



Theme: The Art of Salvation – Jesus in the Gospel of Luke
“Salvation in the Kingdom”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, March 26-27, 2022, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing.” – Luke 12:22b-23

VIDEO Sermon Starter

SLIDE “Salvation in the Kingdom”

I’ve been a bachelor this week because my wife is visiting her two brothers for some sibling time and my daughter is home and pet sitting. I had been planning for a while to do some work on our kitchen, so this seemed like a good week. My project has been to refinish our kitchen cabinets and put in new countertops because our current ones are old and warped. To make things easier, I bought a small cart to put some of our kitchen items in while I worked on these projects. I learned a while ago that these things take longer than I anticipate so it’s good to have a plan for how to use the kitchen while it is being deconstructed.

The cards I ordered came in a box and needed to be assembled. I

purchased one that is a certain size because we only had room for something small and it was about the only option I could find on the web and its size. The reviews were pretty good except every person said to expect to take more time to put together than you think because the instructions are not very good. I figured I was smarter than the rest of them so I could do it in less than two hours everybody was saying it would take.

GRAPHIC Instructions

Sure enough, the instructions had no words but just diagrams and the diagrams were not very detailed. And up putting one board in the wrong place and of course that meant none of the holes were lined up and I had to take it apart and put it back together again. Let's just say I went way over the two hours everybody was saying it would take to put together. At least my dog Jasper was happy with the final product.

GRAPHIC Jasper on Cabinet

GRAPHIC Kitchen

Now the issue is the kitchen because it is taking way longer than I anticipated. I'm pretty sure it's not going to be finished the time my wife gets back on Wednesday, so we'll have to live without a kitchen sink and cooktop for a few days. I don't know about you, but I always seem to underestimate what things are going to take time and there are always problems as you take things apart in an older house. Nothing really works the way you plan for it, and I probably should just learn to deal with that and plan for extra time for the inevitable unforeseen problems.

This is just how life works, isn't it? There always seem to be problems that come up that we don't anticipate, and it blows up our plans. Whether it is the kit we have to build which doesn't have great directions or we choose not to follow them correctly, or the project with hidden issues, life has a way of throwing curveballs which we then have to navigate.

These might seem like silly examples, but Jesus spent quite a bit of time pointing out to the religious leaders that whenever there are conflicts between what the plans for rules are and the need that pop up for people, the Kingdom of God is a place where people come first. Yes, there are boundaries and guardrails, but Jesus is constantly putting people before plans or rules, and this causes tension with religious leaders time and again in the gospel of Luke. One of the main messages of Jesus and that he is ushering in a new kind of Kingdom, something he will call the Kingdom of God. In Luke 17, we read this interaction between the Pharisees and Jesus.

BIBLE

²⁰ One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, “When will the Kingdom of God come?”

Jesus replied, “The Kingdom of God can’t be detected by visible signs. ²¹ You won’t be able to say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘It’s over there!’ For the Kingdom of God is already among you.”

This idea of the Kingdom of God is central to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His message is clear that the kingdom of God is now, and it is going to be fulfilled in the future. It is one of the reasons why he invites us to pray in Luke 11 these words that we know as part of the Lord’s prayer.

BIBLE

² Jesus said, “This is how you should pray:

**“Father, may your name be kept holy.
May your Kingdom come soon.”**

We pray the words, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The idea is that there is the kingdom which is both here and is coming soon, and each of us are invited to be part of this kingdom, which begs this question.

SLIDE What does the Kingdom of God look like?

Today we continue our journey through the season of Lent, the 40 days and seven Sundays before we get to Easter. We are inviting each of us to read through the gospel of Luke, and I encourage you to use our Meditation Moments each day to read through that gospel over the next seven weeks.

SLIDE Salvation = “to be restored and made whole”

Salvation is one of the key themes in Luke’s gospel and it is what we experience in the Kingdom of God that is both now and not yet. Yes, there is a Kingdom to come in which there will be no more sorrow, tears, pain, pandemic, or wars. All of creation will be made whole and be restored. And we are invited to be part of that work of bringing in the Kingdom of God in today’s world. Jesus talked about this Kingdom in the Gospels most often using stories called parables or showing us what it looks like by the way he lives and treats others.

We have been watching the gospel of Luke together to hear the Scripture using the Lumo Project’s film adaption. Let’s experience parts of Luke 14 together as Jesus teaches the religious leaders and his followers about the Kingdom of God.

