

Luke: 14:7-15

From Catena Aurea:

14:7–11

7. And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

8. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;

9. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

AMBROSE. First the dropsical man is cured, in whom the abundant discharges of the flesh crushed down the powers of the soul, quenched the ardour of the Spirit. Next, humility is taught, when at the nuptial feast the desire of the highest place is forbidden. As it is said, And he spake, Sit not down in the highest room.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For to rush forward hastily to honours which are not fitting for us, indicates rashness and casts a slur upon our actions. Hence it follows, lest a more honourable man than thou be invited, &c.

CHRYSOSTOM. (non occ.) And so the seeker of honour obtained not that which he coveted, but suffered a defeat, and busying himself how he might be loaded with honours, is treated with dishonour. And because nothing is of so much worth as modesty, He leads His hearer to the opposite of this seeking; not only forbidding him to seek the highest place, but bidding him search for the lowest. As it follows; But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For if a man wishes not to be set before others, he obtains this honour according to the divine word. As it follows; That when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher. In these words He does not harshly chide, but gently admonishes; for a word of advice is enough for the wise. And thus for their humility men are crowned with honours; as it follows, Then shall thou have worship.

BASIL. (in reg. fus. ad inter. 12.) To take then the lowest place at a feast, according to our Lord's command, is becoming to every man, but again to rush contentiously after this is to be condemned as a breach of order and cause of tumult; and a strife raised about it, will place you on a level with those who dispute concerning the highest place. Wherefore, as our Lord here says, it becomes him who makes the feast to arrange the order of sitting down. Thus in patience and love should we mutually bear ourselves, following all things decently according to order, not for external appearance or public display; nor should we seem to study or affect humility by violent contradiction, but rather gain it by condescension or by patience. For resistance or opposition is a far stronger token of pride than taking the first seat at meat, when we obtain it by authority.

THEOPHYLACT. Now let no one deem the above precepts of Christ to be trifling, and unworthy of the sublimity and grandeur of the Word of God. For you would not call him a merciful physician who professed to heal the gout, but refused to cure a scar on the finger or a tooth-ache. Besides, how can that passion of vainglory appear slight, which moved or agitated those who sought the first seats. It became then the Master of humility to cut off every branch of the bad root. But observe this also, that when the supper was ready, and the wretched guests were contending for precedency before the eyes of the Saviour, there was a fit occasion for advice.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Having shewn therefore from so slight an example the degradation of the ambitious and the exaltation of the humbleminded, He adds a great thing to a little, pronouncing a general sentence, as it follows, For every one who exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. This is spoken according to the divine judgment, not after human experience, in which they who desire after glory obtain it, while others who humble themselves remain inglorious.

THEOPHYLACT. Moreover, he is not to be respected in the end, nor by all men, who thrusts himself into honours; but while by some he is honoured, by others he is disparaged, and sometimes even by the very men who outwardly honour him.

12. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

THEOPHYLACT. The supper being composed of two parties, the invited and the inviter, and having already exhorted the invited to humility, He next rewards by His advice the inviter, guarding him against making a feast to gain the favour of men. Hence it is said, Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 1, 3. in ep. Col.) Many are the sources from which friendships are made. Leaving out all unlawful ones, we shall speak only of those which are natural and moral; the natural are, for instance, between father and son, brother and brother, and such like; which He meant, saying, Nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen; the moral, when a man has become your guest or neighbour; and with reference to these He says, nor thy neighbours.

CHRYSOSTOM. Let us not then bestow kindness on others under the hope of return. For this is a cold motive, and hence it is that such a friendship soon vanishes. But if you invite the poor, God, who never forgets, will be your debtor, as it follows, But when ye make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 45. in Act.) For the humbler our brother is, so much the more does Christ come through him and visit us. For he who entertains a great man does it often from vainglory. And elsewhere, But very often interest is his object, that through such a one he may gain promotion. I could indeed mention many who for this pay court to the most distinguished of the nobles, that through their assistance they may obtain the greater favour from the prince. Let us not then ask those who can recompense us, as it follows, And thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee. And let us not be troubled when we receive no return of a kindness, but when we do; for if we have received it we shall receive nothing more, but if man does not repay us, God will. As it follows, For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

CHRYSOSTOM. But thou sayest, the poor are unclean and filthy. Wash him, and make him to sit with thee at table. If he has dirty garments, give him clean ones. Christ comes to thee through him, and dost thou stand trifling?

