

September 5, 2021

“The Story”

The Story begins...

Monday, September 6, 2021: The Set-Up

Daily reading: Luke 14:1-11

As always, the words preceding our text illuminate the story. Jesus is invited to a prominent Pharisee's house for dinner. This is a significant invitation, suggesting equality, respect, and even curiosity on the part of the Pharisee. And Jesus shakes things up. He silences the lawyer and Pharisee over healing on the Sabbath, revises cultural understandings of formal seating arrangements, directs guest list protocol, and responds to a pious remark made by a guest. This may not strike us as disruptive, but in that day, Jesus is bumping up against many societal norms. Luke tells us all of this as preparation for tomorrow's text. Have you ever thought of Jesus as someone who shakes things up? What does Jesus need to shake up in your life? Ask him to do that for you today.

Tuesday, September 7, 2021: The Interaction

Daily reading: Luke 14:12-14

There are important religious and/or political people at this dinner; think of a country club environment in its best sense. You can imagine the jockeying for position at the table (Jesus has already addressed it!) and the polite, yet calculated, conversations as the guests attempt to “best” themselves. What is Jesus doing there? Luke has us, the reader, right where he wants us: trying to figure out why Jesus, the average Joe, underdog Rabbi is associating with this crowd! After witnessing Jesus' initial interactions, Luke wants us on the edge of our seats awaiting some sort of knockout blow. Jesus doesn't disappoint. Have you ever purposely invited someone of a radically different social status than your own over for dinner? Ask God to help you understand your answer to that question.

Wednesday, September 8, 2021: The Story

Daily reading: Luke 14:15-24

As Jesus finishes speaking, another guest seems so enamored with Jesus that he offers his own statement of blessing, drawing everyone's attention to the great Messianic banquet to come. It just may be that this man is impressed with Jesus' words, and touched by what he's just heard. You can almost hear the crowd, troubled or confused by Jesus' previous words, raise their glasses and cheer, “Hear, hear!” It's at this precarious moment, when all at the table are open to an understanding of what it means to

participate in the heavenly feast of God, that Jesus once again shakes things up. Jesus doesn't debate (the classic Rabbinic method), or begin a direct confrontation, or use the “brood of vipers” language that he's famous for. How does Jesus enter into their lives and proclaim God's truth? Story! Do you see yourself in this story? Do you ever feel like an “insider” or an “outsider”? Ask God to help you break through those divisions.

Thursday, September 9, 2021: The Excuse

Daily reading: Luke 14:15-24 again

Jesus begins with an important, rich, high-status person called “Someone.” He has planned a dinner, sent invitations, and now the time has come to dine! His servant announces that dinner is served, but those who had initially accepted the invitation have decided not to attend. What?! This would never happen in traditional, respectful culture. Do these people not care that this banquet is for them? Do you make excuses for not showing up when the Kingdom needs tending? Ask God to reveal your excuses to you today.

Friday, September 10, 2021: The Someone

Daily reading: Luke 14:15-24 (yes, a third time)

We begin to realize that this “someone” is the owner of the house. This might not be a big deal to us as American homeowners, but in the context of the heavenly banquet, this master is God! He's not cancelling the banquet. The banquet will go on as scheduled, but the people attending will be different. The servant is told to go out into the streets and gather the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. And these “outcasts” actually show up! There's room for more, so the servant is told to go out as far as possible and bring people in, from wherever they are. Who was this servant, single-handedly doing the will of the owner? Who would go to the far ends of the earth to gather people of all types to dine at the banquet of God? Luke uses the power of story to help you see who that servant is – the one telling this story to the guests – Jesus! Can you see Jesus as the faithful servant gathering us all to the great banquet? Ask God to help you see Jesus and his purposes more clearly today.

Saturday, September 11, 2021: The Facts

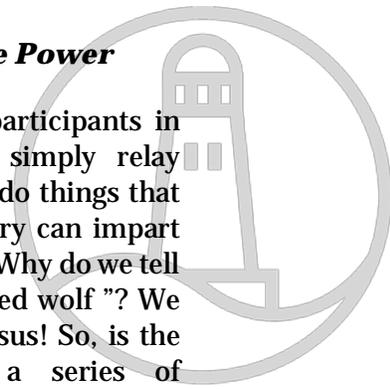
Daily reading: John 20:26-31

We often read the Bible for facts or proof, applying the “facts = truth” equation. “Facts can tell what something is, but they can't tell you what that thing means. So while you might be able to prove what

sequence of historical events led to the Civil War, you definitely can't prove what the Civil war means. In the same way, seeing Jesus may prove to Thomas that Jesus is alive, but it doesn't prove what that means. And so Thomas has to make a confession of faith about what it means to him. It's not something Thomas can prove, but it's definitely something that he believes, and it's definitely something that shapes the rest of his life. Which is why, I think, the Bible was written" (- David Lose, *Making Sense of Scripture*). This Gospel was written so that we might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." The Bible calls us to faith, not facts. God's story shapes our lives toward real life. Have you been transformed by the God's story? Ask God to lead you into deeper discipleship today.

Sunday, September 12, 2021: *The Power*
Daily reading: John 21:24-25

Luke wants us to see ourselves as participants in God's story. Bible stories do not simply relay information or share facts; story can do things that facts can't. Story has real power. Story can impart truth in a way that makes it personal. Why do we tell our kids stories like "the boy who cried wolf"? We use stories to teach truth, so does Jesus! So, is the Bible true? Sure; but not as a series of independently-verified, perfectly-synched facts. The Holy Spirit is at work, especially when it comes to grasping the grand arc of God's story, and then stepping into it. The power of story calls us to faith. Is the Bible true? Through God's Holy Spirit we can say "Yes!" Are you able to see the truth of the Scriptures this way? Ask God for a deeper understanding of God's story.



REFLECTIONS

Finding Hope