

## Message #71

## Luke 14:1-14

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He came to a world that had all kinds of religious notions and ideas. Those religious, especially Jewish religions, were mostly based on men's traditions and views and rules and codes. Some of the Gentile religions were mystical and given to wild theories (i.e. Greek mythology; Roman polytheism). Jesus Christ came into this kind of world. Jesus Christ said He was God and He proved He was God. When He came to this world and communicated the true, pure word of God and did things proving He was God, that rubbed that religious world the wrong way.

The Jewish group who consistently opposed Christ and rejected Him was the group known as Pharisees. No matter what Christ did or said, they hated Him. **The reason was simple, a true Christlikeness that is right with God is completely opposite of a Phariseeism that is not right with God.**

Those who are phony Pharisaical will never have a good relationship with those who are truly spiritual. The Pharisees are not right with God, and God's ways aren't their ways. They are religious play actors and pretenders who pretend to be right with God, when in all reality they aren't. That point is clearly seen right here in this passage.

**PHARISEEISM THAT IS NOT RIGHT WITH GOD, AND CHRISTLIKENESS THAT IS RIGHT WITH GOD, ARE TOTAL OPPOSITES IN EVERY WAY; CONCERNING THE WORD OF GOD, CONCERNING HURTING PEOPLE AND CONCERNING SELF.**

Pharisees are self-centered; Christlikeness is God-centered.

Phariseeism is a man-made religion; Christlikeness is God-made relationship.

Pharisees are negative; Christlikeness is positive.

Pharisees kill life; Christlikeness gives life.

Pharisees are rigid and legalistic; Christlikeness is flexible and gracious.

In these first 14 verses, Luke presents three major differences between Phariseeism and Christlikeness:

**PHARISAICAL DIFFERENCE #1** – Phariseeism is more concerned about religious traditions and Christlikeness is more concerned with merciful ministry. **14:1-6**

In **verse 1**, Christ went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. This guy was a legal expert in O.T. law and traditions. Not sure where this house was. He went there on the Sabbath day. The teaching that Christ gives at this meal actually starts at **verse 3** and continues to **verse 24**. **At this one dinner Jesus Christ shuts the mouths of all the Pharisees who hated Him.**

**Verse 1** says the Pharisees were watching Christ closely. That participle “watching” means they were continually scrutinizing Him very closely with a very narrow purpose. They were scrupulously watching every move and listening to every word (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 343). William Barclay said this was nothing but “sinister espionage.” These Pharisees were not interested in eating a meal with Jesus Christ so they could learn the truth of God. They are looking for any way to trick Him, trap Him and trip Him. We know that they aren’t fooling Christ because He knows their hearts (Luke 5:22).

Pharisees are subtle and diabolical in the way they work. They will often invite you to lunch or dinner. They smile at you and appear to be cordial. They appear to be your long, lost friend. But behind the scenes and behind your back, they are your enemy. They are the enemy of God. Pharisees are never the friend of one right with God. They are never the friend of one who loves grace.

**Verse 2** says that when Christ went into the house, there was a man “suffering from dropsy.” This is the only place where this Greek word is used, which is one Dr. Luke would know. The word (υδροπικος) is a word closely related to a word that means water (υδωρ). This word describes a swelling of the body which is caused by a fluid or water retention. The body retains the water and is not able to filter it out of its system. In today’s medical world it is usually connected to a heart issue.

Dr. William Hendricksen said that the Rabbis of Christ’s day considered this disease to be a punishment for the sin of immorality. They considered a person who had this disease to be unclean. Trent Butler, who wrote a commentary on Luke, said, “We don’t know how this guy even got into this house” (*Luke*, p. 236). We suspect, the only reason this guy with dropsy was allowed in this home of the Pharisee was because this is a set up. In other words, the Pharisees had invited this man into this home on the Sabbath Day because they want to lure Christ into some legalistic trap.

We learn something else about Pharisees here and that is they are deceptive. They are looking for failure. They are looking for anything they can discover to accuse a true servant of God. Pharisees are good spies. They move into the church and look the part of being spiritually right with God. But their hearts and their motives are false. They are not right with God. They are destructive agents of the Devil looking for any way to destroy a true servant of God.

Christ knew what these guys were about. So in **verse 3**, He asks them whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath Day? Actually, He had already answered that previously in Luke 13:15-16. But Christ raises the question again. These Pharisees actually wanted it to be unlawful to help people on the Sabbath Day, but in their hearts they knew Christ was right because **verse 4** says, “they kept silent.”

Deep down inside the heart of a Pharisee is the realization that they are not right with God and they also sense one who is right with God. Pharisees are play actors. They know the truth, but they pretend to be something they are not. Pharisees are proud and hard-hearted and they are too hateful to change.

**Verse 4** says, Christ “healed him and sent him away.” In the aftermath of that He gives the Pharisees a stinging rebuke of an illustration.

