



The Ideal Meal: Masculinity and Disability among Host and Guests in Luke

Anna Rebecca Solevåg & Marianne Bjelland Kartzow

Abstract

In the Gospel of Luke, the social gathering of the meal appears again and again. It is a setting for Jesus' interactions as well as a topic of conversation. Drawing on theories of disability and masculinity, this article examines the various meal scenes in Luke 14. The focus is on Jesus' advice to the host about who to invite and who not to invite when hosting a meal (vv. 12–14). This saying constructs a complex and intersecting web of potential guests. Those that should not be invited, belong to the social world of the privileged man: his brother, friend, relative and rich neighbor. Representing different levels of his radius of trust, they all have something to give back. The preferred guests in Jesus' parable, however, are those who lack the resources to give anything back, due to bodily disability and lack of means: "The poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind" (Luke 14:14, NRSV). The article thus examines how health, economic ability, and gender intersect. The ideal meal in the Gospel of Luke negotiates the complex social web of the ancient world. We suggest that disability and masculinity are key issues and scrutinize these categories to rethink the social make-up of ideal communities as suggested by Luke.

Key words: disability, meal, guests, Luke 14, masculinity, intersectionality

In the Gospel of Luke, the social gathering of the meal appears again and again. It is a setting for Jesus' interactions as well as a topic of conversation. Unexpected characters and groups are present at these real and imagined table gatherings, thus negotiating conventions for social interaction. This article examines the various meal scenes in Luke 14. We will do a close reading of one paragraph, Luke 14:12–14, in which Jesus advises his host on whom to invite and whom not to invite to a meal. The various characters mentioned here have often been categorized as two contrasting groups, one privileged and one lacking in privilege, without examining their diversity within. We will scrutinize the social categories that appear and ask questions about differences as well as interrelations between ideal and not-so-ideal guests. We suggest that Luke reconfigures existing masculinity ideals and constructs an ideal meal which explicitly includes disabled and unmanly bodies. Never-

theless, there are also disadvantaged social groups that remain unnoticed throughout this chapter in Luke.

This is Jesus's advice on the ideal guest list:

He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in

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return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14.:2–14, all biblical quotations are from NRSV)

In this passage, those who should not be invited belong to the social world of the privileged man: his brother, his friend, his relative and the rich neighbor. The preferred guests in Jesus’ parable, however, are those who lack the resources to give anything back, due to bodily disability and lack of economic means: The poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

In many commentaries, these eight social categories are often collapsed into two contrasting groups of the privileged on the one side and the outcast on the other (e.g. Johnson, 1991; Metzger, 2010; Fitzmyer 1985). Our aim is to deconstruct and nuance this picture and suggest a more complex web of social networks. What is it that these eight groups share and how do they differ? What is revealed about the four groups of ideal guests when they are juxtaposed with the four not-ideal guest groups? Moreover, we will also ask some questions about which groups remain invisible throughout this table conversation.

Meals in Luke and the Ancient World

The meal as a setting is typical for Luke. In the ancient world, meals constructed and confirmed social relations and established networks (Corley, 1993). According to Mary Douglas, to eat represented a risk: to open your mouth in the company of others required mutual trust (Douglas 1971). You could be served food that made you ill or you could be poisoned by drinking. Still, a man who was never invited to a meal or did not host a meal himself was not a real man. Therefore, a meal demonstrated who was an insider and who was an outsider and set important borders of inclusion and exclusion.

Luke 14 is replete with references to meals. The saying in verses 12–14 should be seen within the framework of Luke 14:1–24. This is a separate unit, framed by Jesus’ presence at a meal at the house of a leading Pharisee. Within this unit there are four different sections. First, there is the actual meal with the surprising appearance of a man with dropsy seeking healing (14:2–6). Second, Jesus addresses the *guests* who are present, giving advice

on humility when choosing your seating (14:7–11). The third section, which is our main interest here, is Jesus’s words to the *host* about who to invite to dinner (14:12–14). The fourth and final section is the parable of the great feast (14:15–24). In the parable, the same four groups of ideal invitees, the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, reappear as the ones who are compelled to come to dinner from the streets and the lanes after the first set of invitees have declined the invitation (14:21).

