

Bacon and Eggs: -SLIDE 1

Introduction

“What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!”

We continue where we left off last week in Luke - You will recall that Jesus was at lunch with the Pharisees and he had set them straight that there was nothing in Heaven for them if they carried on the way they were.

He was challenging the foundation of their faith.

They believed that they were storing up rewards in Heaven. Jesus had just made it clear that there was no room for their legalism in Heaven.

He told them that were too proud to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and that unless they humbled themselves they would never make it.

That opening remark was the response from one of the Pharisees present, it was both:

- a dismissal of all that Jesus had just spoken plainly to them
- and a reaffirmation to other Pharisees that their belief in their own religiousness was enough.

Jesus was not one to back away, as Julian said last week he spoke Truth to Power and this was no exception. There was more truth in store for the Pharisees and there is plenty of Truth in store for us this morning too.....

Let's Pray:

Father God, loving and powerful God we come to your Word today with open hearts and open minds. If there is any truth in the words that you have given me to speak this morning, please also give us ears to hear. We come to you in humbleness and surrender to your will for our lives. In your holy name we pray AMEN:

This morning I have titled my message Bacon and Eggs.

This is not the new Breakfast Church model, and I don't want to be dwelling on food too long, but this image reflects the theme of this passage well I think.

I am sure all will have become clear by the time we conclude. I promise.

Read Luke 14:15-35 –

After that very dismissive comment Jesus did what he does best, especially for the Pharisees – he told them a Parable.

Let's start by looking at this a little closer and then we move on.

Some important people had been invited to a big feast. In lead up they had said “absolutely, I will be there”, whether they had bells on or not we don't get told!

The host goes off and gets everything ready, and when he has killed the calves and the pigs and peeled the potatoes and got the slow cooker(s) full of pumpkin soup (this is Baptist feast) he tells them – right, - now is the time - sit up and let's start the feast.

And in this story that is when the excuses come out. A new wife, an ox, a piece of land.

Those things are more important at that time than the feast to which they have been invited, and to which they had first accepted. Whether they were genuine excuses or not is another story, we could say so much more about that, but time is against us. But the thing to remember here is that the Ox, the Wife and the land were more important than the feast.

So, the feast is made available for those in the street, the paupers, the down and out, the exiles. Those who had nothing that would get in the way – and they made the most of it!

And then in Verse 24 the Master says, "none of those I invited will taste my banquet."

Of course, we know that the banquet is an allegory, an image, a picture of salvation. Those who had initially committed to being involved were not going to taste of the salvation banquet! And what a banquet it will be....

Read: Isaiah 25:6 – 8 –

This Parable was a warning to Pharisees specifically but there are things in there for us.

- The Ox – A source of business/work/the means of income?
- The new wife – our relationships perhaps?
- Land – our Possessions?

To the Pharisees this was an absurd story. They were certainly never about to believe Jesus that their salvation was in doubt.

BUT: Jesus really was talking with some urgency by this stage of his ministry. As Randal said 3 weeks ago – Repent or Perish. Of course, we know Jerusalem was destroyed 30 years later.

Jesus did not mince his words with the Pharisees and when he spoke to the multitudes he was equally as straight.

In those days Rabbi's had followers, groups of people who would walk with them, listen to them teach and learn from them.

They became known as Disciples of those Rabbis. Jesus was no different – he was seen by many, as we know, as a Rabbi and a Teacher only; - and he attracted his fair share of followers.

It was not followers he wanted of course, and it was to this group Jesus next spoke in Luke 25 – 35.

As his ministry continued those that were truly committed to him were becoming few and far between.

He was preaching a tough message. Some would say it was very narrow! David Anderson talked about this 3 weeks ago:

Jesus had made it clear in Chapter 13 that the door was narrow and the way was hard.

