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The cover of JBPR features professor John C. Trevor’s photograph of the Isaiah scroll found in Cave 1 at Qumran and is used with the copyright permission of his estate. The scroll consists of 17 sheets of sheepskin sewn together, being 24 feet long and 10 inches high. The earliest biblical manuscript appears here as it looked in 1948 after being sealed in a jar and unexposed to light for over two thousand years. Dr. Trevor has opened the scroll to Isa 38:8-40:28. Lines 2 and 3 in the left column contain Isa 40:3 which inspired the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls.
One Banquet with Many Courses (Luke 14:1–24)

LYLE STORY

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The motif of table-fellowship is one of Luke’s key literary devices, in which Jesus engages hosts and guests with “table talk,” similar to the symposium tradition of Hellenistic practice, going back to Plato’s time.¹ Luke tells his audience² that Jesus often taught while at meals and thereby revealed the connection between the gospel and a meal, using these occasions to epitomize the gospel message.³ When taken as a whole, the Lukan “meal” passages offer a comprehensive portrayal of Jesus and his message of salvation. As Minear notes, “Table fellowship as interpreted by the table talk constituted the gospel.”⁴ Luke’s literary and theological artistry is unmistakable as he narrates various stories, parables (“lessons”) surrounding meals in the context of Middle-Eastern “hospitality.” Each “meal” passage presents “table-talk” that accentuates a specific nuance of the Jesus-event. Since the majority of the meal-passages are set in a context of hostility against Jesus, he uses the atmosphere to warn, teach and correct his opponents. Each of these events become teaching moments, in which Jesus’ practice and teaching subverts cultural, religious and socio-economic norms. For example, Jesus’ subversive table-fellowship with public sinners is accentuated in Luke 5:29–39; 7:36–50; 15:1–2; 19:1–10; in each instance, Jesus responds to the similar accusation that he freely violates various taboos. Above all, Luke reveals a clear affirmation of humility and inclusion as a necessary prerequisite for blessing, honor and


participation in the messianic banquet; such attitudes are contrasted with pride and exclusion.

**Thrust of the Four Paragraphs in Luke 14**

I will argue that in Luke 14:1–24, Luke confronts his readers with four specific “table-talks” in four paragraphs (Man with Dropsy9[vv. 1–6]; Selective Seats [7–11]; Selective Guests [12–14]; Great Banquet [15–24]) that are distinct and yet cohere with the banquet that begins in 14:1, “One Sabbath Jesus went to eat bread in the house of a ruler of the Pharisees.” Each paragraph represents a different “course” of the meal, expressed through the related table talk and is part of the larger study of Luke’s “banquet theology.” In each paragraph, Jesus subverts common thought and practice — all of which are in the context of a banquet. This study builds upon the structural contributions of Green,8 thematic studies by Navone,7 chiasmic-suggestions of Talbert,4 literary and socioeconomic studies by Noël,8 Tannehill,10 and Moxnes.11 The field of literary or narrative criticism suggests a careful reading of the narratives, including setting, plot, characters, dialogue, events, point of view, time, including characteristics of authors and readers.12 Given that Luke 14:1–24 exhibits an evident literary unity in concepts and structure,13 we may assume that through this unity Luke expresses his theological

5. Luke describes him as being οὐδρομικός or dropsical (14:2). Ancient physicians identified this withering and swelling of the body and its symptoms as οὐδρος, οὐδροπός, παρέκκλισις or hydrops, which today is called dropsy (see Annette Weissnieder, Images of Illness in the Gospel of Luke: Insights of Ancient Medical Texts [WUNT 2/164; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 289, 320–21).


12. To this end we could think of an author who has chosen to reveal himself along with his perspectives, concerns and values and of an implied reader or hearer as a person who can detect the original message of the story, with the potential of re-living the story and embrace the author’s point of view. As to readers and hearers participating in Lukan material, Maxwell concludes that we should rightly “attribute to Luke a certain measure of skill in the tradition of Hellenistic rhetoric based on the nature of his writings. Likewise, the details of Luke’s audience members’ identity and level of education are in the end uncertain. Based in part on the character of Luke and Acts, however, we may cautiously assume that audience members had some appreciation of rhetoric, even if they did not receive systemized training. We may more confidently assume that Luke’s audience most often heard the narratives rather than read the texts” (Maxwell, Hearing Between the Lines, 129).

13. Perhaps the evident structural, topical, and linguistic unity of this text may be appreciated as
concerns which he intends his readership to understand, embrace and apply to their faith communities. In these interlocked paragraphs, I will offer numerous considerations, drawing from literary criticism, social-criticism, and theological expression—all of which possess certain implications for Luke’s audience.

Sources and Literary Context

It appears that Luke follows Q in the preceding paragraphs of Luke 13 dealing with the messianic banquet and its theme of reversal (Luke 13:28–30; Matt 8:11–12). Both texts deal with the displacement of the old people of God and replacement by others from various points of the compass. Luke’s version includes the first-last reversal (“the first shall be last and the last shall be first” εἰσὶν ἔσχατοι ὁι ἔσονται πρῶτοι, καὶ εἰσὶν πρῶτοι ὁι ἔσονται, 13:30), which is further developed by Luke in 14:7–11, in the maneuvering for the first or last places at a meal. The mention of “reclining” (ἀνακλίθησονται, 13:29) also carries through in 14:7–11, with Jesus’ warning about reclining in the first seat” (μὴ κατακλίθης, 14:8) and “who are seated at table with you” (τῶν συνακλίθησιν, 14:10). The second Q paragraph constitutes Jesus’ complaint over Jerusalem (Luke 13:31–35; Matt 23:37–39). Luke then breaks away from Q in three paragraphs (14:1–6; 7–11; 12–14) with his own material and then returns to Q as the basis for his own redacted version of the Great Supper (14:15–24) and the paragraph concerning the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25–27; Matt 10:37–38), when he is en route to Jerusalem (14:25).

Within the four banquet paragraphs, Fitzmyer believes that the first three paragraphs are distinctly Lukan. Others such as Fleddermann argue for a dependence upon Q for the saying about the ox or son that falls into a pit (14:5), upon which “Luke crafts a narrative setting” and that the narrative of the healing of the man with dropsy is dependent upon the Markan story of the healing of the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1–6). However, Luke already possesses the story (Luke 6:6–11); in Luke, the healing of the man with dropsy is the third story that deals with a controversial Sabbath-healing (withered-hand [Luke 6:6–11]; crippled woman [13:10–17]; man with dropsy [14:1–6]). Does Luke really create two more stories de novo upon


16. Fleddermann, Q, 719.
the Markan and Q stories of the man with the withered hand? Fleddermann also argues that the saying about exalting oneself (Luke 14:11) originated in Q since the saying is found in Matt 23:12 concluding a paragraph of denouncing of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23:1–12). However, it is important that Luke contains the saying verbatim in Luke 18:14 in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Toll-Collector (Luke 18:9–14), which coheres with Luke's emphasis upon humility. It is important to note that in all three contexts, the saying fits in naturally with the reversal theme of the paragraphs, which are dealing with issues of pride/exclusion and humility/inclusion. Although Luke worked with his own Sondergut, Q, and Mark in his composition of the Third Gospel, this does not negate the possibility or probability that Jesus made the same statement on more than one occasion.

It is probable that the concluding Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15–24) originates in Q since it corresponds to Matthew's Parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt 22:1–14). Although there are noteworthy differences between the two parables, the numerous points of continuity suggest that both stories originated in Q. There is also a version in the Gospel of Thomas (64), which seems to be dependent upon Q. It will be important to note the editorial emendations by Luke that position the parable within the context and themes of Luke 14.