It is well established among Lukan scholars that Luke shows familiarity with the Greco-Roman tradition of the *sumposion* and that he draws on literary conventions from sympotic literature (Smith, 2003). Let us briefly mention some of the ideals and conventions surrounding the symposium that are relevant for our interpretation of this passage. Firstly, the symposium was surrounded by an egalitarian ideal (Smith, 2003). This is not to say that the symposium was at all an egalitarian space. It was an upper-class, male space, which nevertheless idealized notions of equality and reciprocity. Symposiasts came from the same social strata and should ideally regard each other as equals. One aspect of this equality was the notion of reciprocity. It was expected that one would take turns hosting and being guests. Another aspect was that there should be equality at table: guests and host shared the same wine cup and took turns contributing to the conversation (Smith, 2003). However, under this surface of egalitarianism, there was still a strict social order associated not least with seating arrangements in the dining room, the *triclinium*. The symposium reflected complex, hierarchical relationships between host and guests, negotiated through the offering and acceptance of invitations, placements at table, unequal portion sizes and so on (Gosbell, 2018).

Another aspect of the symposium tradition is the conventions surrounding the conversation. One of the sub-genres that appears in sympotic literature is discussions on table etiquette (Smith, 2003). Thus, the advice that Jesus gives to the guests shows Luke’s knowledge of this tradition and highlights the delicate social negotiation that went on at symposia around seating arrangements.

Thirdly, we want to highlight that the symposium was a setting associated with beauty and extravagance. The extreme symposia described in Petronius’ *Satyricon* and Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophist* are clearly regarded as exces-

sive and vulgar (Smith, 2003). But writers, such as Plato, Plutarch and Philo, all highlight that the symposium was an escape from the ordinary, where the food was tasty and plentiful, the wine good, the conversation stimulating, and the entertainment tantalizing (see e.g. Plato’s *Symposium*, Plutarch’s *Table Talk* [Mor. 612C-748D] and Philo, *Contempl.* 57, 64). Pleasure (*hēdone*) was the measuring stick for a successful symposium (Smith, 2003).

Fourthly, we should keep in mind that it was not only host and invited guests who were present at a symposium. The reclined posture necessitated servers, so slaves and other attendants in charge of party logistics were present. There were also performers. In the literature, as well as in vase paintings and other archeological evidence, we find musicians, dancers, jesters, and the ever-present female flute-players who also served as prostitutes. The *Act of Thomas* tells about a female flute-player, who happens to be foreign (Jewish) like Thomas himself. Thomas meets her at a banquet where he serves as a slave during his travel to India (ActThom 5; Kartzow, 2018). Louise Gosbell has brought attention to the fact that people with disabilities often served as performers at *symposia*. During the Roman Empire it became fashionable among the wealthy to display deviant bodies, and it was a trend to keep slaves with non-normative bodies (Garland, 1995). According to Robert Garland, “the popularity of statuettes and vase-paintings depicting deformed dwarfs, hunch backs and obese women strongly suggests that people of this sort were in high demand as singers, dancers, musicians, jugglers and clowns,” (Garland, 1995, p. 32-33). The use of slaves with such visible disabilities as symposium entertainers was intended to be humorous and parodic, and the comical effect was highlighted by the use of young, beautiful slaves as table waiters (Garland, 1995).

In addition to the slaves, servants, and performers, there were also “party crashers.” The uninvited (*aklētoi*) are often depicted as outsiders unfamiliar with symposium etiquette and thus behaving inappropriately (Gosbell, 2018). The *aklētoi*, notably, were not part of the expectation of reciprocity that existed between host and invited guest. Most likely, they belonged to a social class that did not have the means to reciprocate. However, they might contribute to the party through partaking in the entertainment.

Theoretical tools: Intersectionality, Masculinity, Disability

We argue that masculinity and disability are keys to unlock some of the central themes of this chapter and see important relations among and between the different subgroups in the saying. We use theories of intersectionality as an overarching perspective (Crenshaw, 1989; Schüssler Fiorenza, 2009; Kim and Shaw, 2018). The core idea of intersectionality is that social categories, such as gender, class, race, etc., do not operate in isolation but mutually construct each other (Gunnarsson, 2017; Davis, 2008; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 2013). Intersectionality is a useful heuristic tool to explore identity, social networks, and relationships as it highlights complexities, such as overlaps between categories, and potential tensions among them. Multiple identities were commonplace in the ancient world and which part of your identity that was emphasized could vary depending on the social setting. For example, gender meant very different things for the free compared to the enslaved persons. A foreign male slave was not a proper man since his ethnicity, as well as his class, devalued his masculinity. A disabled girl was perceived very differently from a healthy boy who was the heir of an influential man (Solevåg, 2017). Intersectionality helps us understand how all these categories intersect, so we can better map the social web underlying the texts we investigate.

