

Week of March 18-24

## **DINNER TIME LESSONS**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Luke chapter 14

One of my favorite movies is the classic film, "It's a Wonderful Life." Perhaps, you have seen it? Our family watches it every Christmas and even though I've seen it a number of times, I still get misty-eyed at the end.

In one of the scenes in the movie, the lead character, George Bailey, asks his Uncle Billy if he knew what the three most exciting sounds in the world were. Uncle Billy responds, "Uh huh. Breakfast is served, lunch is served, dinner..."

Uncle Billy would probably enjoy our chapter reading today because of a lot of it has to do with eating. In the opening scene, Jesus is invited to a prominent Pharisee's house on the Sabbath for dinner. While there, he healed yet another person on the Sabbath and provided dinner time lesson #1 on the priority of people over legalistic rules. After the healing, Jesus noticed the other guests picking out the places of honor at the table. This provided a wonderful opportunity for Jesus to provide dinner time lesson #2 about humility as he reminded those gathered that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Turning to his host, Jesus offered dinner time lesson #3 about the importance of going beyond the social norms of inviting only those who could repay him and inviting those who couldn't: the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Doing so would lead to blessing according to Jesus at the resurrection.

Having heard Jesus' comment about the age to come, one of the guests piped up with, "*Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.*" His comment provided a launching point for Jesus to teach dinner time lesson #4 about entrance into the Messianic Kingdom by way of the Parable of the Great Banquet. The parable mentions that many who were invited to the banquet made flimsy excuses as to why they couldn't come. As a result, the master closed the doors to those originally invited but opened the doors to the poor, crippled, blind and lame and whoever would come.

For those gathered for dinner that day, the dinner time lessons should have been all too obvious. God provided the gospel of salvation for the lost house of Israel but the religious leadership refused to accept it. They made all kinds of excuses and hid behind their legalistic righteousness rather than be open to God's grace through Jesus Christ. In this chapter alone, for example, they had tried to catch Jesus healing on the Sabbath. In arrogance, they had chosen the best seats at dinner. In selfishness, they did not regularly extend generosity to the poor and needy. They assumed they were in but they were on the verge of being excluded. On the other hand, all those who had been excluded by the religious leadership, symbolized by the poor and battered, had been invited in because they knew they had nothing to depend on but grace.

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** At dinner today, take some time to reflect on and discuss today's lessons of Jesus with your family. Pray to be open to what the Lord might be saying to you that may need to change in your life.

**Take-away:** "*Dinner is served*" is good but "*Lesson is learned*" is better!