VIDEO Lumo Project Luke 14 – 1 to 6

<https://www.bible.com/videos/collections/21-the-gospel-of-luke-lumo-project>

(1 One Sabbath day Jesus went to eat dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, and the people were watching him closely. ² There was a man there whose arms and legs were swollen. ³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in religious law, “Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the Sabbath day, or not?” ⁴ When they refused to answer, Jesus touched the sick man and healed him and sent him away. ⁵ Then he turned to them and said, “Which of you doesn’t work on the Sabbath? If your son or your cow falls into a pit, don’t you rush to get him out?” ⁶ Again they could not answer.)

The Pharisees were deeply devout followers of God and were interested in Jesus as a rabbi and teacher. They were serious about living a life that please God and they believe Jesus was like them in that way. Jesus taught in the synagogues as they did and he knew the law just like they did. We learned in the first week of this series of sermons that Pharisees wanted to please God by separating themselves from then and those who were seen as sinful.

SLIDE Pharisees = “separated ones”

There are 613 religious laws in the Bible along with the top 10 Commandments. They took these laws seriously, but it created another problem. You must determine if you have really followed the rules and if you have done enough and live the right way to be rewarded for following as directed. They created more rules to go with the rules that were written in the Bible and there was commentary on those rules.

One of the main rules had to do with the Sabbath, which was a commandment to work six days and take the seventh day is rest. To follow this rule meticulously, one must determine what is, and what is not considered, “work.” Is making breakfast work? Is mowing my lawn work? Is getting my haircut work? Is going upstairs work? The Pharisees came up with 39 categories of things that were forbidden on the Sabbath to try to clarify things. There were dozens of other things in each of those categories, which meant there were more than 100 rules you had to know and follow to keep the Sabbath holy.

Tensions arise with Jesus because he is constantly breaking the rules. There was a ritual before meals that included washing hands, not because they understood what germs were, but because it makes us ritually clean. Jesus didn’t pay attention to this rule and said it wasn’t about pleasing God with a pointless action, but about the status of our heart. Jesus also teaches on the Sabbath and when people approach him, he offers to heal them. The rules do that if you were a doctor, you could not heal on the Sabbath, unless the person was going to die. If

they were going to die that day, they had to return the next day for healing.

Jesus refuses to tell people to come back to next day with them Sabbath, but instead offers healing and restoration. He makes them whole and brings about salvation in the process. By the time we get this story in Luke 14, there have been several other times where Jesus has done this exact same thing and he is irritating the religious leaders. They are watching him closely because he keeps breaking the rules and putting people before plans. Remember that Jesus is in the home of a Pharisee when this man shows up and he doesn't even ask to be healed. My guess is that everyone noticed the man arms and legs which were swelling. Jesus notices him and he sees him even though everyone else is ignoring the sickness.

When my father was ill several months before he died, he had swelling in his legs and couldn't wear shoes or socks. It often happens when the kidneys or hearts are not working well, and it can be very painful and make the person immobile. It hurt me to look at his feet and I remember how moved I was by my stepmother gently massaging his feet and putting bandages on them if they had a sore. Some of his issues were from diabetes but mostly it was poor blood circulation. It looked as if the skin would tear apart at times, and I imagine this is what Jesus saw when he looked at this man's arms and legs. He may have watched him walk into the home gingerly because of the pain in his feet and legs.

SLIDE Compassion is a Kingdom Value

Jesus sees him and has compassion. Even though the man did not ask for healing, Jesus uses this moment to ask the Pharisees about healing on the Sabbath. He knows what their answer is going to be, and you can feel the tension as you watched that scene. The Pharisees were silent in Jesus healed him in that moment and gave them a picture of the Kingdom of God. For Jesus, people always came before the rules.

This is one of the critical aspects of being a follower of Jesus, which he drives home by asking them if one of their kids or a child fall into a pit, if they would help them. While it may not be in the instruction sheet, Jesus invites us to adopt this reality of salvation in the Kingdom of God, which includes restoring people and healing, even when it's against the rules.

GRAPHIC Boris Romanchenko

I was thinking about times in the past when we have put people before rules because it was the right thing to do. The Scriptures tell us not to lie, but I was struck this last week by the story of the oldest Holocaust survivor in Ukraine who was killed in the Russian bombing of Kharkiv. He was 96 years old, and he talked about people who hid him and lied to the authorities after he escaped from a concentration camp. There are many who put their own lives at risk by housing those being persecuted and lying to the authorities, putting people before rules. Sometimes, the loving thing to do is to lie to protect someone from death.

