

Lord God, in meals you have shown us a picture of the Kingdom you bring to us. Help us live into the challenge and grace of the feast you set for all people. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Meals are used as an image of the future kingdom promised to us.

Day 1 Read Luke 14:15-24

1. This parable of the “escatological feast” (“eschatological” means “the things of the end times”) continues the story we dealt with in Lesson 5 last week.

a. What statement prompts Jesus to tell this parable?

b. What excuses are made for why the invited don't come to the banquet?

2. So, the slaves are ordered to go invite the poor, crippled, blind and lame. If this parable is about the kingdom of God, what is this saying about those people? And what is it saying about us?

Day 2 Read Matthew 22:1-14

3. This story is similar to the one we just read above, but in this story, it originates not as a result of a dinner Jesus was attending, but rather as part of a larger conflict with the Pharisees.

a. How do the invited respond to the banquet invitation in this parable?

b. If Jesus is speaking directly with the religious people of the time what is he saying they do to the people God sends to them? And what does this foreshadow that they will do?

4a. Wedding robes were donned for special occasions as this. What does the absence of a robe on the guest at the end of the parable indicate about this particular man?

b. “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Scholars have debated the meaning of this for years. What does this mean to you in light of the parable?

Day 3 Read Matthew 25:31-46

5. As Jesus describes the “great sorting” of the sheep and goats, what is the basis on which those at the right hand are welcomed into the kingdom (verse 35-36)

6a. The righteous and the wicked alike don't recognize when they did these things for Jesus. What is his response to each of them?

b. What challenge are we given in this regarding our hospitality toward others?

Day 4 Read Matthew 14:13-21

7. Upon hearing of John the Baptist's death Jesus withdraws to a deserted place. However, the crowds follow him (And it feels like in this story that their following and demands are relentless).

a. What were Jesus' responses to the crowd through this story and why did he respond that way?

b. What was the disciples' response to the problem of the hungry crowd and the lack of food?

8. Think about this question for a while for you really need to put yourself in the disciples' position and be honest. Okay . . . here we go: Consider how Jesus and the disciples might be feeling after John's execution. Consider how far they've traveled. Consider the number of people and the relentlessness in their pursuit of Jesus and the disciples. Consider how much food they have. Consider on the other hand how much is left when Jesus is done acting. Why do the disciples want to send the people away?

9. Given the results . . . what discipleship lesson was taught by this event?

Day 5 Read Acts 1:1-48

10. Peter has a vision shortly before he is called to visit Cornelius, a **Roman** centurion who is not Jewish.

a. What was his vision in verses 10-16?

b. What does the voice say about eating those things?

11. Peter begins to sort out what this vision was telling him throughout the rest of the story.

a. What did it mean to him in terms of simply coming to Cornelius' house (verses 28-29)?

b. What did it mean to him after Cornelius shared his own vision (verses 34-35, 44-48)?

Day 6

12. Here at the end of this study on meals and hospitality, what has been your greatest learning?