

The Miracles of Jesus  
Miracle # 26

**"Jesus Heals A Man With Dropsy"**

Luke 14:1-14

In the miracle that we are going to examine this evening (found only in Luke) Jesus is the invited guest to a formal dinner party in the home of an unnamed Pharisee. It was again the Sabbath day and perhaps Jesus had been the special guest preacher in the local synagogue. One of the prominent members a Pharisee invited Jesus home to Sabbath dinner.

It should be noted that Jesus had already violated their manmade Sabbath traditions on **seven** other occasions (casting out a **demon**, Luke 4:32-37; healing a **fever**, Lk. 4:38-39; allowing his disciples to **pluck** grain, Lk. 6:1-5; healing a **lame** man, John 5:1-9; healing a man's **paralyzed** hand, Lk. 6:6-10; delivered a woman with a **bent back**, Lk. 13:10-17 and healing a man **born** blind, John 9).

"Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. (2) And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. (3) And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (4) But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. (5) Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" (6) And they could not answer Him regarding these things."

***The Background of the Miracle*** (vv. 1-2)

*"Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. (2) And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy."*

A ruler of the Pharisees. (v. 1)

The phrase "**ruler of the Pharisees**" suggests that this man was a member of the **Sanhedrin** and belonged to the sect of the **Pharisees**.

Jesus was not offered hospitality because his company was desired; but so that He might be **watched** by critical, cynical eyes for verse one says, "*... they watched him closely.*" It seems very convenient, if not a

little suspicious, that the stage was so carefully set; Jesus is invited to a meal on the Sabbath, in the home of a prominent religious leader, where Jesus could be carefully watched.

### A Certain man who had dropsy. (v. 2)

At this same meal there just happened to be a man suffering from a painful ailment and seated right in front of Jesus. Some suggest that this was a trap set by the enemies of Jesus. There is certainly credibility to this argument if we understand that at this time serious disease was thought to be the **punishment** of God. A leader of the religious establishment most certainly would not have been willing to sit down to a meal with someone they considered a "sinner." All things considered, it was in all probability a carefully laid trap, set for Jesus, and baited with misery that Jesus would find irresistible to relieve.

Luke, the physician, uses the technical medical term, "**dropsy**" to describe this man's condition. Today it is called edema, which is a painful disease caused by kidney trouble, a heart ailment, or liver disease which manifests itself in a serious accumulation of fluid in the body's tissues. Interestingly enough in Jewish tradition, this particular disease was believed to be punishment for **sexual** sin.

### ***The Elements of the Miracle*** (vv. 3-5)

The miracle itself is really interspersed between two questions that Jesus asked.

### Jesus asks a Question (v. 3)

**"And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"**

Jesus asked the Pharisees what their convictions were concerning the Sabbath day; **"... Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"** The question **"Is it lawful for you to heal on the Sabbath Day?"** was mute because they couldn't heal **anybody** on **anyday**.

But this was a difficult question for the Pharisees to answer. If they indicated that it was contrary to the law they would be seen as lacking **compassion**. However, if they said that it was permissible, they would be undermining their own **position** as strict upholders of the law.

It should also be noted that the religious leader's strict adherence to the law did not seem to give them any compunction about **feasting** on the Sabbath; but to heal on the Sabbath was an unforgivable breach of the law.

Jesus heals the diseased man (v. 4)

**"But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go."**

The Pharisee did not know how to respond. When they refused to answer, Jesus touched the sick man, healed him and sent him away.

Jesus asks a second question (v. 5)

**"Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?"**

In the last miracle which we examined **"Jesus Heals A Woman With A Bent Back"** in Luke 13:10-17, Jesus had compared the loosing of an animal from a stall to lead it to water with his loosing of the woman from her eighteen years of being unable to straighten her back. Now in this miracle he compares this man to an animal that has fallen in a pit and is in danger of **drowning**.

In both of these comparisons he is showing that no matter what they taught and demanded of others they made exceptions for themselves. Jesus explained that they **did** work on the Sabbath when it served their purposes.

Even their own Sabbath regulations permitted them to rescue their animals so to forbid the deliverance of humans would mean that they treated animals better than people.

Let me give you an illustration. *"A man was driving to work one morning when he noticed that the car in front of him was weaving back and forth. As he pulled up even with it, he could see that the driver's face was almost touching the windshield as she was attempting to apply mascara. This of course, made the man furious. He thought how wrong it was for her to try and operate a motor vehicle while being so distracted with her make up. He became even angrier when her car suddenly veered in his direction. It scared him so badly he dropped his cell-phone right into the cup of coffee he was drinking."* [Larry Sarver. *"Guess Who Is Coming To Dinner."* Luke 14:1-14 [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com).]

Sometimes like the man in the illustration we are guilty of being judgmental about others, because we are also guilty of similar faults. Jesus is telling them that they are guilty of the same things they are condemning him for. I have seen people judge the younger generation on the basis of listening to contemporary Christian music yet they themselves listen to Country music with songs about drinking and cheating on their mates. Jesus is telling them they are guilty of the same things they are condemning him for.

### **The Effect of the Miracle.** (v. 6)

Again the Pharisees could not answer, verse six, *"And they could not answer Him regarding these things."*

They had invited Jesus so that they could "watch" him, but he had "marked or noted" them. The gospels reveal that Jesus was a careful student of everyday life. Jesus noted that as the guests arrived at the Pharisee's home how they had scrambled for the places of honor next to the host.

It is not unlike scenes we see played out today. How many times have seen traffic being merged into a single lane because of construction but there are always a few who race to the front of the string of traffic before muscling their way into the line of traffic. Or a scene anyone who has traveled on a plane has seen repeated over and over. The plane touches down and the stewardess says, **"Please remain in your seat until the seat belt is turned off."** However, some passengers leap to their feet as soon as the plane has landed and begin to get their belongings from the overhead compartments. It is as if these people believe that no one could possibly be as important as they are.

The miracle led right into Jesus teaching on humility in a parable about a wedding feast in verse seven through ten. In verse seven we read, *"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them (8) "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; (9) "and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. (10) "But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you."*

When Jesus advises the guest to take the lowest places, He was not giving them a "gimmick" that guaranteed promotion. The false humility that takes the lowest place in the expectation of being moved higher, is just as hateful to God as the pride that takes the highest place. Some point to the old saying, **"Cream always rises to the top,"** but remember **"so does scum."**

Jesus states the principle in verse eleven, *"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* Jesus draws from the ancient wisdom of the author of Proverbs (25:6-7) who stated, *"Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of the great (7) For it is better that he say to you,*

*'Come up here.' Than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen."*

True honor is not the honor one claims for oneself, but rather it is the honor that is conferred on one by others.

This is no more an accepted idea today than it was in the days of Jesus earthly ministry. Today's wisdom says that getting ahead depends on "self promotion." What Jesus taught here tosses that idea on its ear.

*"His advice is, Be content with the back seat. Be happy with who you are and where you are. If God wants you in the front row, He'll move you there. And the honor will taste twice as sweet because you won't be expecting it."*

[Charles Swindoll. Bible Study Teaching Guide. "The Declaration of Something Mysterious." A Study of Luke 10:38-16:18. Anaheim, California: Insight for Living, 1995) p. 107]