I think of the employees I met during the pandemic in our grocery stores who took groceries and medicine to people in their homes, something which would've been not allowed but was the right thing to do given the circumstances. People worked overtime and sometimes broke all the rules, but did all right things, because it was a pandemic and we realized some of the rules just didn't work anymore. Salvation in the Kingdom of God is about bringing wholeness and restoration even when things are broken, and regardless of rules that might stand in the way.

Jesus goes on and drives this point home in the next part of Luke's gospel where he teaches the religious leaders about what it means to put others first.

VIDEO Lumo Project Luke 14 – 7 to 14

(7 When Jesus noticed that all who had come to the dinner were

trying to sit in the seats of honor near the head of the table, he gave them this advice: ⁸ “When you are invited to a wedding feast, don’t sit in the seat of honor. What if someone who is more distinguished than you has also been invited? ⁹ The host will come and say, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then you will be embarrassed, and you will have to take whatever seat is left at the foot of the table!

¹⁰ “Instead, take the lowest place at the foot of the table. Then when your host sees you, he will come and say, ‘Friend, we have a better place for you!’ Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests. ¹¹ For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹² Then he turned to his host. “When you put on a luncheon or a banquet,” he said, “don’t invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. ¹³ Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you.”)

If we are seeking to follow God and to enter the Kingdom of God, we are invited by Jesus to take the lowest seat and not the seat of honor. We find this virtue listed up by Jesus throughout the gospel of Luke and lived out in his life. We are invited to live as servants as we care for others before we focus on ourselves and what we want.

SLIDE Humility is a Kingdom value

This last week I was reading about different companies and employees that really struggled during the pandemic because their business was pretty much shut down. One of those is a company which put on corporate banquets and receptions and trainings for Fortune 500 companies throughout the world. They plan these large conferences and huge events which didn’t happen for about two years. I was fascinated by the stories of CEOs and other leaders who had used the services and who offered to help those companies help their

employees as best they could. When interviewed several employees who had been helped financially during the pandemic by those generous companies, they said they were not surprised because they noticed when they planned those events for those companies, those CEOs and company leaders never insisted on being at the tables in the front of the conference, but instead asked for tables toward the back so their employees and managers could sit towards the front and the highlighted with the best seats.

They also told stories about how some people thought they should have better seats and at times would literally pick up their chairs and moved to a different table that was closer to the front. Those persons often had attitudes which made everyone around them anxious and uncomfortable. The employees from this company who hosted these events said it was easy to tell the culture of a company based on where the leader sat, or expected to sit, at the banquet.

I have a sister who leads a company which provides corporate housing and she told me how certain leaders treated her staff and there was almost a direct correlation between the willingness of the leader to serve and not be treated as a king or queen, and the success of that company, especially during the pandemic. Those who were willing to serve led companies where people enjoy their work and many of those companies were able to pivot and thrived during the pandemic. One CEO arrived at the hotel and found out his suite wasn't ready, so he insisted on taking a plain room. He then asked them to give his room, when it was ready, to an employee who arrived late because their flight was delayed so they could just have a treat that week for their housing.

I think this is what Jesus was talking about when he asks in this story for us to invite those who least expected to receive a blessing. He talks about inviting the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, instead of those who make excuses. We are invited to bless others who may not be blessed by anyone else, and it's what we do when we bring

items for Native Hope or when we give to those serving in Ukraine.

When I was serving as a youth pastor at a church in the Denver area, there was a gentleman who volunteered downtown with those living on the streets. His wife told me how frustrating it was because sometimes he would show up for dinner with a stranger, or three, in tow that he had met while working at the food pantry. One time, he brought a family of six! Even sold his car and bought a minivan so it would be easier to transport them, and he would just provide a meal and be sure they had clothing before returning them home, usually with a box of food as well.

When I asked Dave why he did this, he talked about his father who owned a grocery store and gave people credit, often without them having the ability to pay him back. His father told him it was because some of those people had kids at home and couldn't afford to feed them, and God had blessed him with the ability to help. He learned that behavior from a generous father, who taught him that people came before rules, and having compassion was what it meant to follow Jesus faithfully, even when it was uncomfortable or challenging.

SLIDE Generosity is a Kingdom Value

That brings us to the last Kingdom value which is critical to salvation. Jesus talks about in this parable from Luke 14.

VIDEO Lumo Project Luke 14 – 15 to 24

(¹⁵ Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, "What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!")

¹⁶ Jesus replied with this story: "A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. ¹⁷ When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' ¹⁸ But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.' ¹⁹ Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.' ²⁰ Another

said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

²¹ "The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, 'Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' ²² After the servant had done this, he reported, 'There is still room for more.' ²³ So his master said, 'Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full. ²⁴ For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.'")