What are Luke's main emendations from Q in the Parable of the Great Banquet? First, the parable is introduced by a high-spirited exclamation from one of the elite guests (v. 15) who presumes that he and his fellow-guests will participate in the blessedness of the Messianic banquet, occasioned by Jesus' statement about a future reward (v. 14). Jesus will correct the prideful comment about the future with a clear emphasis upon the present character of the kingdom of God, a clear Lukan concern (e.g., Luke 2:29–32). Second, Luke's parable uniquely encompasses Jesus' missional thrust to society's "broken victims" (NEB, v. 21) and outcasts (v. 21), which corresponds to the same victims in v. 13. This emphasis elsewhere corresponds to Luke's special interest (e.g., Luke 7:22). Third, the idea of reversal in this parable complements both the reversal theme in previous paragraphs (esp. v. 11) and the further emphasis upon humility with the summoning of the originally "uninvited" guests (v. 21). Throughout the four paragraphs, Luke accentuates Q's statements about humility in that "For Q faith requires humility as its essential precondition. Only by acknowledging one's inadequacy can one open out to God." The opponents of Jesus in these four paragraphs are filled with pride and are in need of Jesus' correction and warning (v. 1 [lying in

17. Ibid.
20. Fleddermann, Q, 721.
wait for Jesus); v. 7 [selective seats]; v. 12 [selective guests]; the exclamation in v. 15 and those who reject the invitation in vv. 18–20).

Through the four paragraphs, Luke invites his readers to experience the various points of tension in each “course,” to see how the several conflicts were subsequently addressed in each paragraph; he intends to change and alter his readership through the table talk and then return to their own communities with an appreciation and commitment to Jesus’ subversive message, e.g., humility and inclusion. Luke helps the community to live and relive the event and its nuances and, thereby, adopt and embrace his point of view in changing thoughts, attitudes and behavior to reflect humility and inclusion; herein Luke’s community witness to a needy world.

Structural Chart of Luke 14:1–24

The chart below expresses the numerous ways in which the four paragraphs are interwoven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>14:1–6 — Man with Dropsy</th>
<th>7–11 — Selective Seats</th>
<th>12–14 — Selective Guests</th>
<th>15–24 — Great Banquet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“house” (εἰς οἶκον) v. 1</td>
<td>Same setting as v. 1</td>
<td>Same setting as v. 1</td>
<td>Same setting as v. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>“on one Sabbath” (σαββάτῳ) v. 1, also vv. 3, 5</td>
<td>Same day as v. 1</td>
<td>Same day as v. 1</td>
<td>Same day as v. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>“to eat bread” (φαγεῖν ἀρτόν) v. 1</td>
<td>“to a wedding feast” (εἰς γάμον μου) v. 8</td>
<td>“luncheon or a dinner” (ἀριστον ἡ δείπνου) v. 12; “banquet” (δοξην) v. 13</td>
<td>“shall eat bread” (φάγεται ἀρτοῦ) v. 15; “a great banquet” (δείπνου μέγα) v. 16; “at the hour of the banquet” (τῇ ἁρπᾷ τοῦ δείπνου) v. 17; “shall taste of my banquet” (γεύσεται μου τοῦ δείπνου) v. 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus' direct audience</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Host</strong>: “a ruler of the Pharisees” (τινος τῶν ἀρχῶν τῶν Ἰουδαίων) v. 1; “Pharisees and Lawyers” (νομικοῦς καὶ Φαρισαίους) v. 3</td>
<td><strong>Guests</strong>: “to the ones who had been invited” (πρὸς τοὺς κεκλημένους) v. 7</td>
<td><strong>Host</strong>: “to the one who had called him,” i.e., the host (τὸ κεκληκτὸν αὐτῷ) v. 12—the host of v. 1</td>
<td><strong>Guest(s)</strong> “a certain one of those who were reclining” (τις τῶν συνανακειμένων) v. 15; “to you”—plural (ὑμῖν) v. 24</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(implied that Jesus is an invited guest)</em></td>
<td>“invite” (καλέω) v. 7, 8—twice, 9, 10—twice</td>
<td>“invite” (καλέω) v. 12, 13; “stop inviting” (μὴ φῶνει) v. 12; “invite you in return” (ἀντικαλέω) v. 12</td>
<td>“invite” (καλέω) v. 16, 17, 24; stronger forms than inviting, “bring in here” (εἰσάγαγε ὁδεῖ) v. 21; “compel them to enter” (ἀνάγκασον εἰσελθεῖν) v. 23</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Verb of Invitation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Jesus was watched maliciously</strong> (ἡσαν παρατηροῦμεν) by the religious leaders v. 1.</td>
<td>Jesus “fixed his attention” (ἐπεί χοῦ) on the guests’ behavior v. 7.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Similar structure</td>
<td>(a) Introduction: “but he was saying” (ἐλεγεν δὲ) v. 7</td>
<td>(a) Introduction: “but he was saying” (ἐλεγεν δὲ) v. 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Temporal note “whenever” (ὁταν) you are invited to a meal v. 8;</td>
<td>(b) Temporal note “whenever” (ὁταν) you prepare a meal v. 12;</td>
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<td>(c) What not to do: “don’t sit down at the place of honor” (μὴ κατακλιθῆς εἰς τὴν πρωτοκλισίαν) v. 8;</td>
<td>(c) What not to do: “stop inviting…” (μὴ φοινεῖ) those closest to you v. 12;</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) Consequence: “lest” (μὴ ποτε) v. 8;</td>
<td>(d) Consequence: “lest” (μὴ ποτε) v. 12;</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) What to do: “but whenever” (ἄλλα ὁταν) v. 10;</td>
<td>(e) What to do: “but whenever” (ἄλλα ὁταν) v. 13;</td>
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<tr>
<td>(f) Resulting reward: “then you will be honored” (τὸ ἔσται σοι δόξα v. 10;</td>
<td>(f) Resulting reward: “then you will be blessed” (καὶ μοιχαρίος ἐσῃ v. 14;</td>
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<td>(g) Grounds for reward: “because” (ὅτι) v. 11</td>
<td>(g) Grounds for reward: “because” (ὅτι) v. 14;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Chiasm | “A: Unconcern about others (humans) while giving an appearance of being religious | B: Self-seeking as a guest | B’: Self-seeking as a host | A’: Unconcern about others (God) while giving the appearance of being religious** |

A. The chiasm is suggested by Talbert, Reading Luke, 196.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needy guests</th>
<th>The edematous man (ὑδρωπίκος) v. 2</th>
<th>“recline at the last place” (ἀνάπεσε εἰς τὸν ἔσχατον τόπου) v. 9</th>
<th>“the poor, crippled, lame, blind” (πτωχοῦς, ἀναπείρους, χωλοῦς, τυφλοῦς) v. 13</th>
<th>“the poor, crippled, blind, lame” (τοὺς πτωχοὺς, ἀναπείρους, τυφλοὺς, χωλοὺς) v. 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reversal Language</td>
<td>What not to do: To self-seeking guests, Don’t seek “places of honor” (τὰς πρωτοκλίσιας) v. 7; “place of honor” (τὴν πρωτοκλίσια) v. 8</td>
<td>last place with shame” (μετ’ αἰσχύνης τὸν ἔσχατον τόπου) v. 9</td>
<td>Contrasted with: What to do: “Recline at the last place” (ἀνάπεσε εἰς τὸν ἔσχατον τόπου) v. 10</td>
<td>Invited are all absent: “But they all with one accord began to make excuses” (ὑπελαύνοντο ἀριστεῖς παρατείνοντες) v. 18</td>
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<td>↓ “last place with shame” (μετ’ αἰσχύνης τὸν ἔσχατον τόπου) v. 9</td>
<td>↓ “a better place” (ἀνώτερον) v. 10; “honor” (δόξα)</td>
<td>Contrasted with: Whom to invite: “the poor, crippled, lame, blind” (πτωχοῦς, ἀναπείρους, χωλοῦς, τυφλοῦς) v. 13</td>
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<td>“self exaltation” ↓ “humiliation (by God)” v. 11</td>
<td>Contrasted with: “self humiliation” ↓ “exaltation” (by God)” v. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous Banquets</td>
<td>Future divine passive</td>
<td>Blessing</td>
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<td><strong>to eat bread</strong> (φαγεῖν ἀρτοῦ) v. 1</td>
<td>“shall be humbled...shall be exalted” (ταπεινωθῇ σεται...ψυχῆ σεται) v. 11</td>
<td>“then you will be blessed” (καὶ μακάριος ἥτη) v. 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-humbling guests at the present banquet shall be exalted at the eschatological banquet (ψυχῆ σεται) v. 11</td>
<td>“for you will be repaid” (ἀνταποδοθήσεται) v. 14</td>
<td>“Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Μακάριος ὡς τις φαγεῖ αρτοῦ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ) v. 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>“for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (ἀνταποδοθήσεται γάρ σοι ἐν τῇ ἁναστάσει τῶν δικαίων) v. 14</td>
<td>“Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Μακάριος ὡς τις φάγει ἀρτοῦ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ) v. 15; “not one of those invited men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet” (οὐδεὶς τῶν ἅγωρων γεύσεται μου τοῦ δείπνου) v. 24</td>
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**Comments on the Relationships of the Four Paragraphs**

