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Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
Pastor David Pfeiffer

## **Our Dropsy Diagnosis, Healed by Jesus' Touch**

Luke 14:1-14

INI

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. Amen. (1 Peter 1:3-4)

For our meditation today, we consider that Scripture which the Holy Spirit caused Luke to write concerning our Lord's interaction at the house of one of the Pharisees, chapter 14, beginning at verse 1,

***Luke 14:1-14 (NKJV)** — 1 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. 7 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. 11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." 12 Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

**Let us PRAY:** Oh Lord Jesus, humble our hearts to your gracious invitation as we hear Your Word today. Grant that we would so read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest this precious news which You have spoken and worked for our salvation. Amen.

In Jesus name, dear fellow redeemed,

The man in our text suffers from a medical condition called “dropsy.” The medical term used for this condition today is “edema.” This condition is caused by the collection of fluid under the skin which often results in the swelling of arms, hands, legs, or feet.

The physician Luke is specific in his diagnosis. He uses a word which appears only once in Scripture. The diagnosis is “hudropikos” – relating to the Greek word, hudros, meaning “water.” In its more severe forms, dropsy is often a symptom of an underlying disease.

As we consider how Jesus touched this man and granted physical healing, let us also consider how Jesus touches you and heals you spiritually. Let us consider how we too have had our own dropsy diagnosis. With a parable, Jesus endeavors to lead the Pharisees to see that they too have suffered from their own case of swelling – puffed up, a swelled sense of self. Jesus endeavors to lead us to recognize the same. Like the Pharisees, our dropsy diagnosis has shown its symptoms. Above all, we pray that the Spirit would lead us today to the touch of Jesus – a touch which alone can heal us. **Our dropsy diagnosis is healed by Jesus touch.**

This Sabbath dinner was likely held in an open courtyard of this Pharisees house, hence this swollen man appears before Jesus. And Jesus literally “seizes” the opportunity. When it says “He took him and healed him,” it could be translated “seized him,” “took hold of,” “touched him.”

Under the Old Covenant, God had set aside the seventh day of the week as a special day for the people of Israel. This day was to be a day of “sabbath” or “rest,” a day of worship and meditation on the works of God. Jesus now performs His powerful work. He touches a man who would be considered unclean and cures him of his disease. But the Sabbath, meaning “rest”, was to be a day in which no work was done. The Pharisees watch Him closely. What would be their response to Jesus’ great work? Is this a violation of the command to do no work on the Sabbath?

Just one chapter earlier Luke, these supposed experts in the law of Moses accuse Jesus of just that. Jesus heals a woman who had a been some spinal disorder and was unable to stand up straight for over eighteen years. The ruler of the local synagogue responds: “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath.”

For all their pious works and strict adherence to the law, they really missed the whole meaning of what “Sabbath rest” is all about. They never saw that rather than even in resting, they were working – they were trying to earn something, they were serving themselves.

The Sabbath represented “rest” from spiritual labor and ailments. It is to be a spiritual experience of the seventh of creation – in which God rested from all His labor. Only in God’s saving work in Christ do we find that rest that was originally intended between God and His creation. Jesus was the fulfillment of the Sabbath in every way. *v.5 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.* To come to Jesus for His saving touch is to find the true meaning of the Sabbath. For all of us, our Sabbath is fulfilled right here, in Jesus’ presence where our sins are forgiven and peace with God is confirmed. So He says, “Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

They simply could not answer Jesus. They would pull their oxen out of a pit, but they would not lift a finger to help their suffering and lost brethren. The diagnosis: spiritual dropsy. Their interpretation of the Sabbath was self-inflated. They interpreted the Law in a way that could only serve themselves. They never saw that the Law is not about serving self, it is about serving others. The Law is about taking the lowest place, being last so someone else can be first, and expecting nothing in return.

One of the causes or contributors to dropsy is sitting for too long. How often isn’t this our diagnosis too? We suffer from self-inflation because we’ve reclined in the best place for far too long. We sit back with an eye on everyone else. We sit in the place of honor and watch others closely just like the Pharisees watched Jesus closely.

