

Sermon: “Service Over Status - Jesus’ Call to Humility” Series: Parables - Luke 14 + 15 January 18, 2026 NSAC Dave Sattler

Text: Luke 14:1-14 Sub-texts: Matthew 23:11-12, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Peter 5:5b-6

Sources: Bible Gateway, NIV Life Application Bible. Commentaries: Leon Morris, N.T. Wright. Books: Devotionals from Life of Bernard of Clairvaux (12th C), “*The Way Up Is Down*” by Marlena Graves (2020). Sermon: Graham Cooke (2000s). Texts: Dr Steve Kim (1/13/2026). Song: “*Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*” by Robert Robinson (1758). Online: unsplash.com.

I. Introduction:

- Welcome, everyone! I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at North Shore Alliance Church. Thanks for coming ... [people online], first-timers, long-timers, those coming back to church, new Canadians.
- We’re pumped you’ve joined us for church today!!
- It’s time now to look to the Bible. At NSAC, we believe one of *the* primary ways *God speaks to us* and *shapes and guides our lives* is through *His Word*, the Bible.
- **<Slide>** We’re starting a mini-series: ***Parables in Luke 14 & 15.***
- A *parable* presents a relatable, though often fictional scenario to convey a higher principle; a parable is a story about something that happens in real-life that has a deeper or double meaning.
- In His teaching, ***Jesus often told parables as a way of connecting truth about the things of God to everyday events—***like farming, family, workplace drama, and *food*.
- Over the next two weeks, we will take a look at Luke 14, where Luke brings together two parables about banquets and *feasts*.
- **<Slide>** It’s uncanny how often Luke, the author of the third biography of Jesus—the Gospel of Luke—talks about *food*.
- More than fifty times Luke turns the scene in his narrative to a meal.
- Seems for Luke, the Christian life is like a feast, or a banquet, or a party.
- And, readers have no choice but to conclude: ***Jesus does some of His best work at mealtimes.***
- The logical conclusion, then, is that Christ-followers do the same: eat and drink with with all sorts of people. Food-based ministry is a key facet of the mission of Jesus.
- And, as we’ll see in Luke 14, Jesus Himself gives some pointed instructions on how to best plan a banquet or share a meal with people.

II. Scripture: Luke 14:1-14

<Slide> 1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, He was being carefully watched. 2 There in front of Him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. 3 Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” 4 But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, [Jesus] healed him and sent him on his way. 5 Then [Jesus] asked them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?” 6 And they had nothing to say.

<Slide> 7 When [Jesus] noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, He told them this parable: 8 “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honoured in the presence of all the other guests. 11 For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

<Slide> 12 Then Jesus said to His host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

<Pray> *“Lord, thank You for Your Word. Please move me out of the way. Come speak to us by Your Spirit. We’re hungry to hear from you.”*

III. Bible Teaching: Luke 1:1-14

1. **<Slide> A sabbath meal invitation (1)**

- Sabbath meals are always special in a Jewish home.
- Because no food preparation is to take place on the sabbath, the meal requires much advanced-planning. [Recently, we got a new oven; it has ‘Sabbath-mode’ and can be programmed to shut down for 24 hours.]

- It was common to entertain guests at a sabbath meal and Jesus receives an *invitation* to eat at “the house of a prominent Pharisee”—an important religious leader. Says, “[Jesus] was being carefully watched.”
- At this point in His life and ministry, Jesus is making as many enemies as He is, friends. From here to the cross, every move Jesus makes, every word He says, is magnified to use against Him.
- Likely this was a *trap* set by the host to catch Jesus breaking the law.
- Unafraid, Jesus faces His detractors head on.