As it appears, the four paragraphs occur in the same place, “the house of a prominent Pharisee” (v. 1) on the same Sabbath day (vv. 1, 3, 5, implicit in 7, 12, 15). All four paragraphs are tied together in terms of an actual meal or a proposed meal setting, although there are numerous and interchangeable terms to express the theme of the banquet (“to eat bread” [φαγεῖν ἀρτοῦ, v. 1]; “banquet” [γάμος, v. 8]; “luncheon or dinner” [ἀριστον ἢ δείπνον, v. 12]; “reception” [δοξή, v. 13]; “shall eat bread” [φαγεῖται ἀρτοῦ, v. 15]; “dinner” [δείπνον, vv. 16–17, 24]). There is an interchange between “hosts” and “guests” in all four paragraphs that in Jesus speaks to a host (v. 1, several others in v. 3), guests (v. 7), host (v. 12, same as v. 1), and one guest (v. 24).
15), which broadens out to the full number of guests (v. 24). The key verb, “invite” (καλέω—11 occurrences21), is supplemented with other verbs (“invite” [φωνέω, v. 12]; “invite in return” [ἀντικαλέω, v. 12]; “bring in” [εἰσάγω, v. 21]; “compel” [ὁ νογάκαζω, v. 23]). The “malicious watching” by Jesus’ fellow guests in the Man with Dropsy paragraph (14:1–6) is matched by Jesus’ careful observation of the guests’ competition for the best seat in the Selective Seats paragraph (7–11). Luke narrates a similar structure in the Selective Seats paragraph and the Selective Guests paragraph (12–14): (a) introduction, (b) temporal note, (c) what not to do, (d) what to do, (e) consequences, (f) resultant reward, followed by the (g) grounds for the reward. The same four-fold group of needy persons (“poor, crippled, lame, blind v. 13) is noted in the Great Banquet paragraph 15–24).22 These needy persons are joined to the man with dropsy (v. 2) and the humble guest (v. 10) in terms of Jesus’ affirmation of them in their own needy condition.

Jesus’ subversive message expresses a present and future reversal through several contrasts: what not to do and what to do about occupying the first or last seats (vv. 7–10) and the eschatological reversal (v. 11); whom to stop inviting and whom to invite (vv. 12–13), coupled with an eschatological blessing (v. 14); absence of first invited guests contrasted with the presence of previously uninvited guests (v. 23); contrast between a guest’s statement about future participation in the messianic banquet (v. 15) and Jesus’ subversive message about the presence of the Kingdom of God, expressed in the invitation to needy persons (vv. 18–23). The future divine passives in the Selective Seats paragraph (v. 11) and in the Selective Guests paragraph (v. 14) further support the reversal language. There is also a cause-effect relationship between the closing of the Selective Guests paragraph (“you will be blessed and you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous,” v. 14) and a guest’s exclamation at the onset of the Great Banquet paragraph (“how blessed is the one who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God,” v. 15). A chiasm is also present among the four paragraphs which binds them together. Finally, all paragraphs express the message of simultaneous banquets at the literal and figurative levels. Thus, actual banquets are linked to an eschatological and messianic banquet. For those who accept Jesus and his subversive message another banquet awaits them in the coming kingdom of God. Thus, the four paragraphs are interlocked through verbs, nouns, themes, literary relationships, structure, chiasm, people, setting, phrases and message—all of which reveal a clear literary unity and artistry on Luke’s part.

My approach explores various nuances of the four paragraphs in 14:1–24 as they cohere with the overall message that Luke conveys to his readership. The present study presupposes that the four paragraphs are genuine stories and need to be

21. On the verb, καλέω, Schmidt states: “The fact that . . . Christians are the κεκλημένοι, with no qualifying addition, makes it clear that in the NT καλέω is a technical term for the process of salvation” (Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “καλέω,” TDNT 3:487–536 [489]).

22. A different order in v. 13 and v. 21.
read as stories as they correspond to Luke's emphasis on the banquet theme. Krieger suggests the language of historical “windows” and literary “mirrors,” which function interdependently, which is well-illustrated by the cohesion of the four meal paragraphs: “The historical nature of the Bible leads one to treat the story as a window to the event behind the text;” and to relive the Jesus-events as part of a community of faith. In the four banquet-paragraphs, Luke invites his readership to experience and feel the various points of tension and to be changed by Jesus' subversive message, when the readers return to their separate worlds, which will certainly involve meals and social occasions.

Explanatory Aside to Illustrate Social Interaction (Reciprocity) in the Banquet Paragraphs

Meal-settings serve to establish and maintain trust and solidarity. Sahlins observes that “Food dealings are a delicate barometer, a ritual statement, as it were of social relationships, and food is thus employed instrumentally as a starting, sustaining or a destroying mechanism of sociability.” Prior to exploring the four paragraphs, it is important to note three forms of reciprocity, originally suggested by Sahlins and developed by Koering, Moxnes and Malina.

Generalized reciprocity = An expression of altruism, without expectation of reciprocity, a return, grateful honor, praise, loyalty or changed status (e.g., Luke 6:35). It moves from the top to bottom and can be a form of redistribution, a one-way flow from those who have to the have-nots.

Balanced reciprocity = Giving with an implicit expectation of a return in kind to maintain sociability, group loyalty, ties, a form of hospitality, which expects an invitation in return for the offer (e.g., Luke 6:34). It preserves the status quo, erects boundaries, is exclusive and binds people together in terms of a shared theology, communal practice and religious rituals, while it excludes others who do not belong to the “elite” group, e.g. “toll collectors and sinners.

28. Moxnes, Economy of the Kingdom.
30. Moxnes, Economy of the Kingdom, 133.
Negative reciprocity = Taking from others in a communal setting, “the anti-social extreme,” “to get something for nothing” (e.g., table setting in Luke 11:37–38 with clean cups and dishes, while filled “with greed and wickedness” (11:39); meticulous tithing without social concern, “justice and the love of God” (11:43).

The three forms of reciprocity are illustrated in Luke’s four banquet paragraphs.

