorify, and honor Him.

THE WAY OF SHAME, verses 8-9

When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not recline in the place of honor, lest a more highly and properly valued person than you be invited by him;

And lest he that invited you both, come and say to you, "Give at once this man the place," and you with [prolonged] shame begin to take the last place.

Luke 14:7-8 ADT

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

In this parable, our Lord discreetly refers to a wedding feast. In so doing He avoids the appearance of personality. He purposely and wisely and delicately alludes to a different kind of entertainment from

²⁰ II Tim 2:10 ²¹ Jn. 15:10

that of His present circumstance. We all would do well to follow His thoughtful example in order to avoid harshness in our dealings with others. This is a graphic example of the gentleness of His humility, and should characterize us as well.

The custom of the day at feasts of any kind—wedding, Sabbath, birthday, etc.—required invitations to be sent. Then when the time was nearing, just before the feast was to be served, a servant was sent again, this time to announce that everything was ready. As the guests arrived they were usually allowed to congregate to greet one another and make conversation. Then the host would enter and would seat the guests according to his desires. The place of honor would be for himself or for the guest of honor, and the rest of the seating would follow his desires, each person being seated according to his esteem, etc. Sometimes the host allowed some of the guests to seat themselves. This was the circumstance in the parable. Before the host announced his preferences, the guests were seating themselves. Christ warns that the threat of being seated lower by the host would be an awkward time of embarrassment. It would be especially humiliating when the host and someone he considers more honorable and more highly valued to himself, to come and require the other to move down. The word, *Give this man place*, is a sharp, authoritative command. The aorist tense used indicates an abrupt, blunt, brusque manner of speech, even an apparent rudeness. The prolonged time to take the lowest place would seem even longer while all eyes focused upon this debasement. The last place would be the only one left, because the more honorable man who is with the host would have placed himself down there to begin with. In other words, he is more honorable as exemplified in his humility in taking the lowest place.²²

The application of this way of shame is two-fold. **First**, seeking the highest honor for oneself in all relationships is the unceasing way of the natural man. In the world the man most honored is he who has gained the most wealth for himself, or who has performed “pharisaical good” *for to be seen of men*,²³ or who has gained political power, or who has exhibited physical abilities. All of

²² V. 10 ²³ Matt. 23: 5

this is a self-esteem and self-honoring system. They think that God will be flattered to have them in a place of honor in His kingdom. How very different is the true way of God. The only honor worth anything is the honor of God. I mean God's honor; His high position is the only worthy glory. He alone deserves the place of honor. We all should be struggling for the lowest place. Indeed, those of us who know Him, run in holy awe from any claim of honor in ourselves. May God's grace grant for more of us natural men to behold His glory in the Person and work of the Son in order that more might flee from self-esteem to the rightful place of lowliness before His supreme honor. True repentance is for the man thus allowed to see Him; and one so blessed will say with Isaiah, *Woe is me! for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*²⁴ What woe and destruction will come to those who think their honor is acceptable to Him! Truly in their cases, *Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.*²⁵

Secondly, it is the way of the flesh in the Christian to seek self-esteem. While our spirits and our new minds have within an innate understanding of God's true and only-high worth, still, our fleshly minds want to push ahead to seat themselves upon high with Him. Oh, if only that day were here when we shall fully have only the mind of Christ, when we shall with all our selves and with all our time and opportunity seek only His honor and glory. But alas! our corrupt natures hinder our true worship, and struggle for the chief seats. We often find ourselves thinking our selves to be something grand even while and even because we are worshipping Him. How deceitful is our carnal minds, and how foolish for Christians to feed that carnal mind with worldly pursuits. Oh, that we Christians would pursue only the spiritual enrichment. Then we would know little of the shame of *taking the lowest place*. The discipline of repentance is often grievous and not joyous as we begin with shame to take the lowest place before Him. But when there, we know the splendid

²⁴ *Isaiah 6:5*

²⁵ *Proverbs 16:18*

fruit of righteousness²⁶ that comes as a result of being emptied completely of all self-esteem.