2. <Slide> A trap: heal a man suffering illness? (2-6)

- “There in front of Him [at the dinner party] was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body.” This is dropsy or edema, an *illness* that most commonly develops in the legs.
- According to a doctor friend of mine: “If left untreated, fluid starts to weep through the skin and lead to ulcers which often become infected. This is typically very painful and can be life threatening.” - Dr Steve Kim
- While nothing in Scripture or the Mosaic Law forbade Jesus from healing this suffering man, the rabbis often made up secret laws to catch people.
- Like vultures His enemies circle, hoping Jesus breaks one of their rules so they can bring a charge against Him.
- Surprisingly, Jesus responds to this tense situation by asking two questions: 1) “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” And, 2) “If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?”
- Brilliant. What Jesus asks puts the religious “experts” in a bind.
- An emphatic answer, ‘yes’ to either question would give the impression they were *soft* on their interpretation of the law, and, to say ‘no’ would cause them to appear *indifferent* to human suffering.
- ***By healing a man on the Sabbath Jesus shows He cares more about people than impressing others with His rule-keeping.***
- Caught in a public relations nightmare, the Pharisees “had nothing to say.” Trapped, Jesus knew their silence would make it difficult for them to build a case against Him after He healed the man.

3. <Slide> A parable about a wedding feast (7-11)

- Well, it’s mealtime now and, a *mad scramble* breaks out among the invitees, for the best seats at the table. Jesus notices.

- ILL—Context on ***ancient banquet seating plans*** is helpful.
- You can see the seats here in my diagram in descending order of value.
- In the 1st Century, people typically sat in an inverted U-shape, around a low table, and ate, reclining on their left shoulder.
- The guest of highest honour sat in the middle at the top of the inverted U, with the second most distinguished person on their left, reclining behind, and third most at their right, reclining in front on the bosom. Interesting.
- I love diagrams. As a bonus, I've added my lineup card from our epic NSAC Soccer Cup victory on July 4, 2025! [Notice #3 at the bottom.]
- **<Slide>** In response to the guests' mad clamoring for prime spots at the table, Jesus tells ***a parable about a wedding feast***.
- 'There's danger in claiming the best spot,' He says. 'A guest of higher honour may come after you, forcing the host to make you vacate while everyone looks on, smiling smugly at your embarrassment.'
- Jesus teaches, 'It's better to go to the lowest place first. The way to the top is to start at the bottom.'
- Jesus is not merely giving social advice here. ***He aims to teach the all-important spiritual principle of humility.*** V11 is a statement Jesus repeats throughout the gospels: "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."
- Like every parable this one has a double meaning.
- It is about banquet-seating protocol ('do not seek places of honour'), but it's also a warning against trying to *impress* God.
- People in Jesus' day were eager to showcase how well they were keeping the law *and* quick to point out faults in others.
- ***With this parable, Jesus challenges drivenness, self-promotion, and, as one commentator puts it, our "jostling for position in the eyes of God."*** - NT Wright, p175

4. **<Slide> Expand your dinner guest list! (12-14)**

- Jesus ends with some words that would upset the cultural customs of *His* day—and *ours*: 'Do not ask friends, family, or rich neighbours (the elite) for dinner who have the means to repay you. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed—not necessarily now on earth, but in eternity.'

- [Funny, N.T. Wright says he preached this passage in *his* church and received *three* meal invitations that week! He wasn't sure which category—poor, crippled, lame, blind—his congregants determined he fell into.]
- Again Jesus makes a mess of the 'rules' for association between social demographics. His call to ***expand our guest list*** is revolutionary.
- Seeking community and friendship outside social norms is good for us.
- ILL—And I am mindful of the tremendous impact friends like Ahmad, Sarah, Lawrence, & Firouzeh have had on *my* heart, my life, my faith.
- Our Saviour leads the way in this. ***Jesus encourages a vision for church where ethnicities, disabilities, and socio-economics don't divide but rather bring people together to enrich them.***

IV. Life Applications

- Well, it's time to now to land the plane on some life-applications ...
- A. **<Slide> Trying to impress God or others never works.**
 - Like the dinner guests in our story who scramble for the prime seats, like James and John who boldly ask Jesus for spots at His right and left, we *all crave power*—some of us are just more cagey about it than others.
 - This passage confronts our needy-ness to gain worth through impressing other people. Aiming for prestige never satisfies and *always* comes back to bite us.
 - Luke 14 begs some questions: ***Who is it you're trying to impress?*** By your eagerness? Your scrambling to get ahead? Who are you trying to impress by wearing certain clothes? Hanging around the right people? Using certain phrases (cool words to sound smart or f-bombs to act tough) to gain acceptance, to be somebody, or, to try and stand out?
 - Perhaps for some of you, like me, *your* need to impress is fuelled by fear of disappointing others. Disappointing my father was a painful part of my young adult life. And this messed up my thinking: 'Because I'm a disappointment to my earthly father, I'm going to make for darn sure I don't disappoint anyone else ever again.' And I drove myself.
- **<Slide> Reality is: *desire to impress God can also be driven by fear of disappointing Him.***
 - We can sit in church to show up, but still not open our heart to Him.
 - We can pray or read the Bible trying to appease God or get what we want from Him rather than spend time in His presence relating to Him.