Man with Dropsy Paragraph (Luke 14:1–6)

Atmosphere

Luke notes the tense atmosphere of this meal in several ways. Before Luke introduces the dropsical man, he states that the meal took place on the Sabbath (v. 1). This is the third incidence of a controversial Sabbath healing (6:6–11; 13:10–1731); thus Luke prepares his readers for another conflict by his ominous reference to the Sabbath. Mention of the prominent Pharisee (v. 1)32 and the scribes and Pharisees (v. 3) recalls numerous paragraphs in Luke where these religious leaders both monitor and accuse Jesus. The periphrastic construction, “they were maliciously watching” (ἡν παρατηροῦμενοι) alerts the readers to the previous tension in the first Sabbath healing, “they were watching whether he would heal on the Sabbath” (6:7).33 Further, the malicious observation in 14:1 is a continuation of the stronger expressions in 11:53–54, “bitterly have a grudge against him, to besiege him with questions, ambush him to catch him in a mistake in something he might say.” Thus, “The social behavior of the guests in the Pharisees’ house already gives a clue as to whether they are ready to accept God’s way of giving a party.”34 While the prominent Pharisee appears to offer a generalized reciprocity in his invitation, readers are alert to the negative reciprocity of the malicious observers, who “have it in” for Jesus. Luke’s readership is alert to the way in which the religious opponents’ close scrutiny of Jesus belongs to their hostile attempts to catch Jesus in something he might say. Whether the man with dropsical illness appeared at the meal because he knew Jesus or whether he was a deliberate “plant” by Jesus’ critics is not clear; however, the use of the emphatic, “behold” (ὁδοὺ)35 coupled with the preposition, “before” (ἐμπροσθεν) him, might well suggest a “set-up.” It is certain that the religious leaders were intent upon making the sick man a foil for a

32. The same host resurfaces in 14:8, 9, 10, and 12.
33. A similar hostile watching is also evident in Luke 20:20.
35. The introduction of a nameless person at the beginning of a conflict story is similarly expressed in Luke (4:33 [a demoniac]; 6:6 [man with withered hand]; 7:37 [a certain sinful woman]; 13:11 [a crippled woman]; 14:2 [a certain dropsical man, ἁρμόστης τίς ἕν ὑδρωμάκος]).
mean-spirited accusation. Luke's readers are prepared for the sub-verbal question, "In view of the tense and malicious atmosphere, what will Jesus do?"

Healing

The healing of the man in the banquet setting is very briefly expressed, "So taking him, Jesus healed and released him" (v. 4b). In the earlier account of Levi's call and subsequent banquet, a healing of a paralytic precedes Levi's call (5:17-26); similarly the banquet for the 5000 men (9:10-17) is preceded by the account of the disciples' short-term missions trip, with an emphasis upon healing/exorcism accompanying their declaration of the kingdom of God ("authority over demons and healing of sickness" [9:2]; "to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" [9:2]; "preaching the good news and healing people everywhere" [9:6]; "such things" [9:9]; "reported to Jesus what they had done" [9:10]; "he spoke to them about the Kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing" [9:11]). And again, the healing of a blind man (Luke 18:35-43) directly precedes the meal in Zacchaeus' home (19:1-10).

In the messianic age, physical healing is an aspect that is closely associated with the banquet theme (Isa 35:4-10; 26:6-10; 55:1-3). The importance of healing for the messianic age is underscored by Jesus' agenda in Luke 4:18-19 (from Isa 61:1-2; 58:6). The banquet theme in 14:1-6 is prefigured by Jesus' statements in Luke 13:28-30 of the eschatological banquet (from Isa. 25:6-9), wherein people will come from the four points of the compass to celebrate in the divine banquet table. Luke intends that his readers understand that, for now, the messianic banquet is present in Jesus' healing ministry (5:17; 6:18-19; 13:16); as such, Jesus acts on behalf of this man with a generalized reciprocity in that nothing is expected from the man who was obviously ill.

Luke grounds Jesus' healing ministry at this banquet through two rhetorical questions (Luke 14:3, 5), both of which expect a positive answer: "Surely it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath!" (v. 3), "Surely anyone of you would immediately pull his son or an ox from a pit on the Sabbath!" (v. 5). Although the rabbis and Qumran sect argued over the legitimacy of such saving activity, the force of Jesus' rhetorical question is clear: "Of course, anyone acts redemptively on the Sabbath for a child or oxen." Perhaps the critics assume the same posture as the synagogue president who argued that since the bent-over woman is not afflicted with a life-threatening diseases,

36. The same verb "I release" (ἀπολύω) is used in Luke 13:12 with respect to the release of the crippled woman.

37. Creed opts for an easier reading, a fortiori, i.e., if you act for an ox, then how much more will you respond to a son who has fallen into a well (John Martin Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke [London: Macmillan, 1950], 189). Gerhard Schneider, Das Evangelium nach Lukas, Kapitel 11-24 (ÖTK 3; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1984), 312, argues unconvincingly that v. 5 is dependent upon Q (parallel to Matt 12:11).

38. bT Shab. 117b; m. Erub. 2:1-4.

she should come on another day to be healed (13:14; 14:2). In any case, "Jesus also criticizes his contemporaries for their lack of concern for a fellow human being." As such, Jesus' words echo Moses' humane injunction (Deut 22:4).

Silence

It is striking that the religious leaders say nothing after each of Jesus' rhetorical questions. The initial verb "they were silent" (ἡσύχασαν) after Jesus' first rhetorical question (v. 4) is followed by a stronger expression, "they were unable to 'make unjustified accusations' to these things" (οὐκ ἴσχυσαν ἀνταποκριθῆναι πρὸς τούτα 14:6), after Jesus' second rhetorical question (v. 5). Jesus is met with sustained silence to his two probing questions. Borg, following the contribution of Daube, argues for a tripartite literary form of "revolutionary action, protest, silencing of opponents." Jesus' revolutionary action in his table-fellowship with the religious leaders is deliberate, "an acted parable on which to do battle." The event itself is not simply Jesus' casual response to an invitation; Jesus' protest is expressed in the tension-filled banquet setting. Further, Luke's account notes that their pregnant silence to both rhetorical questions means that they cannot stand on any reasonable grounds. While the setting is that of balanced reciprocity, the religious guests reveal a negative reciprocity in their unspoken accusation and their revealing silence. Thereby, the host and guests are shamed. While they seek to ensnare Jesus in his speech and activity (11:53–54), Jesus' rhetorical questions render the critics speechless.

The Real Sabbath

In this paragraph, Luke affirms Jesus' healing presence at a banquet on the Sabbath. Jesus does not attack or denigrate the Sabbath in this meal setting, but he affirms the Sabbath's true purpose through his words and healing. The Sabbath is a celebration of satisfaction (Gen 2:2) and restoration of life, not a cessation from activity. What better day, than the Sabbath, to celebrate a man's hand becoming whole (6:10), a crippled woman able to stand upright (13:16, 12), or a sick man who becomes whole (14:3). It is a holy day with its true fast so well described in Isa 58:6–7, "to set the oppressed free, to break every yoke, to share bread with the hungry." Given the fact that the man's illness was not life-threatening and that Jesus does not wait until after the Sabbath, it

41. Friedrich Buechel, "κρίνω κτλ.," TDNT 3:921–54 (945).
44. Ibid., 83.
is Jesus who initiates the healing in a provocative manner: "Jesus, not his opponents, chose to make the Sabbath an issue." Jesus' subversive message is revealed in the conflict between Sabbath-holiness and compassion: "Thus compassion in the presence of human suffering became the implicit criterion for exceptions to Sabbath law." In this banquet setting ("to eat bread" [φαγεῖν ἐρτόν, v. 1]), Jesus' healing of the man with dropsy indicates that the Messiah himself is present. At the same time, such a banquet does not lessen Jesus' interest in the eschatological banquet, which is occasioned by a guest's remark ("blessed is the one who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" [Μακάριος ὁσιὸς φαγεῖται ἐρτόν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 15]).