Verse 26 and 27 of chapter 14 were no easier and then in Verse 33 he hits them again:

Read V26 and also 33:

Let's look at that:

Firstly, when Jesus says hate he is not talking of emotional hatred, or despising. The word hate is used in a way to mean a lesser love. He is saying that our love and surrender to Him should be so strong, that when compared to that, our love of everything else is like hatred.

He is not telling us to go around hating our family and our life to the point of harm.

But in order to be His Disciple we must not put anything ahead of him.

When Jesus used the word Disciple the meaning had shifted from 'Follower', like those who follow around after the latest and greatest Rabbi, to a more committed, dedicated, devoted follower.

Jesus was using it to define His true followers, those who would be fully committed to him – the word we would now use is Christian. To be in Christ.

It is not easy stuff. But it is real, and it is Truth.

Jesus is to be our most important relationship. We are to surrender to him so that what is important to him is important to us. What is significant to Him is significant to us. The People that are significant to him are significant to us. With our possessions we are to be owners of nothing and stewards of everything.

Last week's memory Verse for the Sunday School was 1 Corinthians 10:31. "whatever you do, do it all for the Glory of God". We are not being called to do nothing we are being called to do it all - for him. That was the reason for our creation and it should be the response to our salvation.

Jesus uses a phrase that is part of our everyday vernacular now and may therefore have lost a little significance.

V27 – "If you do not carry your own cross and follow me you cannot be my disciple"

Do not let that become too familiar.

Following Jesus means sacrifice. But more than that it means *willing* sacrifice – being willing to the point of losing, or giving up, your own life.

We must empty our lives so that we can be filled, and we must humble ourselves so that God can be glorified – and our reward for that obedience will be at the great banquet in heaven.

We all know the Young Ruler in Matthew 19. He wanted to know what it took to make it to Heaven. When Jesus told him the cost he decided it was too much.... "when he heard this...." That is that he would have to give away his possessions, "he went away sad, for he had many possessions".

Notice that he was sad. It wasn't that he didn't believe Jesus necessarily. It was simply that he could not comply. He was not prepared to be obedient.

Since Randal preached two weeks ago I have read the book *Tortured For Christ*. It is sobering stuff. But the foreword had a quote from TS Eliot describing a Martyr as one who:

'has become an instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God. The Martyr no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of martyrdom.'

That is what Jesus means when he says to hate one's own life.

So, Jesus has said to the multitudes, if you want to be My Disciple you must give up your past priorities. I am your new priority. I heard a rather corny line that said, "Jesus was not after a Make over, he wanted a take over".

I told you it was corny!

Paul says it a little better in Philippians 3:8:

"yes, everything else is worthless compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ."

It is clear from verse 28 onward – Jesus is not expecting a once and only decision and then you are done.

He is calling for commitment for the full distance.

It is not all expected to happen at once. We are to go on learning and growing – it takes effort and striving and overcoming hurdles and needs to be done over a long time and needs to continue a life time.

We are being called to an ongoing response and commitment. Paul reflects on his own efforts in 2 Timothy:

2 Timothy 4: 6 – 7 "As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God..... I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race and I have remained faithful"

Jesus wants us to remain faithful for the long haul.

Is that what you committed to?

Listen to these words from John Stott in *Basic Christianity* they are on the front of the newsletter:

The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict, half-built towers, the ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. For thousands of people still ignore Christ's warning and undertake to follow Him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so. This is the great scandal of Christendom, so-called nominal Christianity. In countries to which the Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent, but thin veneer of Christianity. They've allowed themselves to become somewhat involved, enough to be respectable, but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the

hard unpleasantness of life while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism,"

What do our towers look like? Are they on schedule or are they abandoned and in need some hard work? I think mine needs a bit of work for sure....

If his priorities have become your priorities and you have surrendered completely to Him what does that look like in your life?

We are to retain no privileges and make no demands;
We should safeguard no cherished sins, treasure no earthly possessions and cling to no secret self-indulgences. Our commitment to Jesus must be without reservation.

