

Sunday 10 April 2011 – Ranui Baptist – Pastor Russell  
“Jesus tells it like it is because He loves us” Luke 13:31-14:35

Proposition: Jesus cared more about people's relationship to God than He did about being liked. So He spoke the truth in love always – so can we.

There is going to be a day when you and I who personally know the Lord and are disciplined followers of the Lord will sit down to a great feast with him in heaven. It will be the best banquet of all time. Revelation 19 describes it as the Marriage feast of the Lamb. God wants all humanity to make it there, but the reality is many will choose to decline His invitation to salvation and fellowship. Many will make up excuses why they can't or won't respond to His grace. And there will be others who just assume that they will make it because they have been good people or because they come from a good family. In the passage we are looking at this morning we see Jesus going to Jerusalem to die in our place and on his way there he sits down to yet another dinner party and is so straight up with everyone there because he wants them to be right with God more than he wants them to like him or approve of him. I pray that as we go through these accounts that you and I will become less concerned about people liking us and not being upset by us and more and more concerned about helping people be right with God, as Jesus demonstrates for us. If you are a Christian this passage is in places like a mirror that helps us examine our motivations. If you are not yet in Gods family this passage is a clear warning that our lame excuses don't cut it with God that He really wants and is giving you every opportunity to get your life right with Him.

We return to Dr Luke's methodically researched account of Jesus' life in Luke 13:31 and we see Jesus journeying towards Jerusalem where He knows that He is going to get rejected and crucified. Other gospel writers say of Him at this time that He set his face like flint; that is there was a determination in Him to go to Jerusalem and fulfil God's will for his life, to pay the fine for your sins and mine.

As He left Galilee in the North and went south He goes through the region of Perea on the other side of the Jordan river, an area ruled by Herod, the same Herod that had John the Baptist's head lopped off.

***31At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "You had better get away from here! Herod wants to kill you."***

Now these Pharisees weren't saying this to keep Jesus safe, this was their way of saying, we don't want you here mister, you had better push off. They said it to get rid of Jesus. But Jesus sends a message to Herod through these Pharisees who had said that Herod is out to get you. He does some straight talking.

***Go tell that fox, "I am going to force out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and three days later I'll be through."***

Now friends this is not a polite response. He calls Herod a fox; that is a sneaky, predatory eating machine. Tell the fox. What? That I am going to do what I am destined to do. I am going to do what I am meant to do. I am going to cast out demons, heal the sick and in three days time I will be out of the region. I will have completed my ministry here.

In the face of intimidation and danger Jesus says, I am going to do what I know I am destined to do and therefore I am not intimidated or worried.

When you hear of world disasters; when you hear of global financial crisis; when you see devastation in Christchurch or hear of the alarming nuclear threat in devastated Japan, you could get anxious, you could get fearful and worried about life or you could say, this is all in bible prophecy (as it is) and so I am going to go about my Father's business today and fulfil my destiny.

God has put a real sense of call of destiny in each of our hearts. That is to be our daily focus. Let's just do what we are meant to be doing especially because of the times that we are living in. I am sure that Jesus had a double meaning to what he said in his message to Herod because of what comes next in the text. I am sure that this dealing with sin and sickness and on the third day his job would be complete also relates to what He was going to do on the cross of Calvary in Jerusalem shortly.

***33But I am going on my way today and tomorrow and the next day. After all, Jerusalem is the place where prophets are killed.***

Jesus wasn't worried about Herod's threats, He knew what His destiny was, and that is to die in Jerusalem on a hill so that humanity would get the opportunity to go to the marriage feast of the lamb and have fellowship with God.

Jesus is focused on going to Jerusalem and thinking of Jerusalem and now He says

***34Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Your people have killed the prophets and have stoned the messengers who were sent to you. I have often wanted to gather your people, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you wouldn't let me.***

Wow. This is real strength and power.

Often people in history have cried for the innocent when they have been killed wrongly but how often have you seen the innocent person so in love with and caring of their executioners that they would cry for their executioners before their executioners kill them.

The purity of motive and the love of the Lord, it's amazing.

**Herod the fox wants to devour people but Jesus the king wants to defend people to comfort and nurture and protect people.**

Consider here, what it is that makes Jesus weep; what it is that grieves the heart of God as he daily deals with humanity.