Selective-Seats Paragraph (Luke 14:7–11)

The second paragraph of Jesus' table-talk is occasioned by his fixed attention on the self-seeking behavior of his fellow-guests at the Pharisee's home, who were vying for the seat(s) of honor, next to the host. Neyrey notes, "The perception of an ordered universe is replicated in the spatial arrangement of persons and things at a meal and in regard to the place where one sits . . . Even at a proper meal, there would also be concern over the seating arrangement of those eating, a ranking in terms of some value or honor system." Jesus' parabolic parody concerns the high and low places at a table; obviously, sitting at the host's right hand is the most prestigious position (e.g., Ps 110:1). On the one hand, the banquet setting appears to be a situation of balanced reciprocity between the host and guests, nonetheless there also appears the ugly fact of negative reciprocity; Luke depicts "the Pharisees as individuals who use hospitality for self-serving purposes . . . within the group itself, it created a situation of imbalance and competition," as well as manipulation and envy.

Shame and Honor

Luke notes Jesus' warning to the table-guests about choosing the seat(s) of honor (πρωτοκλητὸς), lest the host would recognize a late-coming and more distinguished person, and move this new guest to the seat(s) of honor. Meanwhile the would-be honor-seeking guests must proceed to occupy the last place of honor—all to their public shame; an embarrassing shame accompanies each step towards the guest's designated position in the last place. The host will need to verbally express the demotion, "Give your place to this person" (v. 9), a command that all the guests will hear; the

45. Ibid., 149
46. Ibid., 150.
contrasting word of promotion, “come up to a higher place (v. 10), to the humble guest in v. 10 is spoken “in the presence of all the fellow-guests” (ευκόπτων πάντων τῶν συμμαχιμενῶν σοι, v. 10). Both shame and honor will be evident to all. The “first places” (πρωτοκλησίας) of 14:7 parallels Jesus’ castigation of his religious opponents who loved “the first seat” (πρωτοκαθεδρίαν) of 11:43 in the synagogues, and Jesus’ later indictment of the Scribes, who “love greetings in the market places and first seats (πρωτοκαθεδρίας) in the synagogues and first couches (πρωτοκλησίας) at the dinners” (20:46).

A few remarks are in order with respect to the “shame-honor” (αἰσχύνη-δόξα) motif in the New Testament culture. Malina and Neyrey provide some cogent remarks on this cultural value: “Honor is the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes plus the positive appreciation of that person in the eyes of his or her group. In this perspective honor is a claim to positive worth along with the social acknowledgement of that worth by others. Honor is linked with ‘face’ (‘saving face’) and ‘respect’. At stake is how others see us and so how we see ourselves.”49 By way of contrast, “a ‘shameless’ person is one who does not recognize the rules of human interaction, and hence, social boundaries . . . people get shamed (not have shame) when they aspire to a certain status which is denied them by public opinion. When a person realizes he is being denied the status, he is or gets shamed; he is humiliated, and stripped of honor for aspiring to a value not socially his.”50 Jesus looks to the familiar and cultural practice of rank and status of the village. Persons who promote themselves incur shame while persons who make no claims and act with humility and modesty are promoted and bestowed with honor—visible to all.51 In addition, the modest person is addressed with the term, “friend” (φίλας, v. 10), a term, which also suggests intimacy and equality with the host. Real honor does not come from self-seeking but is bestowed by another, in this case, God (v. 11).

In the banquet setting of Luke 14, the Pharisee’s guests break “the fundamental rules of behavior in the community. Their competition for honor was a serious break with solidarity. Within Luke’s scheme, this represents another example of the social situation created by the Pharisees. They push towards balanced exchange in hospitality . . . at the same time, this expectation of reciprocity created tensions within the group.”52 Given this, Tannehill is correct to observe that here “The scribes and Pharisees have largely become stereotypes because they are being used rhetorically as negative examples of what the audience should avoid.”53

50. Ibid., 45.
52. Moores, Economy of the Kingdom, 135.
Thus, through this “parable,” the honor-seeking guests (v. 7) are shamed for their attitude and aggressive behavior, which also correlates with the shame of guests who maliciously wait for Jesus to take a wrong step with the sick man. Jesus, however, subverts “the socially shared map,” wherein people value their own worth and the worth of others on the basis of their social space within the village.

**Pride and Humility**

For Luke, Jesus’ message is far more than parabolic advice to proper decorum at a banquet (“don’t do this but do this”), but is grounded (“because” [ὁτι, v. 11]) in the eschatological reversal statements of pride and humility through two contrasting clauses:

“people who exalt themselves (before others) will be humiliated (by God);

“people who humble themselves (before others) will be exalted (by God) (14:11).

The divine passives (by God) lift the sphere of human behavior to the eschatological dimension of divine reversal; the thrust is far more than sage advice for it is concerned with the attitude of humility demanded by the coming kingdom. The parabolic nature of these sayings (14:7) is supported most clearly by the Parable of the Pharisee and Tax-Collector (Luke 18:9–14). Luke introduces the parable with the statement that this story was told to speak against the ones who trusted in themselves and who looked down with contempt upon others (18:9); in Luke 16:15, Jesus’ attack on self-exaltation is all the more pointed, “an abomination before God.” The parable of reversal (18:9–13) likewise finds its ground (“because” [ὁτι, 18:14]) in a statement that is exact with the paired statements above in 14:11. It is a maxim that is consistent with the Jesus-tradition and is emphasized in Luke-Acts. The elevation of humility as a virtue stands in contrast with Greek culture wherein humility is regarded as a vice. Tannehill notes, “An elevation in status is promised as a reward, and this promise is supported by the maxim,” which serves as the theological grounds. Humility “means to become a child again before God, i.e., to trust him utterly, to expect everything from him and nothing from self” in a personal way that is not dependent upon public and visible signs of humility, e.g., clothing.

The four banquet paragraphs together

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60. The sayings about humility and pride are deeply rooted in the idiom of the OT and Judaism: “Do not exalt yoursleff in the king’s presence, and do not claim a place among great men; it is better for him to say to you, ‘Come up here’ than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman” (Prov 25:6–7); “My son, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God. For great is the power of God;
witness to Jesus’ subversive message about sitting down with the humble or lowly (the man with dropsy, the last place, and the “poor, crippled, lame and blind” vv. 13, 21). The focus of Luke’s four paragraphs assumes that the addressed people possess both wealth and status; their issues surface in the banquet paragraphs and become the springboard for Jesus’ lessons about ultimate issues. Humility is the necessary virtue for reclining at the ultimate eschatological banquet, when God will reverse human opinion (“last-first, first-last” in 13:30).

Luke appears to be drawn to the “humble” (ταπεινός) word-family. Of 34 occurrences of the word-family in the New Testament, 7 belong to Luke, which is further augmented by related expressions, e.g., “poverty,” notably expressed through the annunciation and birth narratives of Luke 1–2. In Luke 3:5, Luke uses the extended quote from Isa 40:3–5, “every mountain and hill shall be leveled (πᾶν ὄρος καὶ βουνός ταπεινωθήσεται).” This paragraph on humility makes explicit what is implied in the three other paragraphs. Here, the starting point is the ambition of the invited guests (14:7) and the conclusion of the paragraph “demands submission to God’s decision rather than arrogant anticipation of it,” as well illustrated by the exclamation of the enthusiast in 14:15. Here Jesus offers hope for the humble poor, which is accentuated by Jesus’ warnings to the self-righteous and self-centered attitudes and behavior of others (Luke 18:28–30; 12:16–21; 16:19–31).

Selective Guests Paragraph (Luke 14: 12–14)

Issues of reciprocity

Jesus turns his attention to the host, the prominent Pharisee of 14:1. The surface issue in this banquet paragraph is based upon the principle of balanced reciprocity, do ut des, inviting others of one’s own socioeconomic group with the expectation of a returned favor. Sahlin notes that balanced “reciprocity stipulates two sides, two distinct social-economic interests. Reciprocity can establish solidary relations, insofar as the material flow suggests assistance of mutual benefit, yet the social fact of sides is inescapable.” Further, “it refers to direct exchange. In precise balance, the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay.” It reflects the idea that there can be no one-way flow of invitations to guests; if there is no reciprocity, then there will be a disruption of relationships.

