

MAIN POINT

We are called to invite people to the Master's table.

INTRODUCTION

What is the best party or event you have ever been invited to? What was so special about it?

Think of an event that you chose not to go to or were unable to attend. What did you miss out on by not attending?

Going to a party is contingent upon two factors—being invited and accepting the invitation. In the parable under consideration today, Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a large banquet that many people were invited to, though many people declined. We live in a culture where discussing spiritual matters is considered politically incorrect. But in this parable of a lavish banquet, Jesus reminds us that as followers of the King, we have something worth inviting people to. Is it possible we have underestimated the richness of the feast?

UNDERSTANDING

> **READ LUKE 14:15-24.**

Look back at Luke 14:1-6. Who was Jesus dining with when He told this parable? Why should we always try and discern Jesus' original audience?

To help settle ourselves in this passage of Scripture, re-tell this parable. What happens and who are the characters in the parable supposed to represent?

Who are the people who are too busy to attend the banquet intended to represent? What is the lesson for us?

What keeps us from fully engaging the things of God and giving ourselves to His mission for us?

This parable is one in a succession of parables told while eating with Pharisees, and it is the last parable in this succession as well as the last time Jesus eats with Pharisees in the Gospel of Luke. A great banquet was thrown. The event was so large that the master sent his servant to invite anyone and everyone to attend. Those who declined are stand ins for the religious elite of Jesus' day, reclining at table with Him, listening to

this parable. They had all been invited, and were the most prepared to attend God's banquet, but ultimately missed the boat. It is possible to do all the right religious activities, but miss the whole point of being a part of the kingdom of God.

With what character in this parable can you most identify? Why?

How would you feel as one of the people mentioned in verse 21?

How did Luke describe the size of the event the master was preparing for? Where do God's people today figure into this parable?

Jesus took this opportunity to stress another characteristic of the gospel's humbling affect on the heart. When you see that the Creator God is offering you the banquet feast of grace, you just want in. You don't care where you are sitting, and you don't make excuses. When you realize the depth of God's grace, you drop everything and run to Him. The most common designation the apostle Paul used for himself was the word for servant or slave that is used in this parable. We are the servants of the master and we are tasked with inviting people to the amazing banquet that He has prepared for those who enter the kingdom.

What do these words from Jesus say about our obedience to the mission we have been given? What does obedience to the mission of God look like in light of this parable?

Why is it significant that the people who accepted the invitation to the master's feast were poor and marginalized?

How would you describe your appetite right now for the things of God?

From your experience, what excuses do people make to avoid God's "banquet"? What can you say or do to help people overcome their hesitation?

Notice that the servant did not bear the responsibility for the people who did not accept the invitation, only for inviting people. Following Jesus means that we have a responsibility to invite people into the kingdom of God by sharing the gospel message with them. Often we complicate our message by seeing rejection of the invitation as a rejection of us. However, if we are faithfully extending the invitation, some will accept and come if they see that making invitations is our priority. Notice that the invitation is not from us but from God; the decline is not to us, but to God. All people are loved by God and invited to His table, though few people accept the invitation.

APPLICATION

We are responsible for inviting people, but those with whom we share are responsible for accepting the invitation. Why should we not take it personally when people reject the gospel message? In reality, who are they truly rejecting?

How can we encourage one another to be faithful to extend invitations to the feast that God has prepared for us?

A recent study by LifeWay Christian Resources shows that while your neighbors might not be likely to accept an invitation to church, they would be open to having a conversation about what you believe. (See: <http://lifewayresearch.com/2016/06/28/unchurched-will-talk-about-faith-not-interested-in-going-to-church/>) Jesus has called us to invite people into a relationship with Him. Do we feel uncomfortable extending this invitation?

PRAY

Pray that we would be a people who are excited about the mission of God and invite people to His table with boldness, kindness, courage, and consistency. Ask that God would give you favor with your neighbors and friends who do not yet know Him.

MEMORIZE

“So the slave came back and reported these things to his master. Then in anger, the master of the house told his slave, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in here the poor, maimed, blind, and lame!’” – Luke 14:21

COMMENTARY

LUKE 14:15-24

14:15. The metaphor of the feast speaks of the messianic banquet and refers to participating in the resurrection of the righteous (14:14). This is another way of describing salvation and the inheritance of eternal life (cf. 18:18, 25-26). While sounding devout, the statement assumes that God’s kingdom is a distant abstraction rather than, as Jesus had been teaching, a present reality brought about by his coming. To “eat bread” means to eat a meal (cf. 14:1).

14:16. “A certain man” was Luke’s customary way to begin a parable. “A great banquet” is a clear allusion to the Jewish hope for the time when the Messiah would come and share a great feast with Israel’s devout. It was customary to extend two invitations. The first (as here) was to “make reservations” and the second to announce that the banquet was beginning.

14:17. At the time of the banquet, the host sent his servant. This would have been the second invitation. "Come, for everything is now ready," helps us understand that what the Pharisee relegated to the distant future (God's kingdom) Jesus proclaimed as having already come.

14:18. But they all alike began to make excuses. While it was unlikely in real life that every guest invited would refuse to attend, this is a parable, i.e., fiction, and thus the unlikely can occur quite easily (cf. Matt 18:24; 25:5). I have just bought a field. The hearers/readers may have assumed that the purchase was conditional, subject to a later inspection and approval. This may also have been their assumption regarding the five yoke of oxen in the next example.

14:20. No explanation is given about why the groom was not free to attend the banquet. Was it to make sure that no opportunity to beget children would be missed? Luke did not comment on the validity of the three excuses. The fact that they made excuses was what mattered to him, not their validity or lack of validity. From Luke 14:26 it is clear that God's kingdom, which is now present, must take precedence over everything else. As a result no excuse is valid. What is a good excuse for forfeiting one's soul (9:25)?

14:21. By sending the servant into the streets and alleys of the town, we see that Israel's outcasts were brought to the banquet. The poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame occur in a different order than in 14:13, but they witness to a typical Lukan fondness for "fours."

14:23. The detail of roads and country lanes would almost certainly have been interpreted allegorically by Luke's readers as an indication that Gentiles also were invited to partake of the messianic banquet. "Make them come in." In the past the command to make them had been used to justify forced conversions to Christianity. This picture part of the parable portrays a persuasive insistence for the outcasts to enter. It was done in order to overcome their shyness and feelings of unworthiness. God's fervent desire to share salvation with humanity is the reality that corresponds to this part of the picture—not a specific evangelistic technique. "So that my house will be full." Luke emphasized the divine necessity of evangelism in order to fill up the kingdom as well as the assurance that such efforts would succeed.

14:24. The exclusion of the original guests is emphasized in this verse. Compare Acts 13:45-47; 18:6; 28:25-28 and Matthew 25:1-13. The exclusion had little meaning in the picture part of the parable since the excluded guests did not want to come anyway, but it was of great significance in the reality part, where persons foolishly declined God's gracious offer of salvation.