THE WAY OF HONOR, verse 10

But on the contrary, when you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, go and recline in the last place in order that when he that invited you comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, start to go up higher'; then there will be honor for you before all those reclining with you.

Luke 14:10 ADT

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to he humble.

James 4:6

This way of honor is to be preferred above the way of shame. Now that statement appears to be a truism, but the message of the gospel is the way of honor, and it is not preferred by many. In fact, it would seem that repeating the proper preference is just what man needs to hear again and again. In the parable the Lord tells of one who, when invited, comes and takes the lowest place. Then, when the host comes, there is chance that elevation might come. Actually, in the story the host does come and say, "Friend, go up to a higher place." The resulting honor placed upon this man is seen by all, known by all.

That all men want to be near the host is understandable. That all men want to be near the highly honored at this feast is understandable. But the rationale behind the honoring is the key to unlocking the door for getting near the host or near the most honored guest. The guests must come to realize that it is the host's privilege to determine the respective honor of the guests; it is his alone to wield authority over his own feast. That a guest attempts to usurp this sovereignty is an insult to the host's regard. Surely, the person who takes a low place in order to allow the host to make his choices for honor, unhindered and unaffected by others, would

²⁶ *Hebrews 12:11*

immediately find favor in the host's eyes. So in the parable the host honors the man who acknowledged his method and discretion by immediately elevating that man in the eyes of the other guests.

The application of the honor is again two-fold. **First**, the very truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is here illustrated in the parable. God is the host and all men every where are invited to come and recline at His feast.²⁷ Now, while most come honoring themselves to experience only the way of shame, some come, knowing the right of prerogatives of the Host, God, and take the lowest position of self-abasement as sinners to the darkest degree and are then addressed by Him, *Friend, go up higher*. God resists the proud seekers but gives grace to the humble seekers. The message of this parable is plain. When men are given honor at God's table, they have come to it realizing their own utter worthlessness, and that God alone can and should determine by His favor where one can recline—either in higher or lower honor. While the parable, as with all parables, cannot be made to parallel in every degree still the parable pictures the spiritual acceptability of only the truly self-abased. God in His effectual call brings the natural man to the position of the lowest place before Him. It is only when the sinner is the worst sinner in his own eyes that God gives grace in His Son Jesus. In the parable this man of *verse 10* is like the Publican of *Luke 18:13*, who was unworthy in his own eyes even to approach the holy glory of God. All evil men want to go to heaven and to escape judgment; therefore they are all clamoring for a place near to God, only upon death to be forced to retreat in shame to the lowest hell. But some men, enlightened men, men who know the truth about themselves, stand back and are ready to wait for an eternity if necessary for the Host, God, to give grace for elevation from sin to righteousness in Christ Jesus. That is the way of honor for dishonorable men. Through faith in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for the lowest of sinners, they are elevated up to sit with Him in the honor due only to God's Only Beloved Son.

²⁷ *Luke 14:16, 24*

Secondly, true progress in the Christian life comes only to the humble guests who wait on the Host, God, to speak the words, *Friend, go up higher*. God operates His kingdom under this principle: Shame for the self-honored, Honor for the self-abased. To receive a higher degree of usefulness is the goal of all Christians. We all long to produce honor for Him. We know that closeness to the Guest of Honor, Jesus, is necessary for usefulness in His work. Consequently, we sometimes are like the guests at this Sabbath day feast. We, in our own ways and to differing degrees, seek to *choose out the chief rooms* next to Christ. “Surely,” we say, “if I were serving there, or doing that, or holding that position or office, I would be more honoring to Christ.” And perhaps one would, but we must remember God’s way of honor. His promotion comes to us when we *take the lowest place* and allow Him His prerogatives to place the members of the Body of Christ as suits Him.²⁸ When John and James with their mother sought this very thing from Christ, He answered them in strict accord with the principles of this parable, *But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared*.²⁹ The resurrected Christ, the abiding Holy Spirit, the Supreme God and Father alone determine the position of the members of His Body. But be assured of this, when one takes the lowest place, he can expect to be moved higher in and by His grace. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time*.³⁰