One way to identify such intersections is to “ask the other question” (Matsuda, 1990; Kartzow, 2010). When we read about a slave, for example, we can ask about gender or ethnicity. When a text talks about a disabled person, such as a blind beggar, we can ask about gender, social status, religious belonging, and so on. The point is to scrutinize which social categories a text highlights, but also to address those which are left unmentioned, or even made “invisible” by the text.

The social setting in Luke 14 is very male-oriented. Both the host (an unnamed leader of the Pharisees) and the guest (Jesus) are male, and no women are mentioned in this scene. Theories of masculinity are therefore useful. Biblical scholars drawing on masculinity theory often refer to some important aspects of Greco-Roman hegemonic masculinity. These include the notions of activity, dominance, and self-control (Smit, 2017). To be

a man was not considered a fact determined simply by having a male body, “but needed to be proved constantly in the public arena through one’s appearance, behaviour and performance” (Smit, p. 52). Gender was thus a symbolic category with moral overtones, and feminine and masculine characteristics did not necessarily correspond with female and male sex, rather they existed in an overlapping continuum (Moxnes, 1997). The male end of the spectrum was understood as the fully and perfectly human, while the female end of the spectrum was lacking in perfection. The notion of ideal manhood made men’s lives a continuous test, as masculinity was based on the capacity to protect and prove one’s honor (Gleason, 1995). The training into manhood involved both voice and body, both rhetoric and deportment, and social etiquette, such as being an ideal host at a meal. To appear as “unmanly” represented shame (Foxhall, 1998).

Studies of masculinity in the Gospel of Luke differ in their evaluation of how hegemonic Luke’s masculinity is. Whereas Susanna Asikainen suggests that Luke is the synoptic author which comes closest to ancient Mediterranean hegemonic masculinity ideals (Asikainen, 2018), Brittany Wilson argues that Luke’s portrayal of men is rather countercultural (Wilson, 2015). We agree with Wilson that Luke does not simply reproduce elite constructions of masculinity, but re-figures elite norms to serve his larger theological agenda, in which power is ultimately only in the hands of God (Wilson, 2015). She also observes that Luke problematizes the power differential between “abled” and “disabled” bodies, showing how “Luke also presents weakness and dependency in positive terms, for Luke insists that God prioritises the ‘weak and lowly’ and that discipleship is characterised by dependency” (Wilson, 2015, p. 262).

This brings us to disability, which is also an aspect of social identity that comes up in the passage. Disability theory critiques the so-called *medical model* of disability and other “property definitions” that see disability as inherent in the person with an impairment (Williams, 2001). Against such claims, it is argued that understandings of disability are culturally and historically specific social constructions (Thomson, 1997). Rosemarie Garland Thomson argues that disability is not a “self-evident physical condition” and a personal misfortune:

Disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration, and a comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions. Disability, then, is the attribution of corporeal deviance—not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do (Thomson, 1997, p. 6).

The understanding that disability is a “product of cultural rules” is often referred to as the *cultural model*. As an approach to historical texts, disability studies offer a lens to ask new questions. How is disability represented in the text? What categories of disability do we find? What kinds of stigmas are attached to certain categories? What kinds of attitudes do we find towards people with different kinds of impairments? (Solevåg, 2018).

...[D]isability...is not necessarily related
mainly to pain and suffering, but to the so-
cial configurations of spaces and discourses.

The term “disability” is a modern category, and there are no equivalent terms in the Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts of this time period (Rose, 2003). Drawing on disability historian David Turner, we use this modern term in an open-ended way about people in antiquity with non-standard bodies who possibly experienced restrictions on their ability to carry out everyday activities due to injury, disease, congenital malformation, aging or chronic illness, or whose appearance made them liable to be singled out as different (Turner, 2012).

Invited or not?