As noted, the Selective Seats paragraph is similar to the Selective Guests paragraph in terms of structure; Jesus tells the host what not to do and what to do by way

by the humble he is glorified. What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not” (Sir 3:17–20); see also Ezek 21:26 (21:31 MT); 17:24 and numerous references in Bertram’s discussion of ὑψόω in the LXX (TDNT 8:606–607).


63. Ibid., 194.
of contrast. At issue is the question of whom to invite to a banquet. There is a four-fold group that the host should not invite, which corresponds to a fourfold group that the host is to invite:

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<th>Whom not to invite:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Friends, brothers, neighbors and rich neighbors (v. 12)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Whom to invite:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Poor, crippled, lame and blind (v. 13)</td>
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Luke portrays the Pharisees as people who use their religious and socio-economic status for self-seeking purposes. The expectation of exchange of a banquet invitation “mirrors their social relationship and strengthens their group cohesion and their dominant position in the village.”64 Their group cohesion is reflected in the first paragraph by their commitment to purity laws on the Sabbath through their shared authority to critique Jesus (14:1–6). The expressions of who not to invite are based upon house-group (brothers), kinsmen (lineage sector) and village sector (rich friends).65 The idea of reciprocity is accentuated by four comparable terms: “they should invite you in return” (ἀντικαλέσουσιν σε, v. 12), “and so you will be repaid” (γένηται ἀνταπόδομα σοι, v. 12), “they cannot repay you” (οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνταπόδομα σοι, v. 14), “you will be repaid” (ἀνταποδοθήσεται, v. 14). Luke accuses the religious leader and his peers for a selfish use of hospitality (balanced reciprocity), which excludes people who are underprivileged. Currently, the leaders exclude the less fortunate, for “Such a person would experience a serious loss of status if found to be socializing with groups other than one’s own.”66 A host who invites the marginalized expresses the enjoined humility of vv. 7–11, since his new guest list does not reinforce balanced reciprocity. There is no expectation of reward, return or heightened status. To be sure, recompense will come not from the guests but from God.

By way of contrast, Jesus provides a new guest list of invitees, which corresponds with Jesus’ initial sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:18–19) from the text of Isa 61:1–2 (“good news to the poor ... freedom for the prisoners ... recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed ... the year of the Lord’s favor). Society’s “broken victims” constitute Jesus’ agenda (see also Isa 35:5–6). The same agenda corresponds to Jesus’ response to the Baptist’s question about whether Jesus is the coming one or not. Luke accentuates Jesus’ life-giving mission to the vulnerable poor with the affirmation, “In that hour (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὁμοίῳ, 7:21).” Jesus was healing and giving sight to the blind, which is followed by Jesus’ statements, “blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are healed, the deaf hear, the dead are being raised, and good news is declared to the poor” (7:22). These “broken victims” lived on the borders or outside the village and are to be distinguished from the elite in the center of the city;67 the same group

64. Moxnes, Economy of the Kingdom, 131.
65. Ibid., 130.
67. Rohrbaugh (ibid., 155) offers a diagram of the pre-industrial city.
surfaces again in v. 21. According to Jewish law, such needy persons are regarded as unclean, similar to the man with dropsy in 14:1.

The term “poor” (πτωχός) embraces ideas of people who: 1) lack resources, 2) are downtrodden and oppressed due to lack, 3) have no power, influence or prestige, and who are also dependent upon God. Luke constantly thinks of oppression. Jeremias states that “the circle of ‘poor’ is wider. That becomes clear when we collect the designations and imagery with which Jesus characterizes them. He calls them the hungry, those who weep, the sick, those who labour, those who bear burdens, the last, the simple, the lost, the sinners.”

For example, Jesus’ beatitude about the poor in Matthew’s gospel is expressed as an inner need, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit” (Matt 5:3), while Luke’s beatitude expresses outward poverty and oppression, “Blessed are the poor” (Luke 6:20). While Luke’s guest-list only mentions four groups, the list can be supplemented with other New Testament lists, which draw from the language of Isa. 61:1–2; 29:18–19; and 35:5–6. These lists serve as examples of people in needy conditions; they could continue endlessly, as the continuation of the three Isaiah passages shows. It should be noted that the lepers and the dead are not mentioned in the three lists in Isaiah. That Jesus mentions them means that the fulfillment goes far beyond all promises, hopes and expectations.

The points at which the two guest-lists are contrasted appears in the social location of people to whom the invitation is extended and in their capacity to reciprocate. Jesus subverts the common balanced reciprocity in favor of a generalized reciprocity. Jesus highlights the reciprocity that expects nothing in return, not even gratitude, loyalty or praise for such benevolence; it is a one-way flow of benevolence. This type of hospitality insures that the “broken victims” are made members of the community; outsiders become insiders. This is the “end of a patron-client relationship in a traditional sense.”

Gratuitous generosity seeks to be inclusive not exclusive. The inclusive invitations can be understood within the broader category of the Lukan “almsgiving” (Luke 11:41).

The real reward

For an inclusive host, there will be a beatitude and genuine reciprocity, however the reciprocity is not with other humans but with God. The grounds (“because” [ὅτι, v. 14]) for the beatitude of the inclusive host (“you will be blessed” [μακάριος ἡμι, v. 14a]) is expressed through a genuine reciprocity; the reward is expressed in v. 14b, “you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous” (ἀνταποδοθήσεται γάρ ὦι ἐν τῇ αἰωνίῳ

69. Ibid., 105.
70. Moxnes, Economy of the Kingdom, 129.
71. Ibid., 133.
σει τῶν δικαίων). In the language of balanced reciprocity, a return-invitation should come soon from the invitee. However, in Jesus’ benevolence, the reward is deferred until the resurrection. Thus, the human benefactor is dependent upon God for a future reward—based upon gratuitous hospitality and almsgiving. For Luke, the community is to behave with inclusive and generous hospitality with the assurance of a divine reward. The new model mirrors the activity of God and his Son (1:51–53; 6:20–26). Consequently, God will reward those who feel and behave like him.

Behind Jesus’ “table-talk” in this paragraph is the conviction that the kingdom of God (14:15) makes possible, indeed normative, new modes of sharing for Luke’s readers, coupled with genuine humility and inclusion that expects nothing. Tight-knit groups must expand and open up the community to invite the stranger. The expected social behavior of inclusion illustrates the real concern and vibrant power of the newly formed community, whose host is Jesus the benefactor. Mention of the host in the Selective Guests paragraph (v. 12) and the Great Banquet paragraph (v. 16) might well suggest that in Luke’s readership, there are some individuals who have the finances to host such festive meals. Well-off hosts share a messianic meal with socioeconomic, religious and ethnic outcasts. Luke envisions room at the table for all.

The Great Banquet Paragraph (Luke 14:15–24)\textsuperscript{72}

The closing declaration about the future “resurrection of the righteous” (14:14) elicits the macarism of a proud and elite guest at the same meal, who is oriented to the future consummation, “Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God” (v. 15).\textsuperscript{73} Jesus will correct the proud presumption of this man (v. 15),\textsuperscript{74} also shared by his fellow guests noted by the plural, “to you” (ὑμῖν) in v. 24. Fitzmyer states, “In using the material from ‘Q,’ Luke has prefixed to it his own transitional verse, the remark of a fellow guest about the eschatological dinner in the kingdom (14:15).”\textsuperscript{75} Schottroff argues that “there could be no doubt in the minds of the self-righteous ‘scribes’ and ‘Pharisees’: they themselves would be the ones to sit at the table.”\textsuperscript{76} Attention can be drawn to the contrast between the proud guest who thinks of personal enjoyment and possession and the social thrust of the parable in terms of invitation and ministry to the unfortunate and outcast; the meal is to be shared with all, including the unfortunate and out-

\textsuperscript{72} Here I am unable to deal with the versions of the parable in Matt 22:1–14 and Gospel of Thomas 64.