But we also must be realistic in our expectation of honor through this way of honor,

³For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

²⁸ *I Cor. 12:11; Eph. 4:7* ²⁹ *Mark 10:40* but see the whole passage, *Mark 10:35-45*. ³⁰ *I Peter 5:6*

⁴For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

⁵So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another. Romans 12 :3-5

God alone knows the potentiality of His creatures, and the necessary stations for that final development. It is only as we allow Him to set us up in our “place” that it will truly be a high position of honor. We must be moved up to the ultimate potential through the development that His perfect will directs. To attempt to set ourselves in the place of highest good is to do an unfair justice to God and to discredit His perfect will. It is indeed foolish for any man to attempt to govern his own progress in life. In other words one may plan, one may prepare, but God does the choosing and the placing. One has put it, “If grace should give the desire, providence must open the path.”³¹ It is, therefore, God Who is the Host, Who comes to His own to say, “Friend, move up higher to Me,” or else, “Give this man your usurped place!” But if it is up or down, if it is honor or dishonor, still it is God’s will in the Providence, and we know it is best for us in order that we might reach that ultimate perfection which is the fulfillment of the potential which God predestined.³³

THE AXIOM OF THE PARABLE, verse 11

For whoever exalts himself will be abased, and the one humbling himself will be exalted.

A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit. Proverbs 29: 23

Lo, here is a great miracle: God is on high, and yet the higher thou liftest up thyself, the further thou art from him; the lower thou humbleth thyself, the nearer he draweth to thee. Low things he looketh close upon, that he may raise them; proud things he knows afar off, that he may depress them.

Augustine

³¹ Charles Bridges, 1846 ³³ Romans 8:29-30 with Psalms 75:6-7.

In the original the same Greek word is used for *humbleth* and *abased*. The translators caught the very meaning of Jesus' words by naming a self-induced humbling as *humbleth*, but a God-originated humbling as *abasement*. Same Greek word, different meanings. *Abase* has the connotation of degradation and humiliation, while *humbleth* is a rather sweet virtue to a sensitive soul. This means if we bring ourselves down in the sight of God and man it is a virtue of humility; but if God must bring us down in His sight and in man's, then it is abasement, a degradation, a disgrace, a shame.

When we humble ourselves before God as every authentic disciple must, it is an act of virtuous humility, to be commended by our Lord. If we refuse to humble ourselves before Him, it will bring dishonor to us in the end. It is all a matter of honesty. The one who thinks himself to be more than he is neither honest with himself nor with God. But the one who is simply honest and realistic about his place before a holy God, is rewarded with honor and exaltation from the God Who alone holds such rewards in His power. This exaltation gained from Christ is the only pride-protected exaltation because its recipient knows experientially real humility, namely that to God only is the honor and glory. He alone is responsible for all real exaltation, and hence His alone is the honor for it. Fleshly squatters on planet earth think to exalt themselves; therefore Jesus discredits and dishonors them with debasement in the end. An authentic disciple thinks to humble himself before God; therefore God credits and honors him with an eternal exaltation in Christ.

Exalting Self and Abasement

In the age-long warfare between God and Satan, God has chosen His Son to be the Victor through the principle of this parable. On the one hand Satan lifts himself up in a rebellion and self-esteem, saying in his evil heart,

HE THAT EXALTETH HIMSELF...

I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will set also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the Most High. Isaiah 14: 13-14

SHALL BE ABASED:

Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. Isaiah 14:15

Humbling One's Self and Exaltation

And on the other hand Jesus says in His heart, *A body hast thou prepared me.*³⁴ What an abasement! He became flesh and dwelt among us. He took the lowest place³⁵ and so is ever now highly exalted.

AND HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF...

Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of a man.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:6-8

SHALL BE EXALTED.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth;

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

³⁴ Hebrews 10:5, being a quote of the meaning of Psalms 40:6

³⁵ Eph. 4:9

This is the eternal scheme of things. This principle permeates the whole of heaven's domain. Since day one of Satan's rebellion, this eternal law has found ready subscribers to its letter, either for the good exaltation of the humble or for the evil abasement of the prideful. God uses this law precisely, accurately and consistently. Like the law of the harvest, a seed of pride will germinate into a monstrous organism of shame. But a sowing of self-abasement will enlarge into a tableland of honorable promotion. Look yonder to the fields of glory. I believe I can see the praise of Jesus Christ. He is a harvest of honor, praise, and glory sweeping to and fro amidst the winds of heaven's acclaim. There are heaven's occupants singing and extolling the One Who became lower than any man, Whose form was marred more than the sons of men. Yet, now He is higher than the heavens. He is rightfully above every name that is named because He became lower than any man. Jesus Christ is His name and title. He is the embodiment of this truth: *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. Christ is the exemplar of what the maturation of authentic discipleship behind Him consists.

AUTHENTIC LESSONS AND WARNINGS FOR AUTHENTIC DISCIPLES TO HEAR AND TO LEARN

1. **Ways to exalt self in the end, in *due time*:**³⁶

#1 Seek more grace lived; be more humble in life; be more like Christ.

#2 Seek not honor and esteem from men, but become modest. Humble persons are most admired by others.

2. **Ways to be abased:**

#1 Entertain a too high opinion of self, both inwardly or outwardly of one's own gifts, as being preferable to others in the church.

#2 Covet titles of honor, Doctor, Master, Father, Elder.

#3 Seek honor not belonging to oneself.

#4 Abuse ones position in the Church by not heeding the Wisdom in the Word.

3. **Ways to humble self:**

#1 Think realistic thoughts of self.

#2 Behave modestly around others.

#3 Refuse to be elated with one's own gifts, but acknowledge that they are His gifts of goodness and grace.

#4 Use ones gifts in a humble way, at every opportunity for the advancement and good of God and man.

#5 Desire no honor from men.

#6 Refuse to be lifted up with what is given you.

4. **Ways men are exalted:**

#1 By God directly intervening into one's life through one's humble service to Christ.

#2 By losing honor or esteem with man through faithfulness to Christ.

³⁶ *I Peter 5:6*

III. THE SEVERE
CHARACTER OF GRACE
OR
AUTHENTIC DISCIPLES SERVE
THOSE WHO CAN RETURN NO FAVOR
Luke 14: 12-14

¹²*Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made unto thee.*

¹³*But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:*

¹⁴*And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

Luke 14: 12-14

The title of this lesson might seem a bit awkward. However, it does relay basically the principle involved in the passage: Authentic disciples are especially, ardently, and severely required to serve others who can return no favors. This is indeed the spirit and temper of God to man, who has no resource to return to God for the favors enjoyed from Him. That is what the title is saying. Therefore, this would suggest that only persons who know that about the Kingdom of God are really welcomed, received, and entertained by its Host. Certainly this is the character of authentic disciples. Just those persons who acknowledge to the Host, God, that they have “no resource to return” to Him are acceptable to Him. True fellowship in the Kingdom of God and service to Christ as disciples are reserved for those who understand this and then live a similar concept out in their lives. That is basically the intent of this teaching from our Lord Jesus.

After having displayed the mercy of Kingdom discipleship (*vs. 1-6*), and after having taught in parabolic method the fundamental of humility in the kingdom and in His disciples (*vs. 7-11*), Christ

now teaches the essential concept of grace in the Kingdom (*vs. 12-14*). He does this first by addressing the host of this Sabbath day feast concerning hospitality (*vs. 12-14*, our lesson text), and secondly by addressing a particular fellow-guest in another parable concerning the effectual invitations of God to attend His feast in the Kingdom of God (*vs. 15-24*). The scripture for this lesson (*Luke 14:12-14*), therefore, deals with the concept of grace which characterizes His kingdom and must similarly characterize His disciples.

Luke has by inspiration given us this day out of the life of our Lord in order to contrast and to explain why He had judged Jerusalem as unworthy to represent His kingdom. Mercy and humility were absent from the lives and subsequent teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees. Their rabbis failed to teach God's nation His own principles as essential for the true rule of God. They also failed to live and to teach Jerusalem about His grace. The rudimentary maxims of the pharisaical rabbis failed to include this general notion of grace. Though taught by the older Rabbis, they totally ignored its necessity. One earlier Rabbi wrote, "Let thy house be open towards the street, and let the poor be the sons of thy house." The Son of God included clear instructions about helping the needy, but the then modern teachers failed to live it or to teach it.