The un-ideal guests

In his advice about dinner guests, Jesus lists eight categories. *Not* to be invited are: “your” friends (*philoï*), “your” brothers (*adelphoi*) “your” relatives (*syngenoï*), or rich neighbors (*geitonas plousious*). These categories, which describe the ideal social network of an ancient male householder, are not necessarily negative categories in Luke. Within this circle of trust – friends, brothers, relatives, and neighbors – a man of respect and honor was in his right habitat. The meal represented one central stage in which he could

perform and confirm his masculinity, vis-à-vis his social network. But what kind of groups were these four, and what potential relations could be between them?

One important observation is that the three first categories are marked by the genitive "your" (*tous*). Friends, brothers, and relatives are listed with this possessive pronoun, signaling belonging and intimacy. Although they are all close, the three groups fill different functions and roles: a brother is the closest (by blood or symbolic) and a relative can also be categorized as part of family, while friend is the closest male companion outside the inner household setting (Balch, 1997; Aasgaard, 2004). With the neighbor, however, this pattern is broken: For the neighbor, "yours" is replaced with "rich" (*plousious*). This category is not as clear and straight forward as the three others. In order to further explore the interrelations among these categories, let us look at what else Luke says about neighbors. How do they resemble and how do they differ from brothers, (male) family members, and friends? The prime example of the neighbor in Luke is in the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37). This is a story that has attracted attention in the interdisciplinary discourse on the figure of the neighbor (Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard, 2013). The parable is introduced by the question "Who is my neighbor?" (*plēision*, 10:29). In the narrative that follows, the storyline is dramatic: a man on travel was attacked. He was in crisis and needed compassion. The helper is the ambiguous insider/other, the Samaritan, who turns out to be the unexpected good neighbor (Johnson, 1991; Meylahn, 2009). The semi-stranger becomes the real neighbor, while the more immediate figures walk past, behaving like the robbers through their inaction. If we compare the meal parable in Luke 14 with the Good Samaritan, some of the male characters can be recognized. The priest and Levite are potentially brothers, relatives, or friends of the injured man. And they are certainly neighbors. Those not to be invited, according to Luke 14, echo the two men who passed by the robbed and naked man. They did not behave like *good* neighbors, according to the standards of Greco-Roman masculinity. From the parable of the good Samaritan, we can learn that a rich neighbor is one who has ethnic insider capital and proper masculinity but does not extend a helping hand. The priest and the Levite should have followed the rule of reciprocity, and

helped a suffering fellow human being, but did not. Such neighbors should not be invited to a meal.

In addition, other neighbors appear in Luke. In Chapter 15, the chapter following our saying, two other references to neighbors appear in parables. First, the story of the 99+1 sheep ends with a celebration when the shepherd finds his lost sheep. When he returns to his house, he calls together friends and neighbors (*tous philous kai tous geitonas*) to share his joy (15:6). A similar celebration with the same two groups, except here in the female gender, follows in the next parable: A woman has lost one coin, searches for it and finds it. She calls together female friends and neighbors (*tas philas kai geitonas*) to rejoice with her (Luk 15:9–10). In these two parables, the neighbors, whether male or female, are close and at hand. They rejoice and celebrate when their neighbor has retrieved what was lost (Kartzow, 2019).

Another example of female neighbors can be found in Luke 1. Elisabeth's neighbors and relatives rejoice with her when she gives birth to John the Baptist (Luke 1:58). The visitors who came lived concretely in the houses around (*perioikos*). These neighbors fill a typical role of neighbors: They learn the good news and they rejoice when their neighbor is happy. These neighbors are not like the two men who passed by in the parable of the Samaritan. Elisabeth's neighbors are there, in their houses next to hers, to fulfil their reciprocal duties: to rejoice when a woman neighbor and her son in the critical state of birth survive. The neighbors in Luke 1 are paired with another group, the *syngenoi*, the relatives, who also appear on Jesus's list of un-ideal guests. Those who lived nearby and those who belonged to the same *genos* seem to be important members of the ancient social network, for women as well as men.