Is that you? I ask myself is that me?

And then in Verse 34 - 35 Jesus finishes:

We are used to hearing about Salt, Jesus does it again here.... He says, "Salt is good."

A life full of Jesus is Salty. And salt is Good. Here is another corny saying, "A salty Christian makes others thirsty for Jesus"

Our job is to share in bringing preservation, life and flavor.

[I have not included reference missionary friend who ask for discretion and caution for their safety around printing their stories and experiences in a devoutly Muslim country. However, the theme was that in order for those who have heard the word from Chas and Claudia in that country they have sacrificed family relationships, education and even home town in order to follow Jesus. We serve that same God.]

What does your commitment to Jesus look like, what does it look like in this Christian community? - Continuing the work of Jesus in the world is our stated purpose.

What about our current needs – are you being invited to become involved in any of these things?

- Divorce Care catering and support;
- Playgroup leadership;
- Mentoring;
- Relationship building;
- Caring for others;
- CAP Courses;
- Home Group Leader;
- Childrens Ministry volunteers;
- BMF/BMS supporters and prayers.
- Global Mission participants;
- Prayer for Missionaries;
- Welcoming teams;
- Hospitality and hosting roles;
- Music team, worship leaders;
- Property Caretaking?
- and the list can go on.....

What are your excuses? I have some thoughts on what they might be but before you think I am condemning you let me reassure you. Over our almost 23 nomadic years of marriage, Julie and I have had 4 significant church families - Remuera in Auckland, River church in Buckinghamshire UK, Crossroads International Church in Singapore and here – and we love each of those places and the people in them. In our time we have had many invites to be involved – and so we know a thing or two about excuses. Maybe they ring true to you....

- I am just new here, they don't know me;
- I don't want Church to take over my whole life;
- I really just want to sit here and be fed please;
- I have nothing to offer these people;
- These people have nothing to offer me;
- I have significant differences with this person, or that person;
- We want to travel and so can't really commit every week;
- We are not in a good place right now;
- I am not good enough for them;
- We are too good for them;
- I do my witnessing at work – that is enough;
- We have nothing in common;
- I don't have time;

And the list could go on a little longer. I must add here though that each time, we been unable to hold onto those excuses forever. Ultimately Jesus had his way and we found ourselves heavily involved.

When we volunteered or were coerced we did it to be a blessing to others but in fact we found it was those we served and served with who became blessings to us.

But we didn't learn. When we started somewhere new, we went back to finding excuses and again and again God had to move us on from them. It is an ongoing process - I guess that is why Paul talks about running the race.

Here at Cavy there are real opportunities, now, to live in complete surrender to Jesus. So let each of us all count the cost this morning. Don't wait to be asked. Come forward if you have something to offer – Only you will know what you are being called into...

Involvement in Gods kingdom means surrendering:

- Our time,
- Pride;
- Possessions;
- Theological differences;
- Insecurities;
- Perceived Inadequacies;
- Fear of rejection;
- Social standing;
- Sins we don't want to give up; - Conflict, harboring anger toward others,
- It means reprioritizing our work, sport, hobbies and yes even our relationships;

In Christ all things are possible. Do not rely on your understanding but in all your ways acknowledge him.

What would our Church look like if we were completely submitted to Christ;

What would our Community look like if we were completely submitted to Christ;

So, what about the bacon and the Eggs?

Just in case you have not yet worked it out..... Like the multitudes that Jesus spoke to, the Chickens who provided the eggs on the plate – were merely involved. They were there but they were not fully committed to the breakfast.

But, like those who Jesus was able to call My Disciples, the pig was fully committed to those bacon and eggs.

Which side of this plate are you on this morning?

Prayer:

As we conclude this morning in worship with 2 songs and before the Blessing take a moment to answer that question in your own hearts.... am I prepared to count the cost of following Jesus!

Blessing Hebrews: 12:1-2.