Why A Feast?

There is much teaching of spiritual truth using a banquet or feast as its setting.³⁷ Why did the Lord Jesus continually use this picture of a supper or feast to teach His kingdom ideals? The answer lies in understanding something of the Jewish concept of the Kingdom.

First, Jesus recognized the Jewish concept of the Kingdom by teaching in accord with their beliefs. The Jews had several terms for the Kingdom—the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of Jehovah, the Kingdom. These were all equivalent terms

³⁷ Viz. *Luke 14:1-24*, et al.

when used generically. The difference is not in the meaning of the different names, but rather in a particular aspect or feature meant to be emphasized in each name. Thus, for the Jews the Kingdom meant simply, the Rule of God. That is what is meant in all the terms for the kingdom. One could, of course, amplify that meaning, but basically that is what the Kingdom of God is. A particular emphasis is noted through different names but not the basic notion of God's rule. It always is meant.

Secondly, the Kingdom of God was thought of as being a joyous reign of the Lord. In that reign feasts were the epitome of kingdom blessings. In fact, in the culture of the Hebrew, feasts were certainly an integral part of their religion. For Jews, a banquet was the high point of all that was good in life. Weddings, which were the highest good for man, were likewise celebrated by feasts. Feasts were the highland of living, and the future Kingdom would be a continuous celebration with God in His Kingdom Dining Hall. That is why we read so much of outer darkness for those outside the Kingdom.³⁸ Most ancient banquets were held at night, and the feasts would be brilliantly lighted, hence to be outside the kingdom would mean *outer darkness*. Even Christ's teaching of the *narrow gate* into the Kingdom must be interpreted in view of this concept of the Kingdom.³⁹ In this passage, He said to the Jews:

And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down [Lit. "recline", i. e. as in a feast] in the Kingdom of God.

Luke 13:29

Consequently, the suppers, dinners, feasts, or banquets are representative of God's rule on earth and in eternity.

Thirdly, then, the feasts represent activity in the Kingdom of God. Just as we, as Christians, live in His Kingdom and our conduct should indicate that Kingdom or Rule of God, even so the Jews' conduct in the Kingdom was suggested by the picture of the

³⁸ *Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30* ³⁹ *Luke 13:22-30*

feast. Proper conduct as a Kingdom subject is plainly outlined in the Scripture, but for the Jews, and for us, that conduct was taught using the feast as the picture of Kingdom conduct (*Luke 14:7-14*) and even entrance (*Luke 14: 15-24*). Christ capitalized on the feast concept of the Kingdom to teach proper discipleship in the Kingdom. He used its setting to teach spiritual truths by paralleling spiritual concepts to its physical structure. That was His method in our lesson text.

Is This A Parable?

Is this teaching a parable in its strictest sense? No. However, some do see it this way.⁴⁰ This is a parable for the host, which follows the one just given for the guests (*vs. 7-11*), though Luke does not term this a parable. In what way some believe this to be a parable might be understood by another quote,

[This section (*vs. 12-14*) is] “A word to the host, also parabolic in character in so far as it gives general counsel under a concrete particular form, but not parabolic in the strict sense of teaching spiritual truth by natural examples.”⁴¹

What this means is that while not strictly a parable where the several players and objects in the story represent some true persons and things, this lesson from the Lord Jesus has a spiritual application. It reveals spiritual truth and not just cultural social etiquette. Jesus meant to teach a basic element within the Kingdom of God through these instructions to this host. He and Luke desire us to grasp some concept, some spiritual element behind the externalities involved in this teaching. While not a parable, the spiritual application of this teaching will suggest some elements of grace, which by way of comparison will be evident from this passage.

