

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 14: 7-14

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Luke chapter 14, verses 7 to 14.

Yesterday we read about Jesus being invited by a leader of the Pharisees to his house for a meal. On the Sabbath, Jesus unhesitatingly healed a man with dropsy and questioned them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" After these things, Jesus observed the situation of how these Pharisees were seating themselves at the table in the house and gave them very direct teaching. This teaching is divided into two aspects: the first aspect is for those who are guests—how you should choose your seat; and the second aspect is for the host—what kind of guests you should actually invite. Regarding these two aspects of the teaching, let us read the Scripture.

Verses 7-9: "So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noticed how they chose the best places, saying to them: 'When you are invited 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," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place.'"

These friends of the Pharisees were all people of status and social standing; they were all upper-class people in society. Every one of them also thought quite highly of themselves, and their self-image was very good. Therefore, when each person came, they all rushed to take the best seats. Usually, when Jews had a meal, there would be three long tables arranged in a U-shape. The middle position of each table was considered the best seat. And the middle position of the middle table among

the three tables was the highest place. Jesus observed that every person who came to sit at the table in the Pharisee leader's house wanted to seize the best seat in the middle of the table. Therefore, Jesus spoke about how to be a good guest: when you come, start by sitting in the last place. Because you do not know whom else the host has actually invited; and your own judgment of great and small may not match the host's judgment. It is better for you to sit in the lowest place and then be asked by the host to move up, rather than to sit in the best place, and when a more honorable guest comes, the host asks you in front of everyone to give up your seat to that person. At that time, you would have to retreat to the lowest place with shame.

Verse 10: "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."

This therefore leads to a conclusion.

Verse 11: "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Most of these Pharisees suffered from dropsy—a spiritual dropsy. Everyone's ego was swollen; they always felt they were very good. Jesus told them very directly, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." This is especially true at the spiritual level. When we think we are very good, when we think we already have everything, when we think we already know everything, God's light can hardly come upon us anymore, and God's grace can hardly come upon us anymore. Therefore, you will also stagnate and stop progressing. Once life stops growing, it changes from high to low.

On the contrary, if you realize you have nothing, if you humble yourself, and every time you come before God's word with an empty heart, God's grace will fill you,

and God's light will shine upon you. This will cause every time you read the Bible to bring new insights and new gains, and your life will continue to grow. Gradually, height will grow out of lowliness.

What Jesus said to these Pharisees is also spoken to us—to every one of His children. And Jesus Himself is the best example. In Philippians 2:5-11 it says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Jesus Himself humbled Himself to the point of becoming a servant and dying on the cross. Because of His humility, God exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name. After Jesus finished speaking to those who were guests, He then taught us how we should be hosts.

Verses 12-14: "Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor 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 at the resurrection of the just.'"

In this Pharisee leader's banquet house, Jesus looked around from top to bottom. Everyone was dressed very respectably; everyone was very wealthy. There were no poor, no maimed, no blind. Even the man with dropsy whom Jesus had healed had left afterward. He had only come here to try to catch Jesus in something. Therefore Jesus said to the host: When you invite your friends, relatives, and some rich

neighbors, today you invite him and tomorrow he invites you—this is common human practice. At the time you invited him, you might have been thinking in your heart that one day he would invite you back. Therefore, you have already received your reward.

Jesus said to this host: Do not invite those who can invite you back. Instead, you should invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, because these people have no way to invite you back and have no way to repay you. Therefore, one day at the resurrection of the just, you will receive your reward.

Here Jesus tells us that when we invite others or when we help others, we should not expect others to be able to repay us. In this way, your reward will be in heaven. One day when you are resurrected, all these things will become your reward. If the people you help have already received repayment from others in this present life, then you have already received your reward, and there will be no other reward for you in heaven.

The section where Jesus teaches how to be a host is actually very applicable to our church life today. Brothers and sisters in the church come together, care for one another, and it is common for them to eat and drink together frequently. Only such church life is healthy; only such church life is sweet. Because it is not only meeting brothers and sisters in the gatherings, but also in daily life. Just like the early church, they broke bread from house to house with glad and sincere hearts, and their lives were together. But if many times when you invite guests, or even when you are a guest, you carry a heart that expects repayment, then the mutual inviting among the church will become a burden. Last time you invited me to eat this, this time I have to invite you back to the same or something better. In this way, the original meaning of mutual inviting is lost.

When brothers and sisters come together to eat and drink, it is fellowship in life. What is eaten is completely unimportant. What is important is enjoying the feeling of being together with one another, that feeling of caring for and cherishing one another. Therefore, Jesus here even goes further and tells us to invite those who

cannot repay us. Only in this way can you be assured that you have a reward in heaven.

Of course, in our daily church life today, the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind that we can come into contact with may be limited. However, we can invite those with whom we do not often interact or have fellowship. Through eating together, we can understand one another better and make church life more grounded in real daily life. This is very beautiful. But we must also pay attention to one principle: when inviting others, do not care whether others can invite you back; and when being invited, do not feel pressured that you must invite them back one day. What we truly care about is the time we spend in fellowship together. According to Jesus' teaching here, we must have this concept: when we are invited as a guest and have no way to invite back, you have not eaten for nothing at all. Because you have given the host an opportunity to store up reward in heaven. This may be more precious than if you were able to invite him back.

People in the church life who know me know that I often like to eat with the saints. Many times I also finish eating and then leave. Thank the Lord that through eating we can have some spiritual fellowship, and even allow the host to store up treasure in heaven. What a blessed thing this is. Thank the Lord.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for letting us learn how to humble ourselves in all things, to receive the supply of Your grace and receive Your light, so that our lives can grow and gradually be lifted up. Also teach us that when we help others, we do not seek repayment, so that we can store up rewards in heaven. Help me today to become a person willing to be humble and also a person willing to help others without seeking repayment, so that on one hand our lives can grow, and on the other hand we can store up treasure in heaven. Thank You, and bless my life today. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.