God wants to help people. He wants to do life with people. The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to draw people to God through Jesus. What is it that grieves God that causes His heart pain? It's this, He has a mind blowing love for everyone, He want to do life with everyone, to gather people like a hen gathers chicks under its wings. He wants to offer them all relationship, purpose and salvation but they won't let Him. People reject that grace, that daily fellowship with Him, they reject His offer of daily help and that is what breaks His heart.

It's true that God will judge the living and the dead and that Hell is a reality. But does God want anyone to go to hell or in reality do people need to reject his offers many times and reject the work of the Holy Spirit in order to end up there.

I even wonder if at times we don't enjoy the day with the Lord and we don't take his offers of help and comfort, if that also grieves the heart of a powerful loving God who wants to protect, bless and nurture? Son, daughter, I wanted to be with you today, to lift that burden, to protect you from the effect of those words but you wouldn't let me.

Jesus, the strongest, purest person of all time weeps over His executioners because he would love to help them and they won't let Him.

***35Now your temple will be deserted. You won't see me again until the time when you say***

***"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."***

Within 40 years the Romans were to come and destroy the city and the temple so that it would be deserted completely. The second half of this prophesy is still not yet fulfilled and won't be fulfilled until Jesus comes a second time.

Zechariah chapters 12 and 14 and the revelation of Jesus at the end of the bible describe a time when Jerusalem is about to be destroyed by a configuration of nations led by the anti-christ, the coming world dictator. A time will come when nations decide to act together to solve world problems not seeking the Lord but acting according to their own apparent wisdom. They will come together in the middle east and end up outside of Jerusalem in a valley called Megedo or Armagedon. The mother of all battles is coming, and when it looks like the nations of this world are going to finally wipe out Israel, Jesus the Lord will come back and we will be with Him, having spent 7 years previously in heaven at the marriage feast of the lamb. When He comes back on that day the Jewish people will say ***"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."*** That is in the name of Yahweh. Jesus said that the Jews would not see him again until that day when they will finally acknowledge who He is. Jeremiah calls the 7 years of tribulation the time of Jacob's trouble because one of the great purposes of the tribulation will be to prepare Israel to finally declare "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of Yahweh."

Chapter 14 Jesus is invited to dinner again and as we have seen before whether the invite comes from friend or foe Jesus always goes to dinner when invited.

What is shocking to me and challenging to me is what takes place at this dinner because it is clear that Jesus is not the least concerned about whether or not people like Him. He is totally focused on saying the truths that will help those people at the do get right with God now. This is gutsy, direct; tell it like it is, straight talking. All of the conversations are motivated by His pure love for people. He wants them right with God and he wants them to do well in life and so positive warm fuzzies are out the window and he gives them the truth between the eyes.

There are 5 groups that he is going to challenge; in fact everyone there is challenged by Jesus to get their lives sorted so they can live rightly with God. Everyone at that dinner function would have become really uncomfortable during this meal.

If you are taking notes Jesus corrects bluntly, directly 5 different people or groups of people.

**1. JESUS TELLS THE PHARISEES WATCHING HIM THAT THEIR SPIRITUALITY IS FAKE. IT WAS ABOUT RULES WHEN IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABOUT LOVING OTHERS**

***1One Sabbath, Jesus was having dinner in the home of an important Pharisee, and everyone was carefully watching Jesus. 2All of a sudden a man with swollen legs stood up in front of him. 3Jesus turned and asked the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses, "Is it right to heal on the Sabbath?"***

The Pharisees and the legal lawyers are out to trap Jesus, as usual and they know that if someone is sick or hurting that Jesus is going to help them, which was work in their opinion and against all their many rules. And so this sick guy is put at the dinner table (probably really close to Jesus) as a plant. We'll watch him and see if he really is spiritual. If he can't follow our rules He is no prophet they are thinking.

It's important to note that Jesus doesn't wait for them to ask Him a question or to initiate the discussion, he has a good idea of what is going on here and what they are thinking and so He initiates the discussion. Friends, all too often we wait for someone to ask us about Jesus, who He is or why He died. Often we wait for people to ask us about bible prophecy etc but... Jesus didn't wait to be asked. He wanted to help them and so He initiated the conversations all the time as He does here.