As we see from these Lukan examples of neighbors, the three other groups of un-ideal guests also show up when neighbors are mentioned. *Friends* are invited to celebrate in Luke 15. *Relatives* are grouped with neighbors, who rejoiced when hearing about Elisabeth giving birth. In other words, the four categories representing un-ideal guests in Luke 14, can also be good, and they form part of both male and female networks in the Lukan narrative. The family, neighbors, and friends in the parables in chapter 15 are ideal and behave well. They are there to celebrate, available at a short notice. Such

family, friends, and neighbors and the behavior described in these narratives probably reflect everyday experiences in the ancient world. On the street level, feasting and celebrating were important roles of neighborhood. Perhaps slaves of both genders and children were also included in such impromptu gatherings. Living in proximity meant sharing; joy, sorrow or whatever came along, with the persons next door. In these parables Luke displays true reciprocity, a real sharing which crosses ethnic and gender divides.

This overview has shown that the four groups of people not to invite for dinner according to 14:12, are not entirely negative categories in Luke. Elsewhere they are employed as helpful and appreciated characters. Another important observation is that although the four categories in this saying appear as all-male, female characters are included among family, friends, and neighbors elsewhere in the gospel. We suggest that it is hegemonic masculinity, belonging and reciprocity that these four groups have in common, and it is these aspects that the saying wants to challenge.

Ideal guests

When we turn to the ideal guests, the poor (*ptochos*) are the first group that is mentioned. The observant reader of Luke knows by the time they reach chapter 14 that the poor is a group with a special place in the gospel of Jesus. From the proclamation in the synagogue at Nazareth in chapter 4 that the Lord “has anointed me to bring good news to the poor” (4:18) and continuously throughout the gospel, the poor are placed in a position of privilege vis-à-vis the Kingdom of God while the rich are singled out as a group that should be worried about their eternal fate, as for instance in the parables (6:20–26), the rich man (18:18–30), or Zacchaeus (19:1–10) just to mention a few examples. Note also that the term stands in contrast to the *rich* neighbor mentioned as the last group among the non-invitees.

The next group is “the crippled,” as they are called in NRSV’s translation. The term *anapeiros* comes from the verb *anapeirō*, which means to impale, pierce through, fix on a spit (BDAG). Maimed or pierced may be a better translation of the Greek word in this passage. The idea of being pierced or penetrated was

closely connected to protocols of masculinity. A proper man was not supposed to be penetrated or wounded, but to have an intact body. Vice versa, the notion of penetrability was closely connected to slavery (Glancy, 2010). Hence, visibly scarred and wounded men could be ridiculed, and they were considered to be effeminate and slavish. As a term for impairment, *anapeiros* signifies a body that is somehow broken, injured, or penetrated. It is used in 2 Macc of a wounded army (2. Macc 8:25), and in Tobit of being blinded, or losing one’s eyesight (Tob 14:2). However, the term is fairly unusual as a term to describe impaired bodies. In the New Testament it occurs only here and in the following parable of the Great Feast, where all four groups of ideal guests are repeated.

The third term, *chōlos*, is a common term for mobility impairments in ancient Greek literature. It could designate a sliding scale of mobility issues, ranging from limping to complete paralysis of the legs (LSJ). Due to its frequent use, also in the New Testament, and often in connection with terms for blind, deaf or both, it may be called an ancient disability category (Raphael, 2009; Solevåg, 2018). Whether congenital or acquired over a lifetime, being *chōlos* would not necessarily entail economic deprivation. Our intersectional lens reminds us that the consequences of a disability were highly dependent on social location. To determine what it meant to be disabled for a particular person in antiquity, it is necessary to ask which other identity categories and power hierarchies intersected with disability in each case. People with economic means were able to negotiate their impairments very differently than less affluent people (Solevåg, 2018). For example, they could rely on slaves for transportation, nursing, and other menial tasks (Garland, 1995).

In contrast to the sliding scale of *chōlos*, the term blind, *tuflos*, usually connotes total sightlessness (Garland, 1995). Many people would lose their eyesight during the course of their lives, due to disease, injury, punishment, or simply old age. Blind beggars were something of a literary stereotype in antiquity, but the everyday lives of blind people in antiquity probably held more variety than the literary representations (Trentin, 2013).

So, what are the relations between these categories of ideal guests? And how do they differ? The first one refers to lack of economic resources. The second refers to bod-

ies somehow impaired, injured or marked, but not a typical disability label. The two last categories are well established ancient disability categories. There are similar, but not identical lists in Luke 4:18–19 (“the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed”) and Luke 7:2 (“the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead and the poor”). In these places, the categories listed and their transformation through good news and healing, point to Jesus’ mission “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:19). In the parable that follows in 14:15–24, “the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind” represent groups that are singled out to be invited to the great feast in the Kingdom of God. So why are these four terms used here?