Perhaps we are eyeing up someone who has got it all together. “They just can’t be that perfect.” We search out their weakness. We look for some small failure in their life in order to prove that I am better, that I deserve a higher place.

Or, perhaps we are watching someone who does not have it all together. Perhaps this is someone who can’t hold a job for more than a month, who is an alcoholic or drug addict, who keeps ending up in jail. So we take the place of honor. We think: “Boy, I’m glad I not as bad as that guy. Sure I’ve got my problems, but at least their not as big as his.”

Or perhaps you are watching those outside of our fellowship only seeking to expose their mistakes. We forget that the work of the Spirit transcends denominations and we

fail to rejoice in the fact that God will accomplish His good purpose where ever the gospel goes forth.

Or perhaps our seat of honor is a place we take in our own marriage. We put our own needs first, and the needs of spouse or child last.

Like the Pharisees, we have been diagnosed by the Law – spiritual dropsy. It swells up in us even now as our flesh tries to excuses us for our sins. But the law is here, my friends, not to give you a pat on the back and tell you to move up. The law is here to tell you to get out of that seat. Move on back. As Jesus says, “Give place to this man.” We absolutely must give up that seat of honor. Whether we like it or not, we have not earned that place of prestige.

The Pharisees resisted this accusation. They rejected the diagnosis. And what happens when someone refuses to accept care because they think there really is no medical problem? Does the problem go away? In the end they will lose that seat of honor. They will lose that seat because they are forced out. They will lose everything they worked for and everything they clung to.

*v.11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

But we are not to that end dear Christians. God has led us to the proper diagnosis. If we did not know the symptoms, we would not be aware of the greater disease lurking underneath.

So here we are, in the last seat; we are lost; we are ill; we are the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. Jesus has taken us to back of the line. Here, in the lowest place, when nothing is left in us but sorrow over sin – Jesus reaches out to touch us. We are seized, grasped, taken hold of. Jesus has come to sit in that seat for you; to take the lowest place that you deserve. His touch heals you.

As Jesus said, *31 “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. (Luke 5:31–32).*

Jesus has reached into the pit and pulled you out. He has given you true Sabbath. Rest, dear Christian. It is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. In fact it is the true purpose of the Sabbath to give you God’s Spirit and free you from the burdens of your sins, of the demands of the law, and to give you the highest place at God’s feast. That touch of Jesus has reached out to you – “Friend, go up higher.” A place of honor has been reserved in heaven for you – all because of Jesus’ dropsy diagnosis and healing touch.

Jamie is a resident at Batavia Rehab just on the other side of the river on Faybian Road. Jamie has Lou Gehrig's disease, a gradual degeneration of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Gradually the nerve cells die until the person loses the ability to move, eat, speak, and even breathe. The nurses will often have Jamie out in the area we host our worship service each Sunday. He can't hold a program, sing a hymn, or even say amen. The most he can do is groan or yell from time to time. There is no way to know what Jamie can hear, understand, or process. He can't shake hands or offer anything in return. Yet I have noticed from time to time when we get to the closing doxology ("Praise God from whom all blessings flow..." TLH 644) his hands will go up and he'll let out a series of groans.

What a wonder to think that in the midst of this wicked disease that has ravaged his nervous system, Jesus is reaching out to touch him. Jesus is laying hold of him, saying, "Friend, come up here."

For Jesus touches not just your spiritual ailments, but also your physical and mental diseases. In the resurrection of the righteous all your brokenness will be made whole. In touching this man with dropsy Jesus was giving us a glimpse into the restorative power of His resurrected touch. His resurrected hands will raise up that failing heart, that slipping mind, that feeble back, that sick child, that lost husband, and all who believe in Jesus, all who have been touched by Jesus will be exalted, perfected, restored to the seventh day of God's creative work. What a wonder to think that in the last day we might see Jamie: fully healed, restored, set free by Jesus touch.

Who is it in your life who has been diagnosed with something awful? Who has been struck with tragedy? Who is it in your life that is suffering spiritually? Who are "the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" that you have a chance to pull out of the pit and invite to the wedding banquet of Christ? As Jesus said: "You will be blessed, For you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." Amen.