GREGORY OF NYSSA. Do not then let them lie as though they were nothing worth. Reflect who they are, and thou wilt discover their preciousness. They have put on the image of the Saviour. Heirs of future blessings, bearing the keys of the kingdom, able accusers and excusers, not speaking themselves, but examined by the judge.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 45. in Act.) It would become thee then to receive them above in the best chamber, but if thou shrinkest, at least admit Christ below, where are the menials and servants. Let the poor man be at least thy door keeper. For where there is alms, the devil durst not enter. And if thou sittest not down with them, at any rate send them the dishes from thy table.

ORIGEN. But mystically, he who shuns vain-glory calls to a spiritual banquet the poor, that is, the ignorant, that he may enrich them; the weak, that is, those with offended consciences, that he may heal them; the lame, that is, those who have wandered from reason, that he may make their paths straight; the blind, that is, those who discern not the truth, that they may behold the true light. But it is said, They cannot recompense thee, i. e. they know not how to return an answer.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

14:7–14 First and Last at the Banquet Table

Jesus Calls Us to Be Humble, Modest and Praiseworthy.

Cyril of Alexandria: “When,” he says, “a man more honorable than you comes, he that invited you and him will say, ‘Give this man place.’ ” Oh, what great shame is there in having to do this! It is like a theft, so to speak, and the restitution of the stolen goods. He must restore what he has seized because he had no right to take it. The modest and praiseworthy person, who without fear of blame might have claimed the dignity of sitting among the foremost, does not seek it. He yields to others what might be called his own, that he may not even seem to be overcome by empty pride. Such a one shall receive honor as his due. He says, “He shall hear him who invited him say, ‘Come up here.’ ” ...

If any one among you wants to be set above others, let him win it by the decree of heaven and be crowned by those honors that God bestows. Let him surpass the many by having the testimony of glorious virtues. The rule of virtue is a lowly mind that does not love boasting. It is humility. The blessed Paul also counted this worthy of all esteem. He writes to those who eagerly desire saintly pursuits, "Love humility." Commentary on Luke, Homily 101.5

The Humble and the Proud.

Augustine: There are humble religious, and there are proud religious. The proud ones should not promise themselves the kingdom of God. The place to which dedicated chastity leads is certainly higher, but the one who exalts himself will be humbled. Why seek the higher place with an appetite for the heights, when you can make it simply by holding on to lowliness? If you exalt yourself, God throws you down. If you cast yourself down, God lifts you up. One may not add to or subtract from the Lord's pronouncement. Sermon 354.8.6

Jacob's Ladder the Place of Exaltation or Humiliation.

The Poor Invited to the Table.

Irenaeus: Where are the hundredfold rewards in this age for the dinners offered to the poor? These things will be during the times of the kingdom, on the seventh day that is sanctified when God rested from all his works that he made. This is the true sabbath of the just, in which they will have no earthly work to do, but will have a table prepared before them by God, who will feed them with all kinds of delicacies. Against Heresies 5.33.2.8

14:15–24 The Banquet Beatitude and Story

Why Jesus Told the Parable.

Cyril of Alexandria: One of those who were sitting at the table with them said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Probably this man was not yet spiritual but earthly, and not able to understand correctly what Christ spoke. He was not one of those who believed, nor had he been baptized. He supposed that the rewards of the saints for their mutual labors of love would be in things pertaining to the body. Since they were too dull in heart to comprehend a precise idea, Christ outlines for them a

parable that explains the nature of the era about to be instituted for their sakes. Commentary on Luke, Homily 104.⁹

The Heavenly Food of Jesus' Word.

Clement of Alexandria: The holy agape is the sublime and saving creation of the Lord....

An agape is in reality heavenly food, a banquet of the Word. The agape, or love, "bears all things, endures all things, hopes all things. Love never fails."¹⁰ "Blessed is he who eats bread in the kingdom of God." The most unlikely of all downfalls is charity that does not fail¹¹ to be thrown down from heaven to earth among all these dainty seasonings. Do you still imagine that I refer to a meal that will be destroyed?¹² "If I distribute my goods to the poor and do not have love," Scripture says, "I am nothing."¹³ The whole law and the word depend on this love.¹⁴ If you love the Lord your God and your neighbor,¹⁵ there will be a heavenly feast in heaven. The earthly feast, as we have proved from Scripture, is called a supper. It is permeated with love yet is not identified with it but is an expression of mutual and generous good will. Christ the Educator 2.1.¹⁶

The Bread of Eternal Life.