We suggest that it is social exclusion and visible otherness that bind these four categories together. The observation that deafness is *not* part of this particular list may help reveal this. Together with *cholos* and *tuflos*, deaf, *kofos* is a recurring disability category in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Rebecca Raphael has called these, “the biblical trilogy of disability” due to the frequency with which they occur together (Raphael, 2009). However, whereas both blind and lame were considered “defects” in the priestly code of the Hebrew Bible, and excluded from priesthood, deafness did not. Blind and lame occur together in Lev. 21 and in 2 Sam. 5.8, where David declares that “the blind and the lame shall not come into the house,” thus (perhaps) banning people with these disabilities from the city of Jerusalem or the temple grounds (Schipper, 2006; see also the articles in this volume by Jones and Zucconi). Although it is contested whether blind and lame were ever actually excluded from the Jerusalem temple (Koosed and Schumm, 2011), there is a trajectory from these texts into some strands of second temple Judaism. Qumranic texts excluded these two groups from the Messianic feast (1QS_a 2:5-6) and discussions about the presence of these groups in the Temple as well as the *eschaton*, may have been a backdrop for this conversation taking place in the house of a Pharisee (Johnson, 1991). In other words, an association with cultic exclusion is common for these two disability terms.

Intersectionality helps us...better map the social web underlying the texts we investigate.

One thing all four categories on the ideal guest list have in common is that they would be highly visible misfits as guests at a symposium. All four groups would disrupt the expected beauty of the symposium as well as the equilibrium of the setting. Neither of these groups are associated with the guest role, but rather with the more marginal roles of the symposium: the waiters, the performers, and the uninvited guests – the *aklētoi*. In fact, there is such an uninvited guest in Luke 14, the man with dropsy. The man seems to suddenly show up: “Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy” (14:2). This man is not introduced as a guest, and he is sent away as soon as Jesus has healed him (14:3). Disrupting the equilibrium of the reclining Pharisees and scribes about to enjoy their meal, this man with a very visible disability, seems to illustrate the group of ideal guests that Jesus later brings up in conversation. It is the man with dropsy that the leading Pharisee should have invited, not his peers.

To sum up, the terms Luke has chosen to describe the ideal guests seem to be related to social and cultic exclusion based on economic ability, social status, and bodily otherness. As noted, disability scholars and activists have critiqued the personal and medical focus of disability in modern western culture. Disability has often been framed as a personal misfortune due to a problem with the individual body. However, disability, whether in antiquity or today is not necessarily related mainly to pain and suffering, but to the social configurations of spaces and discourses. People in the ancient Mediterranean could be excluded or included into particular social or cultic settings on the basis of bodily signs, such as gender or impairments. When commentators like Fitzmyer calls the ideal invitee group “the unfortunates,” he misses this point (Fitzmyer, 1985, p. 1045). The focus for Luke is not whether being poor, maimed, blind or lame is a personal misfortune, but that they are social categories that are excluded from power, privilege, social acceptance, and the rules of reciprocity. Whether one was poor, pierced, blind or lame, such people would face exclusion on a routine basis throughout their lives. Their bodies could be read as sinful bodies, or they could be met with pity and disgust. In opposition to the men in possession of ideal masculinity which comprise the first four groups, these groups, whether male or female, are

not in possession of hegemonic masculinity. In the parable that follows in Luke 14, the place of such bodies at the eschatological symposium changes from a performative and servant role to the guest role.

Asking the other Question

Except for the rich neighbor, which is a clear contrast to the category of “the poor,” the categories in group 1 and group 2 are not opposites. They are not mutually exclusive. It is perfectly possible to be a blind neighbor, a lame brother or a relative or friend with a broken or maimed body. As such, the invitees do not follow logically from the non-invitees. Rather, they come as quite a surprise. If we introduce the intersectional optic of “asking the other question,” are there other identities that we can see the contours of in this Jesus saying? And are there identities that remain invisible?

As noted above, in addition to the un-ideal rich neighbor not to invite, Luke knows of both male and female neighbors and both good and bad neighbors. Other neighbors, then, could be considered: Perhaps a poor neighbor could be on the guest list, or a neighbor with disabilities? Maybe also the semi-stranger, such as a Samaritan, could be a possible guest?