But in so designating this teaching as valuable for spiritual application, one must not lose sight of its plain worth governing love and beneficence. There is practical truth for living contained

⁴⁰ A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures

⁴¹ Alexander Bruce, The Expositor's Greek Testament

here. Jesus meant not just to teach theologically ethereal exactness, but to teach unornamental goodness in every day living. Though parabolic in nature, this passage has useful instruction for proper living.

THE DANGER OF A RETURN

And he also spoke to the one who had invited him, When you are making a breakfast or supper, do not call your friends, nor your relatives, nor your rich neighbors, for fear that they also invite you in return and it [the reciprocal invitation] becomes a remuneration to you.

Luke 14:12 ADT

Lest they also bid thee again (KJV) are the dangerous words! *Lest*, that is to say, “For fear that they also bid thee again.” This is a danger, because it suggests a return in this world. The very fact that a good deed finds a return in this life excludes it from the reward of the resurrection of the just, when that return was the motive for doing it. Many things done as acts of love have promise both in this life and the life to come.⁴² And as they are done out of a true heart of love in order to help others and not meant to help self, they will be rewarded even in this life and also in the life to come. But all good deeds not performed with that proper motive of love are in danger of being paid back in this life in accord with the doer’s original intent.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven.

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. *Matthew 6:1-2*

The pharisaical idea for doing anything was for reward. If they were not repaid for it, they didn’t do it. True and strict politicians were these supposed keepers of God’s truth! But where was grace? Graciousness in conduct serves those in need with the full awareness

⁴² *I Tim. 4:8*

that those benefited will not be able to repay. That consciousness of doing something for persons who have no resource to return the favor is the true and proper spirit of Kingdom, and hence discipleship, love. The humble person will attempt to do his alms in secret because it will please the Heavenly Father. Then he can expect a return in accord with the Father's will⁴³ The love of God is the real value of any good deed, and love's presence excludes all selfish aims or expectations.⁴⁴

But what is the danger? Is it just that the reward gained is now and not later? No, though this is certainly a part of the danger. The greater danger is in the heart of a person who so orders his life only on the principle of being paid back for his benevolences or paying others back for theirs. Christ is warning against an attitude which has escaped the influences of grace. He taught that the failure to do certain things meant that that person failed to grasp certain truth, which meant that that person failed to experience that certain truth. To fail to do means to fail to grasp means to fail to experience.

One example is found in the Lord's teaching about the model prayer.⁴⁵ In our model for prayer, Jesus instructs us, among other things, to ask God to forgive our sins, to remove them just as we forgive those who sin against us.⁴⁶ Then, after a model for prayer is given, Jesus singles out forgiveness as the main issue and as the single item which alone is conditional as regards God's affirmative answer to our prayers.⁴⁷ He said that if we fail to forgive others, God would not forgive us. This does not mean that our forgiveness as sinners is conditioned upon our "work" of forgiving others. Indeed, believers have all their sin forgiven through faith in the work of the cross. Not even as Christians can it be said that forgiveness depends upon any work other than the work of Christ. What this does mean, however, is that whenever a person fails to forgive another, he has failed to grasp the principle of God's forgiveness through the cross, which means he has failed to experience forgiveness through the cross. In other words, a person who cannot forgive has never been forgiven.⁴⁸

⁴³ Matt. 6:3-4 ⁴⁴ I Cor. 13:3, 5 ⁴⁵ Matt. 6:9-13 ⁴⁶ Matt. 6:12 ⁴⁷ Matt. 6:14-15

⁴⁸ This is also taught in *Matthew 18:21-35* in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

The principle of failure to do, to grasp and to experience is involved in our lesson text also. Christ is warning that a person who must do things only in order to be paid back in one way or the other, is a person who has not grasped the principle of grace from God. Therefore, that person has not experienced the grace of God. We might say it this way: If goodness to others must be paid for, then goodness from God without repayment to Him is not understood. The danger warned of by Jesus is simple. The person who cannot conceive of grace and cannot conceive of a “no-return” policy for doing good to others, is a person who has not conceived of the grace of God by which all His goodness to man comes. If a person, any person, demands a “resource in return” for a favor given, then that person reveals an ignorance of the greatest favor of all from God. God requires no “resource in return” for the work of His Son. God gave His best gift to sinners, and by that wonderful gift has graced mankind with good gifts of every kind. Yet God knows no return from us for His gifts. He invites men to His table and knows that they cannot return any resource for it. God help us to guard against ever living our lives and loving our love so that they whom we love must *bid thee again*. Let us live out the grace of our Lord God in our lives and be as He. Let us be as our Lord exhibited and now would have us live as authentic disciples committed to the grace received.