**4But they did not say a word.**

**Jesus took hold of the man. Then he healed him and sent him away. 5Afterwards, Jesus asked the people, "If your son or ox falls into a well, wouldn't you pull him out right away, even on the Sabbath?" 6There was nothing they could say.**

Their rules allowed you to help your livestock out of a well if they got stuck but said it was a sin to help a man who was sick. Jesus is saying directly to them. How pathetic is that. Real spirituality involves serving and caring for others and there was nothing that they could say. In your face Pharisees – and dinner continues to get more uncomfortable.

## **2. JESUS TELLS THE GUESTS WHO ARE JOSTLING FOR THE BEST POSITIONS AROUND HIM THAT THEY HAVE BAD MANNERS AND ARE PROUD.**

**Jesus saw how the guests had tried to take the best seats. So he told them: When you are invited to a wedding feast, don't sit in the best place. Someone more important may have been invited. Then the one who invited you will come and say, "Give your place to this other guest!" You will be embarrassed and will have to sit in the worst place. When you are invited to be a guest, go and sit in the worst place. Then the one who invited you may come and say, "My friend, take a better seat!" You will then be honoured in front of all the other guests. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured.**

In those days the closer you sat to the important person the more important you looked to all the other guests. It was a thing of honour to be placed at the bride and grooms table at a wedding on the most important persons table at a dinner function and these guests, important people no doubt wanted to sit where they would look more important to everyone else. They are jostling for position for social status.

These guests were more concerned about sitting in the right spot than being the right person and so Jesus addresses the serious heart issue of pride. Guests get your hearts right, what you should be doing is living humble lives. At an important do or wedding take the back seat, take an unimportant seat and let the MC or the groom promote you.

Because that is what the Father in heaven does. If you don't promote yourself in the eyes of others down here then God Himself will promote you in life, but if you are prideful you are going to get humbled. So guests get your hearts right. Try to be the right person not worrying about sitting in the best seats. Stop trying to impress others with your outward appearance – get your heart attitudes sorted.

I heard one man say once that you will never meet a person who is not better than you at something. That is a really helpful thought to keep us humble and respectful of others in life. You Pharisees don't know what it is to be truly spiritual.

You guests are rude and are more concerned with matters of image than matters of the heart. Man this is a heavy dinner function, but wait, there's more.

## **3. JESUS TELLS THE HOST THAT HIS MOTIVES FOR THROWING THE DINNER WERE ALL WRONG.**

**Then Jesus said to the man who had invited him: When you give a dinner of a banquet, don't invite your friends and family and relatives and rich neighbours. If you do, they will invite you in return, and you will be paid back. When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. They cannot pay you back. But God will bless you and reward you when his people rise from death.**

This important Pharisee had invited all the important people in the town to his function. I guess they were all important barring the sick guy who was planted there to trip Jesus up. The point was he was getting them on his side, earning their favour, scratching their backs so that one day they could return the favour and Jesus sees right through him to his motives and because he cares, because he wants this guy to learn to give with the right attitude. Because he knows that when we

do good we will be rewarded once. If people applaud us and thank us in this life, that's good but that's all we are going to get. But if we serve anonymously and give anonymously then our father in heaven will reward us one day in heaven and those rewards will last.

Imagine going to someone's house for dinner and saying to your host, mate you have just got to get your motives sorted out. You need to give and to serve people who can't pay you back but remember when we get to glory, when we are raised from the dead God will reward you then. Now there is a guy at this dinner that is feeling that this is all too heavy, way too negative and so he tries to change the topic after all he being a Jew, He being a descendant of Abraham knows that all Jews will go to heaven and so he interrupts Jesus and tries to change the conversation so it is PC and warm and fuzzy and tensions in the room can come down a little.

***After Jesus had finished speaking, one of the guests said, "The greatest blessing of all is to be at the banquet in God's kingdom!"***

Big mistake buster. And so

#### **4. JESUS TELLS THE INTERUPTER NOT TO ASSUME THAT HE IS GOING TO HEAVEN JUST BECAUSE HE IS A JEW.**

Salvation is based on a real relationship with God through Jesus. It has to be personal and real. A person cannot assume that their destiny is heaven just because they are Hebrews or because they go to a church or because they were once baptised. Salvation begins at conversion, its ongoing daily and it will be completed one day when we sit down at that great fellowship banquet. I bet this guy hadn't tried to be so positive, so PC but Jesus cuts to the chase and deals with reality. Just a little bit of historical context. In the days when they didn't have microwaves and ovens and crock pots and warming mechanisms you would be invited to a banquet on a certain day but you would not know exactly what time the meal was starting until the servants of the host came knocking on your door and said hey, the food is ready please come now.