The Pharisees, and all those following Jesus, would've understood that the master in the story is God. The banquet, or great feast, was heaven for the Kingdom of God. Psalm 23 talks about a table that is set before us. Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding feast, a great banquet, to signify the miraculous restoration that will happen. Heaven is a place where God feeds us with the richest of foods as Isaiah mentions. The book of Revelation has the wedding banquet of the lamb, and Jesus uses this metaphor as a picture of what heaven will be like, and what heaven looks like on earth.

In this parable, the banquet has been set in the feast is available, but people have excuses for why they can't come. Each excuse seems legitimate, but the master is still upset because people have turned them down. So, he invites everyone, the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame, those in the country lanes, and those behind the hedges. God wants everyone to experience salvation, restoration, healing from broken hearts and minds and spirits.

SLIDE Are we making room for what really matters in our lives?

I believe this story about salvation in the Kingdom of God is meant to prompt in us a profound question. Are we too busy to experience this banquet? Have we filled our lives up with so much trivial stuff that we are missing out on salvation in the Kingdom, the heavenly banquet, a feast that we can't even imagine? I worry that I get too busy for God,

even though my job is to teach you about God and lead you spiritually! I make room to redo my kitchen and it can easily lead to excuses for why I don't pay attention to God.

I think about what happened during the pandemic, as it was just beginning. We had more than 1000 people online with us regularly for about two months, then things began to taper off. The truth is that people needed hope as there was fear, and church and faith were important, but as things have opened up, we have gotten busy again. In some ways, we are even busier than before because we picked up new habits during the pandemic and now, we have kept those habits and simply added more. The same thing happened after 9/11, when there was a surge of people coming back to church, and then we got busy again and life returned somewhat to normal.

I know that we were eating more often together as a family in our house during the pandemic, and that was great. But now, we all have gotten busy again and it's more difficult and takes effort to make room. Are we willing to be with God and the people that are most important to us, because that is what it means to bring wholeness and healing and restoration? Salvation is something that we long for us to wash over us, but it only happens when we say "yes" to the invitation to the banquet. I encourage us to put first things first so we might live into an experience fully the Kingdom of God.

SLIDE What do we REALLY need?

There is another level to this parable of the banquet we are meant to see. Notice that the excuses were all about money. One bought land, another bought oxen, and another bought a wife! Yes, you purchased brides in those days. Each person was busy with their new toys they had bought with their own money. But those who are broken are the ones who respond, representing the reality that if we are honest, and willing to bring all that we are to God, we can experience salvation, being restored, and made whole. Do we even know what we

really need? Are we willing to bring it ALL to God?

GRAPHIC Kitchen Cart and Dogs Eating

That brings me back to my kitchen cart project. I'm going to show you this picture and give you one guess as to what we keep in that cabinet. This is where my dogs experience their banquet, and they never miss an invitation! They find great joy in coming to this feast and my hope is that we would know that when we are invited to this feast there is healing and wholeness and a sense of being filled up.

As we reflect upon salvation in the Kingdom of God, I hope we can remember that we are invited to show compassion because people come before rules; to be humble and serve others first; to be generous; and to make room for what really matters, so we can enjoy the banquet God has for us now and in the future.

GRAPHIC Week 4 – Heals on the Sabbath

As close, I want to invite you to take a moment in the quiet and reflect on this picture of Jesus healing on the Sabbath. What is it that you need restoration for in your life today? Can you invite Jesus to give you a heart of compassion and put people before rules? Are you willing to humbly come to Jesus? Are you willing to be generous? Are you willing to make room for what's most important and receive his invitation to the banquet? Let's pray...

SLIDE Prayer

Gracious God, forgive us those times when we have not been compassionate or humble or generous. We can easily get too busy to pray or worship or open our Bibles to listen. Help us put first things first; to love You, love others, say "Yes" to your invitation, and share that good news of salvation in your Kingdom. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.

March 26-27 Order

1. Eric welcomes people and says, **“Today we continue our journey through the gospel of Luke, focusing on how we can find healing and wholeness in today’s world.”**
2. Two Songs
3. Jeff welcomes and invites people to wave and be seated.
4. Announcements by Jeff (Check News Section on Website)
 - a. UMCOR
 - b. Easter Invites
 - c.
5. Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.
6. Sermon
7. Prayer
8. Two Songs
9. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
10. Offering SLIDE and Focus (New Offering Boxes UMCOR)
11. Care Ministers (If any are present)
12. Prayer Quilt (If any)
13. Closing Prayer