- ILL—Decades back, I heard a really helpful sermon by Pastor Graham Cooke. He said: “God is never disappointed or disillusioned with us because God has no illusions of us in the first place.” - Cooke
- God made us and knows us—the good, the bad, and the ugly—and still loves us more than we could ever imagine.
- And thankfully, God’s love for us is not dependent upon our performance—even when we disappoint Him. And we will.
- <**Slide**> ILL—There was a time in my life when I was bent on self-promotion. Needy and trying to impress, I was like Donkey in *Shrek*, “Pick me! Pick me! Pick me!”
- In my mind I was just rising to the occasion to grasp that self-made man I’d been conditioned all my life to shoot after.
- A wakeup call came, back in the day, when I was a youth pastor, and one of my children called me out: ‘Dad, you’re just trying to be like Jonny Morrison (a kid in the youth group!)’ Ouch. Busted. That’s what dyeing my hair and using the latest teenage words was all about?!
- I needed to stop! Because shameless self-promotion, trying to impress, clambering to be a person of influence only drags us *down*.
- <**Slide**> Truth is: ***We are only lifted up via humble obedience and faithful service to God. Jesus values service over status.***
- If God wants us to have a bigger platform, it’s best we wait for *Him* to open the door—to invite us to take that place.
- It’s when we move ahead that we make trouble for ourselves and others.
- And some of us here are guilty of this: we’ve claimed the seat of power, promoted ourselves, moved ahead of God. I mean, how can anyone blame us? We are all conditioned to do this here in the West.
- When instead Jesus simply calls us to be faithful and obedient in what’s right in front of us.
- Far from the spiritual posture He taught, Jesus saw in the religious leaders of *His* day, the need to flaunt power, to show off their piety.
- Frustrated, too, by His own disciples’ lack of understanding of His mission and *their* desire to ride Him to *power*, Jesus corrects them in Matthew 23:11-12: “The greatest among you will be your *servant*. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

- And Jesus doesn't just say it. Jesus backs up His teaching by showing them exactly how to do it—by giving Himself up *for* them. On a Roman Cross, Jesus is even willing to die a servant's death. What an example!

B. <Slide> *We best battle our pride with God's grace.*

- The humility to which Jesus calls His followers is not self-degradation; it is realizing our need for *God's grace* and embracing it.
- Reflecting on what he learned from Jesus in battling his own pride and arrogance, the apostle Peter writes: "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favour (gives grace) to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time." - 1 Peter 5:5b-6
- The problem with God's amazing grace is that we cannot buy it, we cannot earn it, and, we do not deserve it. And, when our pride gets in the way, as it often does, that free gift of God's grace is hard to receive.
- We'd rather earn it or deserve it! But that's impossible.
- <Slide> As one scholar puts it: "Pride, notoriously, is the great cloud that blots out the sun of God's generosity: if I reckon that I deserve to be favoured by God, not only do I declare that I don't need His grace, mercy and love, but I imply that those who don't *deserve* it shouldn't have it." - Wright, p175-6
- Miserable, our pride keeps us from embracing God's grace for ourselves *and* makes it hard to accept grace for others we deem don't deserve it.
- Jesus longs to break through that "cloud" of pride in humanity—to minister His love and grace to each of us in the shadows.
- <Slide> ILL—A few months back, I tried giving someone a *gift*: a simple \$5 potted flower I thought might brighten their day.
- And, the recipient promptly handed the flower right back to me—flatly refused my gift, seemingly embarrassed to receive it from me.
- Maybe you're in church today and your faith is wavering.
- Perhaps you've been told that to be a Christian you must believe a bunch of religious statements; or, measure up to a whole set of rules, then you're in. I have to say, if that's all there is, then it will be a struggle.
- For these kinds of false 'gospels' still keep you and me and our spiritual performance at the centre. And, if *we're* at the centre, it's never going to work. ***God and His grace must be at the centre of our faith.***