In **verse 5**, He says if you had a son or an ox fall into a well on the Sabbath Day, would you leave them in the well or would you help them get out of it. In Christ’s day there were many wells that were spring fed. Most were about four foot square by four foot deep. Dr. Ralph Gower says that winter rains would fill the wells.

Very often the wells would be dry and if the stones collapsed a little it would be easy to see how this could happen. An ox would strain to try and get water and would slip and skid down into the well.

Christ’s point is suppose this happened on the Sabbath Day would you guys help the son or ox get out of the well? Wouldn’t you immediately pull them out?

**Verse 6** says they couldn’t respond. Actually they wouldn’t respond. Their mouths were shut.

Now the point that shut their mouths was an illustration about an ox versus a hurting man with dropsy. They could not argue that they would pull an animal or son out, so how could they find fault with helping a man on the Sabbath who was very sick.

A few years ago back in 1987, in Texas, a baby named Jessica fell into a well and the entire nation watched as people frantically worked to get her out. If your child fell into a well, would you do what you could to get your child out? Probably most of you are saying, what kind of stupid question is that. Well spiritually speaking, it is not so stupid. Some children are falling into dangerous things and parents are not doing one thing to get them out of it. Some have fallen into dangerous wells of friendships, music, movies and all kinds of things and parents are not doing a thing to get them out.

**PHARISAICAL DIFFERENCE #2** – Phariseeism is intent on exalting self; Christlikeness is intent on humbling self. **14:7-11**

When Christ got to this meal, He noticed that the guests scrambled for the chief seats at the dinner table (**verse 7**). Back at this time formal dinners were elaborate and there was actually a seating chart.

Couches were arranged in a “U” shape around a table. The center of the first couch was the place of highest honor. If you were facing the couch, to the left of it was the second highest and to the right was the third highest place of honor. At this dinner when the guests arrived, there was obviously a mad rush and scramble for the seats of honor.

So Christ must have shocked the group when He said in **verses 8-10**, when you go to a formal dinner like a wedding, the best thing to do is not to sit in the honorable seats, because if someone more honorable than you shows up, the host will ask you to move and in front of everyone you will be ashamed because you will have to get up from your place of honor and move to a place of less honor.

Christ says the wisest thing to do is to go to the lowest place of honor and then if you are asked to move up, you will be moving up rather than down. Christ's point in **verse 11** is this—the one who exalts himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

**Self-exaltation is one of the distinct marks of a Pharisee (Luke 18:14; Matt. 23:12; James 4:6).** Pushing people around, walking all over others, getting one's own way is the way Pharisees work. They pretend to be a real spiritual person, but they are a play actor and in the end they will be seen for what they really are.

Frederic Godet made an interesting observation. He said that in every situation we should esteem others better than ourselves and be willing to place ourselves last. Then he said, "God perhaps will see it differently, but if we put ourselves last, the only risk we run is the risk of being exalted and promoted."

Pharisees put themselves first. They detest this teaching and they won't follow it. They are proud, dominant and pushy.

**PHARISAICAL DIFFERENCE #3** – Phariseeism reaches out to certain people; Christlikeness reaches out to all people. **14:12-14**

Pharisees are good at playing a people game. They spot a little group they think they can control and then they go to work on dominating them, fooling them and manipulating them. A true Christ-like ministry is aimed at everyone.

There are four classes of people mentioned in **verse 12** of the kinds of people Pharisees like to have in their homes:

**Class #1** - They love their friends - These are the people who like them and honor them.

**Class #2** - They love their brothers - These are the close family members who are proud of them.

**Class #3** - They loved their relatives - These are distant relatives who are so proud of them.

**Class #4** - They love the rich - They love the people who have lots of money.

These people stroke their egos.

But **verse 13** lists the kinds of people the Pharisees don't like and don't want in their homes. In fact, this group of people listed here is not the cultural norm in any time period:

**Class #1** - They do not like the poor people - They have no money.

**Class #2** - They do not like the blind people - They cannot see the Pharisee in his splendor.

**Class #3** - They do not like the lame people - They cannot follow them and serve them.

**Class #4** - They do not like the crippled people - They cannot do anything for the Pharisee.

These people could not try to get some seat of honor; they would have to be helped to the table. Since the Pharisees thought these people were cursed by God because of sin, they would not think of inviting these people to their table.

They have their own invented “purity chart” and they would never think of having these people at their table because they would be contaminated.

Pharisees are known for their partiality. Want to spot a Pharisee? Look for the people at church who won’t associate with the corporate family.

Pharisees are not interested in reaching out to all people for God. They want people around them who can do something for them.

Jesus Christ specifically promises a “heavenly reward” for those who demonstrate grace to those who are down and out.

Jesus says you minister to all kinds of people and you will be blessed. You do things for people who cannot do anything for you and you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Notice Jesus does not mention the resurrection of the unrighteous (Acts 24:15). The unrighteous will not be rewarded, they will be punished.