

Please turn with me in your copies of God's Word to the Gospel of Luke chapter 14. This morning we are gathered together for a celebration. Yes, it is the Lord's Day in which we gather together to come before the throne of grace and offer our sacrifice of praise, but this Lord's Day we are also coming together to celebrate the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus our King. As we approach the table that is set before you this morning, we must remember what this table is and who it is that we are communing with. This bread you are to eat and this wine you are to drink testifies to the fact that Jesus Christ came into this world to seek and save the lost. It is my hope for you today that you come to a greater appreciation of this crucial aspect of the Gospel and you receive the Word in preparation of receiving the sacrament. So hear now the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of the Lord from Luke chapter 14 beginning at verse 25.

Read Luke 14:25-15:7

Pray

Oftentimes Christians can be accused of over-emphasizing certain truths within Scripture. There are certain soap-box doctrines, hobby-horse doctrines, that we tend to focus our attention on, and quite frankly, these can be talked about too much. However, what we see here in our text today is not one of those things. You cannot stress the truth that is found here too much. You have a wonderful Savior who loves to receive sinners. We have a God who willingly stepped down from His seat in heaven, condescending to take on human flesh, who lived a perfect life fulfilling the law that you couldn't fulfill, dying the death that you should have died, who shed His blood to purchase redemption for His people, who rose victorious over death, hell, and the grave, and is seated at the right hand of the Father ruling and reigning over all things as the mediatorial God-man. And this God-man Christ Jesus loves to receive sinners, even the worst of sinners. If we are to be accused of ever over-emphasizing a truth of Scripture, let it be that Christ Jesus loves to receive sinners. Friends, this is the Gospel. This is

what is put on display before you in these elements. Christ's body broken for you; His blood poured out for the remission of sins. This is what you proclaim when you partake of this sacramental meal. This is what you confess when you take on the name of Christ and claim Him as your own. This is what you lean of when you are doubting or the weight of the world is on your shoulders. This is what you rest in when the evil one is seeking to cast you down, to convince you that you are too evil and wicked to be a Christian. Friends, the exhortation to you this day is to turn to Christ Jesus, the one who receiveth sinners. Whether you are an unbeliever who denies the faith, or you are one who has never known a day in which you have not trust in Him, the exhortation is the same: turn to Christ Jesus, the one who receiveth sinners. We will consider this exhortation under three actions of Christ in receiving sinners: first, Christ Jesus calls sinners; next, Christ Jesus sups with sinners; and lastly, Christ Jesus rejoices over repentant sinners.

Let us first consider that Christ Jesus calls sinners. We see this in the latter portion of Luke 14. Christ Jesus calls sinners to be willing to forsake all for the sake of the Gospel. Look with me again at chapter 14 and verse 25, "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Every one of us loves our relationships and our families; and yet, if you are to be a disciple of Christ, you must comparatively hate them; you must love them less than you love Christ. If you are to turn to Christ Jesus, if you are to heed the call to you, if you are to be His disciple, then everything in this world must be counted but loss compared to the excellency of knowledge of Christ Jesus as Paul says in Philippians 3:8. Nothing in this world can take a place of priority over Christ in your life, for that is the height of idolatry. I know of men and women who have been completely shunned from their families, who have lost all that they have owned, who have been disinherited from their parents will, and

who have faced all of this with exceeding joy because they counted it all but loss when compared to their Savior. Friends, you must do the same. You must be willing to give up everything you have for the sake of Christ should the Christian life call for it. Do not say let me tend to my affairs first and then I'll come to Christ; let me get my life straightened out and then I'll come to Christ; let me go say goodbye to my loved ones and then I'll come to Christ. No, the call of Christ Jesus to sinners is to forsake all, take up your cross, and follow Him.