All eight guest categories have masculine grammatical gender. In Greek, this is inclusive of female, and thus gives an opening that there could in principle also be women among them. The first four categories, those who should not be invited, however, represent a typical male social circle. In the everyday neighborhood of the ancient cities and villages, there were social and cultural barriers for a male host to invite a woman to a formal dinner party. It might be easier if she was a sister or a relative, but more problematic if she was a neighbor. Friendship across the sexes was not socially accepted.

Further, we may ask if women are included among the ideal invitees, the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame? Disability was, after all, not a male privilege. In the real world, there were of course both men and women in these categories, but are we still within a symposium setting where women conventionally were excluded from the start? And what about slaves? Are they included among the invitees, or is Jesus’s ideal meal fellowship only for free persons? In the para-

ble of the Great Feast (Luke 14:15–24), it is still a slave that brings out the invitations, even in the last round: “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:22). It should also be noted that there are plenty of marginalized groups that remain invisible in these guest lists. Jesus’s recommendation to the host in Luke 14 challenges hegemonic masculinity. But what about himself and his own role as guest – is he a proper or improper guest to invite? Which of these roles do Jesus fulfill? Does he follow proper masculine standards? In the gospel, he is a brother and a friend. But perhaps not a neighbor, since he is itinerant, and certainly not rich, as he is seemingly dependent on others, including women serving as his patrons (Luke 8:1-3). It might even be argued that Jesus fits in one of the categories on the ideal guest list: the maimed (*anapeiros*). We noted above that the Greek term denotes the idea of being pierced or penetrating. As Wilson has argued, Jesus is portrayed by Luke as a man who does not meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity, precisely because his bodily boundaries are broken in the Easter narrative (Wilson, 2015). Crucifixion was a punishment designated for “non-men,” and it was conceptualized as penetration. As Wilson notes, “crucifixion was a form of execution that particularly “unmanned” its victims because it involved a series of bodily innovations that disfigured and disempowered the one being crucified,” (Wilson, 2015, p. 202).

Another question to consider is whether Jesus could reciprocate? As we have noted, the main criterion for exclusion from the guest list seems to be reciprocity: “do not invite ... in case they might invite you in return, and you would be repaid” (14:12). Could Jesus and his disciples be justified as guests in this sense? As an itinerant with no home of his own, Jesus can only reciprocate in an eschatological sense. This seems to be suggested towards the end of Luke’s gospel, where Jesus almost, but not quite, serves the function of a host at the last supper (22:14–22) as well as in the Emmaus story (24:28–30). Ultimately, Jesus is the ideal host, although his masculinity does not follow established standards.

Conclusion

This study has revealed some previously overlooked

aspects of the Jesus saying in Luke 14:12–14. We have used intersectional theoretical tools - drawing in particular on masculinity and disability theory – to map more accurately, but also destabilize, the social networks and landscapes reflected in this saying.

Firstly, we have shown that the social network that this saying presupposes is quite complex. There are multiple relations and identities that potentially intersect, and the categories that are listed do not necessarily exclude each other. We have asked intersectional questions to this social web. As an example, we have argued that the figure of the neighbor in Luke is a complex social category, also including strangers and women, even if the *rich* male neighbor in Luke 14 should not be on the guest list. We have also pointed out that there are other players present at a symposium in addition to the host and his invited guests: the slaves that serve the meal as well as performers and uninvited guests.

Secondly, we have argued for a more nuanced understanding of disability as an ancient identity category. Various disabilities may have led to social exclusion and stigmatization, yet individuals may have negotiated their impairments in different ways depending on intersectional variables: social status and gender played a significant role in how an impairment was perceived and negotiated. Moreover, we have insisted on a social understanding of disability, rather than an individualized notion of disability as personal misfortune.

Thirdly, we have made visible some previously invisible aspects of the social landscape behind the saying, by asking other questions, a method known from intersectionality. Finally, we have argued that Jesus does not display hegemonic masculinity in the Gospel of Luke, but can be considered a person with a disability, a maimed body which does not meet cultural standards of masculinity. The bodily penetration and infliction of pain in the crucifixion unmans Jesus. Yet, in an eschatological sense, he is still the ideal host.

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