NOTHING TO RETURN

But on the contrary, when you are making an entertaining party, invite poor persons, maimed persons, lame persons, blind persons.
Luke 14:13ADT

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt,

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Romans 4:4-5

In the parable next given by our Lord,⁴⁹ He refers to God as inviting to His Kingdom Feast the poor, maimed, lame and blind.⁵⁰ The same words appear in both places in the English and in the Greek. The lists are identical. The reason for their use in both lessons is obvious. Just as God effectually invites only the ones absolutely unable to repay Him for His hospitality, even so we also must live out that hospitality toward others of the same sort. The person who refuses the poor, maimed, lame, and blind in his discipleship activities is one who has failed to do, and to grasp, and to experience what it is to be invited to God's table. The problem is not just the failure at doing, but is not grasping, and finally not having experienced the true invitation from God, an invitation given only to the poor, maimed, lame, and blind.

In this sense, there are two basic sinners in the world: those who have absolutely nothing to give back to God for His favors, and those who think they have an abundance to give back to God for His favors. The Apostle Paul alluded to these two groups in *Romans 4:4-5*. In *verse 4* there is the person who is implied in *Luke 14:12*. He has no concept of God's free and unmerited grace. He believes that his deeds of goodness leave God indebted to Him to receive him into His Kingdom. *To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* That is to say, "To him who seeks acceptance on account of works, there is the appropriate and merited compensation not apportioned according to grace, but is apportioned according to what is owed." This is a doctrinal revelation of the man warned of in *Luke 14:12*. He thinks he has ready resources to return to God and to make God owe him acceptance. But Paul here warns that approaching God on the basis of one's own resources means that the merited compensation will come in accord with the work performed and so the blessing at the resurrection of the just be missed. Just as the Jewish host in our lesson text is to consider himself as having no resource to return for His place in God's Kingdom, even so he is to engage in kingdom

⁴⁹ *Luke 14:15-24* ⁵⁰ *Luke 14:21*

activities that look for nothing in return to himself. Since his entrance has been by grace, his service is to be by the same grace. The understanding of grace is necessary to lay hold onto the eternal life of the kingdom. When one expects that his goodness to man must find a return to himself, he manifests himself as a stranger to grace. Likewise, when one feels his works before God somehow obligate God to him, then that man may *have his reward* in this life, but woe unto him in the next.

Paul submits another man in *Romans 4:5*, one who calls the poor, blind, maimed, and lame to his feast. This is the authentic disciple who serves by and in grace. He is implied in *Luke 14:13* as one that was poor, blind, maimed, and lame himself, therefore he is ready to invite similar persons to his supper. Paul refers to him, *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*. That is to say, “But to him who does nothing but believes and accepts the invitation as a blind, maimed, lame, and poor sinner, his faith is apportioned to him as righteousness.” This man has the understanding of grace because he has experienced grace. He is ready to serve in the Kingdom of God without a return for his service because his very presence in that Kingdom was without his own resource. He has nothing to return. The belief in that reality is the agency of salvation. That is true saving faith. That faith will begin the Christian life and that faith will characterize authentic Christian discipleship. Paul wrote the same in an exhortation to the Colossians.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.
Colossians 2: 6

This verse lies in the midst of references to faith. In *Colossians 2:5* Paul rejoices over the good order and the firmness of their faith. Again in *Colossians 2:7* He further exhorts that they are to be established in the faith. While the former refers to personal faith in Christ and the latter refers to the proper system of faith, *verse 6* concerns their walk or conduct—their activity in the Kingdom of God—which must be characterized by the same faith in

which they first received Christ Jesus. In our lesson text the same element of faith is suggested. When serving in Kingdom activities, while serving as Christ's authentic disciple, one's service must exhibit one's original belief in God's altogether unmerited favor by showing the same favors to others without expectation of a return from them. The grace which characterizes salvation must also characterize our discipleship.