\textsuperscript{73} The expression, “to eat bread” means to take part in the entire meal, i.e., one part signifies the whole. See the same expression in Luke 14:1.

\textsuperscript{74} Schottroff regards the macarism (v. 15) as a contradiction to Jesus’ statement in v. 14 (Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, Jesus and the Hope of the Poor [trans. Matthew J. O’Connell; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986], 100). Fieddermann notes that the participle, “having heard” (δικαίως, v. 15) is a “linking term in Luke” (Q, 723).

\textsuperscript{75} Fitzmyer, Luke (X–XXIV), 1052.

\textsuperscript{76} Schottroff and Stegemann, Jesus and the Hope of the Poor, 100.
cast. The adjective, “blessed” (μακάριος) is found in both verses (vv. 14, 15), which are future-oriented. The future tense, “shall eat bread” (φάγηται ὁ ἄρτος) is significant in that the guest is thinking about the eschatological banquet as a symbol of salvation, “an allusion to the kingdom-banquet mentioned in 13:29.”

There is a transition from those who will receive a reward at the resurrection of the righteous and those who will celebrate the banquet of the kingdom of God. The coming banquet in God’s kingdom is a promise of satisfaction, joy and privilege. The enthusiast has his sights set on the promised eschatological banquet, which is to be attended by guests coming from the four points of the compass (Luke 13:29). It is a banquet where those who are invited shall sit at table with the Messiah himself, the holy prophets, and all the renowned persons of faith in Israel’s history (13:28). It is indeed a future banquet the wonder of which almost defies description. While the conversation is initially directed to the enthusiastic guest (v. 15), the audience progresses to the plural (“to you” [ὑμῖν, v. 24]).

The awaited messianic feast is present

While the elated guest highlights the future consummation, Jesus corrects the guest, who looks to the future alone. Perrin understands the parable by the words, “The necessity for decision NOW.” What Jesus proceeds to share with the ecstatic guest at his side (14:16) is the incredible news that the messianic feast is present in the here and now. The Pharisees and other dinner guests fail to grasp the truth since they critique Jesus’ shameful table-fellowship with tax-collectors and sinners (Luke 5:30). From their vantage point, there is no connection whatsoever between Jesus’ present and shameful activity and the future feast. Of course, the parable in no way negates the concrete promise of the future messianic banquet (Luke 13:28–29; 22:28–30). Accordingly, Luke’s readers are reminded that there is an “already” and a “not yet” of the kingdom of God.

The “already” is underscored by the present imperative, “come” (ἐρχόμενος), which is knit together with the declaration, which explains why people should come to the

79. There are other instances in Luke where Jesus corrects people’s questions or statements (e.g., Luke 10:29; 11:27–28)
80. Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 110. This urgency and communicative intent is present in other parabolic “lessons” given during meals. At Simon the Pharisee’s meal (Luke 7:36–50), after Jesus gives the parable of the two debtors, Maxwell (*Hearing Between the Lines*, 134–35) observes that Luke’s readers and hearers would like to know Simon’s response to the question “Which of the two debtors will love the forgiving creditor more?” A decision “NOW” comes clearly into view for Luke’s audience. By omitting the expected response from Simon, Luke allows the readers and listeners to provide for themselves what Simon’s response should be, in effect Luke “encourages a personal response of their own. No one wants to be the one who loves Jesus less; the lesson of the parable extends its power outside the narrative and into the listeners’ lives” (135).
banquet, “because all is now ready” (ὅτι ἡδὲ ἐτοιμό ἐστίν, ν. 17) and the report of the servant, “yet there is room” (ἔτι τόπος ἐστίν, ν. 22). For Luke, every person must take seriously the now of salvation. Linnemann observes that “There is a tension between the evaluation of the situation by Jesus’ audience and Jesus’ own understanding of it, as it is expressed in parable . . . It is to come to have faith in the Gospel, which invites to God’s feast now and to act accordingly. The whole future depends for each man on his taking seriously this ‘now’ this parable shows.”

The invitation meets with a mixed-response.

The parable begins with the action of a certain man’s preparation of a banquet. The prospective guests who are invited to the dinner are persons who decline the invitation. The general statement of the rejection by “all with one accord began to make excuses” (ἡρέταντο ἀπὸ μιᾶς πάντες παρατηθῆσαι, ν. 18), is particularized by three specific invited guests, who reject the invitation. Luke says that the response of the first two invited guests has an affected air of decorum, “please, consider me excused” (ἐξε με παρατηθῆσαι, νν. 18, 19), while the third invited guest expresses a flat-out refusal, “I cannot come” (οὖ δύνασαι ἐλθεῖν, ν. 20).

Building upon his experience in the Middle-Eastern world, Bailey argues that the given reasons for their refusal are both stupid and insulting: “Surely a last minute refusal to attend a great banquet is bad taste in any culture.” The statement of the first guest, “I have to examine the purchased field” (ν. 18) is a “bold-faced lie. No one buys a field in the Middle East without knowing every square foot of it like the palm of his hand.” Similarly, the one who says that he needs to try out five yoke of oxen is ridiculous. Farmers go to the market or seller’s field to see whether a pair of oxen can really pull together as a strong team with an even-pull. This is compounded by five pair of oxen that need to be tested. Again Bailey remarks that “All of this obviously takes place before the buyer even begins to negotiate a price. Again the excuse offered is a transparent fabrication.” The third invited guest offers no statement about what he needs to do in the light of his recent marriage; thus the guest is essentially saying, “Yesterday, I said I would come, but this afternoon I am busy with a woman, who is more important to me than your banquet.” Surely such an excuse would be rude in any society, and it is intensely rude in the Middle Eastern world and totally unprecedented.”

82. “a certain man man” (ἀνδρὸς ἄνδρος τις) in ν. 16; “master” (κύριος) in νν. 21, 22, and 23; “householder” (οἰκοδεσπότης) in 21.
84. Ibid., 95.
85. Ibid., 97.
86. Ibid., 99. For a humorous take on the third invited guest, see Bruce W. Longenecker, “A
Luke would have his readership reflect upon the nature of this invitation to a banquet. God hopes that people will respond to this present invitation. Thielicke says, “In the first place we must see that it is a real ‘invitation’ and by no means an order to report for service. The message does not come as a ‘thou shalt,’ a categorical imperative. It does not come to us as a duty and a law. Rather, God addresses us as a friend and host.” 87 The text makes it clear that no one is excluded from the great banquet except by a personal and accountable rejection of a warm invitation. The host invites people to a celebration of life, which makes its blatant and abusive rejection all the more monstrous.