Athanasius: Oh, brothers and sisters, what a banquet that is! How great is the harmony and joy of those who eat at this heavenly table! They enjoy food that produces everlasting life, not that ordinary food which passes right on through the body. Who will be considered worthy to be in that group? Who is so blessed as to be called to and counted worthy of that divine feast? "Blessed is he who will eat bread in your kingdom." Although he has been washed, even a person who has been judged worthy of this heavenly calling and has been sanctified by it can become unclean. How can he become unclean? "Counting as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and despising the Spirit of grace,"¹⁷ he hears the Lord say, "Friend, how did you get in here without wedding garments?"¹⁸ Festal Letter.¹⁹

God the Father Provides the Supper.

Cyril of Alexandria: We understand the man to be God the Father. For similes represent the truth but are not the truth itself. The Creator of the universe and the Father of glory made a great supper, a festival for the whole world, in honor of Christ. In the last times of the world and at our world's setting, the Son rose for us. At this time, he suffered death for our sakes and gave us to eat his flesh, the bread from heaven that gives life to the world. Toward evening and by the light of torches, the lamb was also sacrificed

according to the law of Moses. With good reason, the invitation that is by Christ is called a supper. Commentary on Luke, Homily 104.20

The Slave Who is Sent is Christ.

Cyril of Alexandria: Next, who is he that was sent? It says he was a slave. Perhaps it is Christ. Although God the Word is by nature God and the very Son of God the Father from whom he was revealed, he emptied himself to take the form of a slave. Being God of God, he is Lord of all. One may justly apply the title of a slave to the limits of his humanity. Although he had taken the form of a slave, he was still Lord as being God. Commentary on Luke, Homily 104.21

To Bestow Gifts on All the World.

Cyril of Alexandria: What was the nature of the invitation? "Come, for look, all things are ready." God the Father has prepared in Christ gifts for the inhabitants of the earth. Through Christ, he bestowed the forgiveness of sins, cleansing away of all defilement, communion of the Holy Spirit, glorious adoption as children, and the kingdom of heaven. To these blessings, Christ invited Israel, before all others, by the commandments of the gospel. Somewhere he has even said by the voice of the psalmist, "But I have been sent as a king by him," that is, by God the Father, "on Zion his holy mountain to preach the commandment of the Lord." 22 Commentary on Luke, Homily 104.23

Those Making Excuses.

Cyril of Alexandria: "They began," it says, "all of them at once to make excuse," that is, as with one purpose, without any delay, they made excuse.... By senselessly giving themselves up to these earthly matters, they cannot see things spiritual. Conquered by the love of the flesh, they are far from holiness. They are covetous and greedy after wealth. They seek things that are below but make no account in the slightest degree of the hopes that are stored up with God. It would be far better to gain the joys of paradise instead of earthly fields and temporary furrows. Commentary on Luke, Homily 104.24

Pharisees and Scribes Reject the Invitation.

Cyril of Alexandria: It says that when the house owner heard their refusal, he was angry and commanded "to gather from the streets and marketplaces of the city the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame." Who are they who refused to come because of lands, farming and the physical procreation of children? It must be those who stood at the head of the Jewish synagogue. They were people with wealth, the slaves

of covetousness with their mind set on profit on which they lavished all their seriousness. Commentary on Luke, Homily 104.²⁵

Gentiles and Outcasts Called from the Highways.

Ambrose: He turned to the Gentiles from the careless scorn of the rich. He invites both good and evil to enter in order to strengthen the good and change the disposition of the wicked for the better. The saying that was read today is fulfilled, "Then wolves and lambs will feed together."²⁶ He summons the poor, the maimed and the blind. By this, he shows us either that handicaps do not exclude us from the kingdom of heaven and whoever lacks the enticements of sinning rarely offends, or that the Lord's mercy forgives the weakness of sinners. Whoever glories in the Lord²⁷ glories as one redeemed from reproach not by works but by faith.²⁸

He sends them into the highways,²⁹ because wisdom sings aloud in passages.³⁰ He sends them to the streets, because he sent them to sinners, so that they should come from the broad paths to the narrow way that leads to life.³¹ He sends them to the highways and hedges. They, who are not busied with any desires for present things, hurry to the future on the path of good will. Like a hedge that separates the wild from the cultivated and wards off the attacks of wild beasts, they can distinguish between good and evil and extend a rampart of faith against the temptations of spiritual wickedness.³² Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 7.202–3.³³

The Invitation to the Gentiles.

Cyril of Alexandria: The leaders of the Israelites remained aloof from the supper, as being obstinate, proud and disobedient. They scorned a surpassing invitation, because they had turned aside to earthly things and focused their mind on the vain distractions of this world. The common crowd was invited, and immediately after them the Gentiles. Commentary on Luke, Homily 104.³⁴