***Jesus told him: A man once gave a great banquet and invited a lot of guests.***

***When the banquet was ready, he sent a servant to tell the guests, "Everything is ready! Please come." One guest after another started making excuses. The first one said, "I bought some land, and I've got to look it over. Please excuse me." Another guest said, "I bought five teams of oxen, and I need to try them out. Please excuse me." Still another guest said, "I have just gotten married, and I can't be there."***

Jesus was saying that people, all people have been invited to receive His hospitality, His forgiveness, fellowship with God at the great banquet. God wants them all to know Him personally but people make crazy excuses not to connect with God.

One guy says I have bought some land but must go and look at it. How crazy is that. Who buys land without looking at it? Even if you buy something on Trademe you know what you have bought and there no urgency to deal with your stuff.

The next guy says I have bought some oxen and I need to try them out. How crazy is that. Who would buy oxen or a ploughing tractor without first trying it out and besides the banquet would have been at some stage in the evening so who would try out the oxen or tractor in the dark.

The next guy takes the prize though for excuses, he says I am married and so I can't come. Can't have fellowship with you God I am married. I've got to talk to the wife.

He could so easily just bring her as well, or if family turned up to bring them as well. Excuses, that's all they are.

I'm too busy for God looking after my stuff or my business or my wife. Those excuses don't wash with God and won't wash on judgement day. Every one of us has every opportunity to get to know the Lord and to accept His invitation.

A lot of work goes into preparing a banquet and understandably the master is angry when he hears that his guests aren't coming and so he instructs the servants to give the invitations of salvation to

everyone, not just the chosen few. Invite them all – the whole world and invite the poor that is those who aren't hung up on stuff (they might be rich or tight financially), invite the crippled – that is those who aren't consumed with their work, invite the blind or lame – those unlikely to be tied up in relationships.

Invite the people who aren't consumed with stuff or work or relationships and want to have fellowship with Me. Invite them all.

What a heavy dinner function. The atmosphere must have been intense except it was an outdoor dinner party and uninvited guests were looking over the fence and listening and watching. They heard the Pharisees get it between the eyes – you guys aren't spiritual you don't love people practically. They heard the guests get it between the eyes – you guys are all concerned about your appearances while your hearts are a mess. They heard the Host get it between the eyes, mister you are just throwing this party to get in with the Jones to surround yourself with people who can pay you back. They had heard the interrupter get it between the eyes. Mister don't assume that you are going to heaven because you think you are good or because you are one of Abrahams descendants you need to accept God's invitation to fellowship personally. These onlookers are going, wow, what great entertainment, sorted them out, told them off go Jesus, get em Jesus. Then Jesus turns to them because he loves them also and wants them right with God and

**5. JESUS TELLS THE ONLOOKERS THAT TO BE A CHRISTIAN MEANS TO LOVE GOD WAY MORE THAN EVEN YOUR FAMILY. DON'T MOCK, INSTEAD CONSIDER THE COST.**

***Large crowds were walking along with Jesus, when he turned and said:***

***You cannot be my disciple, unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and children, and your brothers and sisters. You cannot come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life. You cannot be my disciple unless you carry your own cross and come with me.***

I trust that we all love our spouses and our children and our extended families.

I trust that we all love our own lives.

But Jesus says, God wants you to love Him way more than your love your families or yourselves.

Sometimes you hear people say, my back has been playing up again never mind we all have to carry our own crosses. Or my kids are giving me heck but that's my cross. Or I am under so much financial stress that's the cross I must carry.

None of those things are carrying your cross. Those things are just the stuff of life that both Christian and non Christian have to face.

To carry your cross means to do what Jesus did, that is to be willing to die to self if it means you help someone get closer to God.

To carry your cross means to put aside your rights and your entitlements to help someone else. It means doing what you can to speak and serve other people so that they too can receive the dinner invitation and enter into real, personal, lasting fellowship with the Master.

When I read this passage, the strength of Jesus love blows me away; how can he cry for people who are about to kill Him. His unphasable determination to fulfil His destiny blows me away. His willingness to be unpopular, to initiate conversations, to speak the truth in love daily so that other people will get closer to God just amazes and inspires me and I trust you.

I don't believe that anyone will have a valid excuse for rejecting Jesus and Gods invitation on judgement day, I only pray that God will use you and I to help them respond to that invitation.