This is a cross you must bear; it is a yoke which you must take upon yourself. You must bear it when Christ calls you to it, and in bearing it you must have your eye set on Christ, and fetch encouragements from Him, and live in the hope of of the reward that comes from Him. So you the call of Christ Jesus to you as well is to count the cost. See what it is that you will lose and compare that with what it is you will gain. See if it is truly worth forsaking everything, lest you make a false profession and fall by the wayside into apostasy. We see this in verses 28 through 35, “ For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Christ uses three illustrations, that of a builder, that of a king, and that of salt, in order to drive this point home. Every one sees

that a builder, who, through neglecting to count the cost, has to leave his structure unfinished, would be looked down upon as a foolish man. But far greater is the foolishness of one who begins to follow Christ, and afterwards by his apostasy shows that he had never truly considered how much was required to be a disciple of Christ. A king who hastily go to war with an enemy that was too powerful for him would expose both his kingdom and his life to grave danger. So it is also with a man who begins to war with sin and Satan without knowing how it is that he can defeat them. Just as a hasty profession of faith exposes him to self-deception, so a hasty abandoning of the faith will subject him to the heavier condemnation. Do not be as the salt which loses its flavor and is good for nothing but being trampled underfoot. Friends, you must count the cost if you are to bear your cross and be Christ's disciple.

Have you done this? Have you truly counted the cost, seen the worthlessness of the things of this world when compared to the glory of the things of God? Have you devoted yourself to forsaking all things for the sake of the Gospel? You must be ready to part with your reputation, your interest, your worldly ease and pleasures, your friends, your freedom, and even your life: but in return for them you may expect, "the honour that cometh of God," "the riches of Christ that are unsearchable," "the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore:" you even now possess that "peace which passeth all understanding," together with the freedom that come from being a child of God; and soon you shall inherit eternal life and glory in the immediate presence of the Almighty. If you have not counted the cost, if you have not heeded the call of Christ to forsake all, if you have not borne up your cross in order to follow Him, then this meal today is not for you. If you have not traded the things of the world for the things of Christ then do not come and partake of this sacrament, lest you eat and drink damnation upon yourself. Christ Jesus calls sinners; heed His call.

In heeding His call you will find the great joy and benefits that come through being His. This leads us now to consider that Christ

Jesus sups with sinners. We see this in the first two verses of chapter 15, “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” These Pharisees sought to disparage Christ, to malign His character, by stating that He receiveth and eateth with sinners, but what a glorious reality it is dear saints. If you have counted the cost, if you have heeded His call, if you have taken up your cross, Christ Jesus receives you into His household and sits you down at His table and sups with you. Christ receives not the self-righteous, not the good, not the whole-hearted, not those who think that they do not need a Savior; but the broken in spirit, the contrite in heart—those who are ready to confess that they have broken God's laws, and have earned nothing but His displeasure. These and these alone are who Christ came to save. Christ Jesus died for sinners. His body was broken for sinners. His blood was shed for sinners. Because of that, it is sinners who are welcomed at His table; sinner who approach not because of their own worthiness but because of the worthiness of He who clothes them in His righteousness.

What a great honor and privilege it is that Christ Jesus sups with sinners. It is in being welcomed into the household, being sat down at the King's table, and dining with Him that the greatest honor is found; and brothers and sisters, that honor is yours in Christ. If Christ has called you, compelled you to come and feast with Him, He will never cast you away from His table. Rest in that promise, dear saints. Come to His table with thanksgiving and gladness, feasting upon the grace which is offered to you this day. Christ Jesus sups with sinners, and that means you and me. As we come to this table today it is not a mere memorial that we are observing, it is not merely a meal that we share with one another, but instead we are truly and spiritually feasting upon Christ and with Him. In this sacrament we are spiritually brought up into the heavenlies and are seated at the table of King Jesus who partakes with us. The fact that Christ Jesus sups with sinners is nowhere put on display in this age so clearly as in this sacramental meal. But this

meal is not the only one we will have with Him, but instead points us to that great heavenly meal, that marriage supper of the Lamb that we see in Revelation 19, “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

If you have been called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb then come with joy to the table set before you. Do not let your weakness in faith or the vileness of your sin convince you to refrain from coming to this table. Do not let the whispers of the devil keep you from supping with you King. If you are weak rest in the fact that He is strong. If you are doubting then take comfort in the fact that if you have come to Christ in humble reliance upon Him as your Savior and Lord then He will never cast you off. The Westminster Larger Catechism states, “One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; and in God’s account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity: in which case (because promises are made, and this Sacrament is appointed, for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians) he is to bewail his unbelief, and labor to have his doubts resolved; and, so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord’s Supper, that he may be further strengthened.” This sacrament is a strengthening ordinance, so come and partake freely. See the blackness of your sin, but see the greatness of your Savior and come and sup with Him. Christ Jesus sups with sinners.