A BLESSING OF RETURN

And blessed you will be, because they have no remuneration for you: for you will be remunerated [rewarded] in the resurrection of the just.
Luke 14:14 ADT

Rewards seem to monopolize some Christians' thinking. For them, possessing all things in Christ,⁵¹ and owning an equal share in the inheritance with Christ⁵² are not quite enough. The mystery of rewards captivates the minds of some believers, whereas only grace should. Grace must rule the lives of those who have been saved by His grace. And whatever reward is to be given for faithful service will be itself by the same grace.

But what of the reward of our text? There is a clear reference to a *remuneration*, or "a return of reward" as the original word seems to mean. What is this reward? The key to understanding the reward depends on the reference by our Lord to the *resurrection of the just*. While some would emphasize from this that two or more resurrections are taught in the Scriptures, this is not of primary importance here. The emphasis by Jesus just here is in the quality of life for those *just* persons at their resurrection. In other words, not the time of resurrection but the quality or benefit of resurrection is being stressed. Christ is promising the ultimate life for those *just* persons made *just* through the grace of God. The *just* person is one who is treated as righteous as Christ is because he is *in Christ*. Christ's atonement has made him righteous or *just*.⁵³ Consequently the believer will be raised with an especial life

⁵¹ II Cor. 6:10; I Cor. 3:21,23 ⁵² Romans 8:17 ⁵³ II Cor. 5:21

when bodily raised from the grave, called *the resurrection of the just* in our text. When Christ promises a “return of reward” for living God’s grace out in one’s life, He is promising the ultimate experience of God’s grace; and that ultimate experience is for one to be perfected or matured by grace. That is the ultimate reward of grace. If this is difficult to follow, then mark Luke’s record of Christ’s earlier teaching of this very thing in *Luke 6:32-36*.

The Life of Grace

³²*For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.*

³³*And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.*

³⁴*And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.*

³⁵*But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*

³⁶*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

Luke 6:32-36

In this teaching on grace, Christ emphasized that Apostles’ (and all Christians’) service must be as His had been,

The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

Luke 6:40

Christ’s life had been one of grace. He, more than anyone else, lived for, and so-to-speak, invited to His banquet only the maimed, lame, blind, and poor—those who could not return the favor. His entire life was one characterized by grace. Christ is teaching His disciples that the same must typify their lives as well. In *verses 32-36* Christ used the word grace (*thank* KJV, *χαρις* in Greek) when referring to certain conduct. He says in effect,

If you love just to be loved, or if you do good just to get good returned to you, or if you lend just to get something in return, what grace do you have. The lost behave that way. Just doing things to receive something in return is not the way for children of the Highest to live. But you are to be as He is. You are sons of the Highest and He is gracious, so you also be gracious. Have compassion as He is compassionate. Be like Him in your living.

Graciousness is a key to the *resurrection of the just*. We shall be made like Him then. The *remuneration* to be given to the *just* at their resurrection is this gracious character and virtue of God. We are His children, and we shall finally possess His wonderfully desirable gracious disposition. Then we shall be truly inviting the lame, blind, maimed, and poor to recline at our banquets. We will be enabled to give and give and give as He gives, with never a thought of self. That “condition” is the real reward of authentic discipleship.

Oh! dear Christian, what a day that will be. To love as He loves, *hoping for nothing again*. That is the promise of the *resurrection of the just*. The greatest of all reward is just to be perfect and mature in love and grace. Let us all seek to serve now in that maturity. Let us seek to invite to our banquets—into all our occasions of sharing—mostly those who can return nothing. Let our service in His Kingdom feature loving mercy to others, and in humility giving goodness to others, living for others with a severe enthusiasm, while we are *hoping for nothing again*.⁵⁴ Then we shall really be as He is because we will really perceive and grasp Him as He really is.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Luke 6:35 ⁵⁵ I John 3:2