By way of contrast, the host is driven by an inner compulsion to completely fill the banquet hall with anybody and everybody who would respond to the invitation, “in order that my banquet hall may be filled” (Ἰνα γεμισθῇ μου ὁ οἶκος, v. 23). Something is not right about a partially filled banquet-hall. Even though the householder is angry with those who rejected his offer, his commitment to fill the banquet is uppermost in his mind. There is a clear progression in terms of invitation that becomes stronger with each sending of the servant: “invite” [καλέω, v. 17]; “lead/bring them here” [ἰσθήγηγε τὸ ὀδός, v. 21]; and “compel them to enter” [ἀναγκάζομαι ἵστηλθεῖν, v. 23]). There is also a geographical progression where the servant should go to bring in guests from: 1) the town elites: who reject the host’s invitation, 2) the outskirts (streets and lanes), where the non-elites, poor, maimed, blind and lame, are found, and 3) the roads and hedges, i.e., fences around houses and vineyards, inhabited by vagabonds and beggars 88 as well as outcast persons. The first two geographical areas are marked off by the presence of walls that separated the elite from the non-elite and society’s outcasts. 89 Rohrbaugh’s analysis indicates that “The internal walls, moreover were usually arranged so that watchmen could control traffic and communicate between sections . . . and were closed at night, thereby cutting off inter-group communication.” 90

After the insulting rejection by the town-elites, the servant is sent out to the non-elites within the city and even outside to the place of the outcasts and homeless, “choked with refuse and frequented by scavenging dogs, pigs, birds and animals.” 91 What does this indicate? Surely, the compulsion of the host to fill the messianic hall “NOW.” The parable, within its context, affirms that the messianic meal has already begun as a proleptic celebration of the coming kingdom, and is fulfilled in the extension of the Kingdom of God to society’s “broken victims” and outcasts. Luke says that

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88. This is also noticed in the BDAG entry for “φράγμος” (865).


90. Ibid, 135.

91. Ibid.
the infusion of the poor and outcasts is due to God's compulsive and driving purpose to offer the kingdom to all—irrespective of ritual purity and socio-economic considerations. The eschatological banquet is not simply a future apocalyptic event (Luke 14:15), but is a meal with Jesus that has already begun—a meal which shatters all previous barriers.

Some interpreters argue or suggest that the first foursome (poor, maimed, crippled and blind, v. 13) refers to literal conditions, while the second foursome (poor, maimed, blind and crippled, v. 21) is figurative and refers to salvation history, i.e., the movement from the Jews to the gentiles. But this argument lacks support. With Kim I would ask: "Is it really possible that Luke intends his readers to read almost identical verses in a different way one after another?" To be sure, Luke does reveal a concern for the concentric movement of the gospel from the Jewish to the Gentile recipients, but here in this chapter, such allegorical nuance is untenable. The gospel as a whole is concerned with the poor and unfortunate and does not spiritualize or allegorize these persons.

For Luke and his readership, the thrust of the Selective Guests paragraph and the Great Banquet paragraph may well reveal a hiatus between the rich and the poor, between the elite and non-elite, which runs counter to Jesus' purposeful activity with the poor and non-elites. The readership, which has accepted Jesus' banquet table talk, not only responds to Jesus' invitation, but is called upon to celebrate with society's "broken victims." To be sure, there is a warning found in v. 24 about the ones who reject Jesus' invitation; they will not partake of the banquet, even many of the actual guests in the Pharisee's home. However, this warning does not minimize the parable's positive message of the invitation, i.e., the missional and inclusive thrust of Jesus' ministry. Luke intends that his readership not adopt the balanced reciprocity of their contemporary culture but embrace a generalized reciprocity, a gratuitous generosity, which seeks no return. He hopes that readers take up Jesus' purposeful attitude and behavior to those who do not "belong." The thrust of the parable in vv. 15-24 is but one example of almsgiving.


93. Kyung-Jun Kim, Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology (JSNTSup 155; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 188. Klein, Lukasevangelium, 509, for example, does not introduce such different and inappropriate readings.

Implications

Luke invites his readers and hearers to reflect upon their attitudes and behavior. In a forceful manner, Luke challenges the wealthy and elite to forgo their prized status quo. He seeks conversion in his community from prideful attitudes and behavior that exclude others from participation in the community and banquet of God. The theme of renunciation is taken up in the following paragraph (14:25–35), and constitutes a challenge to Jesus’ would-be disciples or Christians of Luke’s day. In Luke’s day, self-renunciation means the refutation of both position and wealth—the proprietary spirit that seeks to possess and selfishly enjoy without thought for the dispossessed. Surely, the rich and the elite are the most vulnerable to Jesus’ provoking message. The call to follow Jesus in mission is not simply a response to an invitation but a reckoning with the cost of personal discipleship. The rich need to renounce their dependence upon wealth and personal attachments and provide for the poor and disenfranchised in a humble manner. Genuine followers of Jesus must be both humble and inclusive in their attitudes towards others. The elite need to renounce position and privilege and side with the humble poor and invite them and celebrate with them as peers in Jesus’ messianic banquet. Societal codes need conversion, which may well mean a personal loss for the rich and elite. The text also impels the Lukan community to join in a missional concern for all, including society’s “broken victims.” The invitation is present, the offer of the Kingdom of God is here, the messianic banquet is for all, even though some refuse the invitation.

Jesus confronts common practice and offers a new way of thinking, changed attitudes and a new way of conduct, which embrace both present and future aspects of the kingdom of God; “It is also instruction and warning to members of the Christian community who may have to choose between their social advantages and the call to follow Jesus.”

Ostensibly, Jesus is the guest at a Sabbath meal, but through his table talk, he is the genuine host who offers a new way of life; “Only those who receive him as guest in their home can receive him as Lord and host of the Banquet of the Kingdom of God.”

Isaiah’s messianic banquet is fulfilled in Jesus’ table-fellowship, which is a proleptic celebration of the consummated banquet of the kingdom of God that still awaits the people of God. The messianic meal is expressed in healing, celebration of the Sabbath and the affirmation of the inestimable worth of persons in God’s sight (14:1–6); people and their needs are more important than rules. The banquet also expresses the paramount need for genuine humility, which alone will lead to exaltation by God (4:7–11); “the host is one who, when he comes (vv. 9, 10) rewards or punishes those


The list of invited guests at the messianic feast will be inclusive, embracing society's "broken-victims" and outcasts (14:12–14, 21); such invitees are people whom Jesus has welcomed in his person, words and works. Luke informs his readers that gratuitous inclusion will not mean a human pay-back but a reward from God, the ultimate benefactor, celebrated in the resurrection of the righteous. Luke's Parable of the Great Banquet (14:15–24) affirms that the Kingdom of God is present and is closely linked with generosity to the poor and non-elite.

As a whole, Luke's four paragraphs call for a conversion from balanced reciprocity to a generous reciprocity, expressed through humble attitudes and social behavior. In Luke's perspective, the people of substance and status must heed a call to "break rank" from their socio-economic customs and find their lot with the sick, the poor, the humble and the outcasts. He addresses the whole network of communal relationships between the elite and non-elite (e.g., "the first seat" [πρωτόκλητον]), which certainly includes the socio-economic hiatus between the rich and poor. The banquet-theme serves "as a metaphor for behavior in life," and includes attitudes and behavior in one's social network. It includes attitudes to the sick, friends, neighbors, outsiders and outcasts, social position, the location of one's home, economic parity and social expectations. Through the four banquet paragraphs, Luke "knows that table fellowship is the litmus test the elite will watch." Indeed the chapter serves as a clear warning for people of substance who are included in Luke's readership.

Luke also stresses that the messianic banquet is both present and future, expressing itself again in a mission to the outsiders, i.e., society's "broken victims" and outcasts (14:15–25). The Lukan community of readers needs to follow Jesus' example of ministry to society's "broken victims." The community is thus to align its missional thrust with people who are high on Jesus' agenda. Luke would expect any Christian community attuned to his narrative to also be realistic in that it will experience rejection, similar to the conflicts in Luke 14, particularly with the rejection of the invited guests; the rejection of Jesus and the host of Luke 14:15–24 may well mirror the community's experience. Nevertheless, Jesus' new community is to be both passionate and intentional to convince people of the gratuitous generosity of God. As Bailey notes, "There is a centrifugal force of mission taught in the parable . . . out beyond the city. If God's salvation is to reach the ends of the earth (Isa 49:6) someone must take the message out and present it with all the winsomeness possible (14:23)."

98. Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor*, 100.