But it is not all sinners that Christ Jesus sups with. The Pharisees themselves were sinners after all, and it is not to them that this passage is speaking. Earlier in this book we see a very similar scene, chapter 5 verses 30 to 32, “But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” It is not the self-righteous sinners who see no need for a Savior who sup with Christ, but the penitent sinner who flees to his Savior. This leads us to consider our final point: Christ Jesus rejoices over repentant sinners. Look with me at verses 3 through 7, “And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

What a beautiful image we are given here of Christ the Good Shepherd going after the sheep who is lost and in danger of destruction. Matthew Henry says the sinner “is like a lost sheep, a sheep gone astray; he is lost to God, who has not the honour and service he should have from him; lost to the flock, which has not communion with him; lost to himself: he knows not where he is, wanders endlessly, is continually exposed to the beasts of prey, subject to frights and terrors, from under the shepherd’s care, and wanting the green pastures; and he cannot of himself find the way back to the fold.” When the Shepherd finds His sheep He does not chastise it or drag it along by His crook, but instead lovingly and gently takes up the sheep in His arms and carries it home. Beloved, do you see how beautiful this imagery is? Christ Jesus came into this world to seek and to save you. He did not leave you to your

wanderings; He did not leave you to your own devices; He did not leave you to be overcome by Satan who “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” No, He came and sought you and found you in your lost estate and carried you home in His loving tender arms. And He keeps doing that time and time again when we fall back into sin. Christ follows backsliding sinners with the calls of His Word and the strivings of His Spirit, until in due time they are brought back from their wanderings.

Is Christ doing that to you this morning? Have you wandered from the fold, fallen back into the sins of this world, the lusts of the flesh, and are in danger of being devoured by the evil one? Hear the call of the Good Shepherd who calls you back into His green pasture by the proclamation of the Word to you today. Christ is willing to receive you, for He came all the way from heaven to seek you and find you out in your wanderings, and to save you and rescue you from your miseries. He has given proof of his sincere interest in your welfare, in that He has shed His very blood to redeem your soul from death and hell. Turn to Him. Heed the call to return to the fold, to be forgiven of your sins and backslidings, and to be welcomed home at His table. The joy that will overcome those in heaven will be greater than anything you have ever experienced, if you would just repent and come unto Him. Charles Simeon writes, “While we remain impenitent we are afar off from God: we wander further and further from the path of life. But in repentance we are made to see our guilt and danger: we gladly embrace the mercy offered to us in the Gospel, and give up ourselves to God to be governed by his will, and be saved by his grace.” So heed the call of our Lord, “Repent ye and believe the Gospel;” and know that your Savior rejoices over each and every one who comes unto repentance, because Christ Jesus rejoice over repentant sinners.

Friends, do not seek to come to Christ with anything, besides your sin; do not seek to come to Christ with your prayers for a recommendation; do not come to Him even with professions of your faith; come to Him with your sin, He will give you faith. If you have

never heeded the call of Christ to come unto Him, I implore you, do not let this moment pass from you. You stand at a pivotal moment in your life. Will you give in to the lusts of the flesh, to the sins that so easily beset you, to the wooings of Satan; or will you submit yourself humbly before the Lord, repenting of your sins, casting off the old man who is of the world and putting on the righteousness of Christ? Friends, today is the day of salvation; do not let this moment pass, for there may not be another. Or are you sitting there thinking that you are too vile a sinner to come to Christ, that your soul is too black to feast at His table? Then hear the comforting words of our Savior, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Listen to the words of that great prince of preachers, “Oh, then, ye chief of sinners, ye vilest of the vile, ye who are the scum of the city, the refuse of the earth, the dregs of creation, whom no man seeketh after, ye whose characters are destroyed, and whose inmost souls are polluted, so black that no fuller on earth can whiten you, so debased that ye have sunk beyond the hope of any moralist to reclaim you! come ye—come ye to Christ. Come ye at his own invitation. Come, and you shall be surely received with a hearty welcome.”

As you prepare to come to this table that is set before you, know that if you were to come in your own strength, by your own worth, that you could never come and partake in a worthy manner. But you have been bought by the blood of Christ, have been clothed in His righteousness, and it is His worthiness that has been credited to you; so come and eat freely, sinner though you are, and turn to Christ Jesus, the one who receiveth sinners.