- **<Slide>** Ephesians 2:8-9 says: “For it is by *grace* you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the *gift* of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”
- It’s not about how much faith we have, or how many good works we can muster up on our own to impress. No. This can’t carry us.
- ***Only when we encounter the God of grace do we find a faith that sustains.***
- We must keep our eyes on the Object of our faith—accept the free gift of God’s amazing grace poured out in Jesus—or our hearts will wander.
- **<Slide>** Many today call ourselves ‘Christians,’ but do we truly know Jesus and His heart for us? Have we felt His loving presence? Have we received His amazing grace—or, are we banking on something else?
- Truth’s found in that old hymn we just sung: “Come, Thou Fount of every blessing; tune my heart to sing Thy *grace*.” And verse 3: “O to *grace* how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be! Let Thy *grace* now, like a fether, bind my wandering heart to Thee.” - Robert Robinson (1758)
- When we humble ourselves before God, acknowledge our need for His salvation, embrace *His free gift of grace*, and cling to it for life, only then do we find a faith that truly lasts.

C. **<Slide> *The kingdom of God is open to everyone.***

- In Jesus’ day it was easy for those who were well-off to imagine they were superior in God’s sight to the “poor,” to those without means to study or practise the law.
- Just in Luke’s lifetime, thousands of non-Jews became followers of Jesus and this was hard for long-timers to understand or approve. Eager to maintain places of prominence, they had a hard time accepting that God’s community (the church) was now open to *all* sorts of people.
- What Jesus teaches here is radical: because they cannot repay their host, to invite the “poor” to a feast is an act of pure generosity that will be recognized, likely not on earth with pats on the backs, a host or hostess gift of a bottle of wine, or mutual benefits, but in eternity.
- ***There is no generosity in giving to people who will give back or return the favour.***
- **<Slide>** Never exclusive, God welcomes all into friendship with Him.

- And those of us who identify with the Christian Story are called to follow the example our Saviour Jesus sets out for us.
- Therefore, ***we mustn't be exclusive with our time, our resources, or our relationships.***
- In her book, "*The Way Up Is Down*," Marlena Graves writes: "Anytime we use the lenses of money, power, and social status to define another's value or our own, or to filter people out of our lives, we engage in godless devil's play." - Graves, p23
- And it is my strong conviction that hanging out *only* with people *like us* is *not* the way of Jesus; it stunts our growth and shrinks our world.
- Sure it's hard to befriend people outside our sphere. But, when we do, if our hearts are open, there is something deeply meaningful in it for us.
- **<Slide>** I believe God designed it this way: having our feet in many cultures, eating and drinking with a diversity of people confronts our pride, keeps us grounded, and reminds us of our deep need for Jesus.
- ILL—My friend Sarah battled homelessness much of her life.
- We met here at church, and, while God has used *me* to serve her, God has served me *through her* in countless impactful ways.
- As I have wrestled with my own issues, Sarah has modelled for me what it means to be grateful for what I have, but still remain hopeful for God to provide. This week, she and I talked about walking this journey with Jesus *together*. What a gift!
- ***This is the authentic community Jesus offers through His Church.*** In all Its mess and beauty, Christian Church community makes transforming spiritual friendships possible and provides opportunity for enriching relationships with people across the kaleidoscope of God's creation. May we all, with God's help, step into this together. Amen. Thanks for listening.
- **<Prayer Slide>** I invite the worship team to come now.
- Prayer is available, now, during worship, and, after the service.
- 9am: Andrea & Dan // 11am: Linda & Dugald; Renee & Joy
- If something's on your heart today, a life situation you need to bring to Jesus, something from the message God's nudging you about, I encourage you to go for prayer.
- Let's stand now to respond to God in worship ...