



Sermon, Sunday February 12, 2023 "Jesus' Lesson on Giving and Repayment"

SCRIPTURE: Luke 14:12-14 ¹² He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Introduction: Lessons from Jesus on Human Relationships

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! There are many factors in our lives that make it difficult for us. What are the intractable things in your life? Personally, I think relationships with people are difficult. However, we cannot choose to live alone because we feel uncomfortable in our relationships with others. I ask you, in human relationships, are you and I comfortable with others?

By the way, Christians have one more relationship besides our relationships with people. It is a relationship with God. Christians must have a good relationship with God as well as good human relationships. Only with both can one live a successful life. What we must understand is that having a good relationship with God and having a good relationship with humans are not separate things. **That's why Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."** This verse shows that our relationship with God is linked to our relationship with humans. So, if we say that our relationship with the Lord is good, but there is a problem with our human relationship, it is not true.

Luke 14:1-14, which includes today's text, talks about various topics through one story called a 'Feast.' One Sabbath, Jesus was invited to dine at the home of a Pharisee leader. There, Jesus healed a man suffering from dropsy and corrected the Pharisees' erroneous concept of the Sabbath (14:1-6). Also, He taught what a life of humility is (14:7-11). Finally, Jesus said to the host who invited Him, **"you must invite the weak in society who cannot repay your hospitality so that God can repay you at the resurrection of the righteous."** (Chapter 14, verses 12-14) I hope that through today's text, we will be able to reflect on our human relationships and our relationship with the Lord.

Body: Jesus' Lesson on Giving and Rewarding

Let's look at today's text, Luke 14:12. **"When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid."** The 13th verse that follows says, **"if when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind."**

How should we understand and accept these words of Jesus? In general, people help others on the premise of giving and taking in a social life. Of course, there is also help that is not a self-interest centered relationship. Among such help, there is one-sided giving, and there is also sharing for neighbors without conditions. Examples of this also exist in early Christian history. The community of Qumran in early Christianity is an example. The Qumran community lived an ascetic life, cut off from the world. It is difficult for those who belong to such a community to have a give and take type of relationship shown in the text of the Bible today.



Then, are Jesus' words in verses 12-13 advising us to help our neighbors with a pure heart and live without expecting any reward? In fact, these moral and ethical lessons can be heard today and in the time of Jesus. The attitude of a good life towards our neighbors is precious, but that is not what the Lord is trying to tell us.

Luke 14:14 says; “And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

This verse makes us look back on many parts of our lives. In general, people try to relate to people who can repay them for what they have given. Also, if possible, we try to establish relationships in which we can give less and get more back.

Therefore, people do not try to establish a relationship with a person who does not have the ability to repay for what they have given, has no heart, and only seeks help. This is our reality. It is not easy for us to overcome this self-interested thinking.

By the way, in today's text, Jesus changes people's thoughts and actions to another dimension in return. Jesus said that those who invite the poor, the disabled, and the blind and give them grace will be rewarded at the time of the resurrection of the righteous. This verse means that at the end of time, God will repay us for our good deeds in God's way.

Now I ask you. Can you agree with these words of Jesus? Also, can we live according to these words of Jesus? But honestly, our answers to these questions are not easy.

Because most of us can't bear to go unrewarded for the help we give to our neighbors. This general attitude toward our lives is not different, not only in the secular world but also within the church. In many cases, Christians in the church also expect the Lord to repay us right away in our lives as much as we faithfully live our faith. If this is our existential image, how can we accept Jesus' words that the situation in which the generosity to our neighbors is not immediately reciprocated is blessed? Then, are these words of Jesus mere virtues in the Bible?

Jesus' answer to this question is that the rewards of our lives are determined by God. By the way, there may be some people who say 'Amen' to these answers in the Bible, but there will be others who find it difficult to accept them.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! What did Jesus mean by “God’s recompense”? In fact, we often fail to enter the world that is given to us in a deep relationship with the Lord because we are bound by the knowledge and experience of the world.

In fact, the rewards given to us as our relationships within the world are usually formal and are given according to our interests. In addition, we live a busy life by expanding such relationships. Therefore, we cannot experience complete satisfaction through the rewards given in these relationships. Most of the time, the satisfaction that these relationships bring is temporary, and we are dissatisfied with them and live for greater satisfaction.

Nevertheless, those who have practically experienced what the 'resurrection of the righteous' refers to in a deep relationship with the Lord can agree with Jesus' words with 'Amen'. Because we know that there is no greater reward in the world than resurrection, that is, participation in the life of God.

Conclusion: What does it mean to be interested in a deep relationship with the Lord?

Now let's summarize today's message. The Pharisees in today's text thought they were the ones who came closest to the kingdom of God. And they were respected by many in Jewish society at the time. However, in Jesus' eyes, they lived a life far from God's kingdom. Because the way of life of the Pharisees was not focused on the relationship with God, but only the repayment from God.



So how can we make sure we live with a deep interest in our relationship with God? What humans fear most in life is death, which is a severance from the world. So, wouldn't it be possible to be free from the bondage of life in this world if we live in memory of our death? And you will focus on your relationship with the Lord. So, like the Pharisees in today's text, interest in who sits in the high seat or what kind of reward they can receive will decrease. This is a blessing that only those who are invited to the "heavenly banquet" that the Lord has prepared for us can enjoy.

We eat and drink the Lord's body and blood, the bread and wine, through Holy Communion on the first Sunday of every month. And we remember the death and resurrection of the Lord on the cross. The Lord promises us that at the resurrection of the righteous He will give us all the rewards for our good lives. By trusting in the promise, I hope that all of you will enjoy peace and rest in a deep relationship with the Lord rather than the benefits and rewards of this life.

