

The Parable of the Great Banquet

Luke 14:15-24

With Study Questions

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When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

¹⁶ But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

¹⁷ And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' ¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' ²⁰ And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

²² And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³ And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet" (Luke 14:15-24).

Introduction

The Pharisees watched Jesus "**carefully**" we are told early in this chapter (Luke 14:1). These clergymen had their eyes on Jesus as He had the audacity to heal on the Sabbath (Luke 14:4). Jesus was under the watchful eye of a religious culture who was growing unhappy with His teaching and His spreading fame (Matthew 4:24). He was a man under human judgment!

As an invited guest at "**the house of a ruler of the Pharisees**" (Luke 14:1) Jesus began to teach in parables. When He saw the religious men seeking "**places of honor**" He taught against self-exaltation. He then taught against desiring reciprocation. We shouldn't do our good works with an eye toward getting something in return but rejoice in the reward at the "**resurrection of the just**" (Luke 14:14).

In the final parable of this event, we'll see things turn. They will no longer be the ones judging but the one's judged. Like a surfer catching waves only to find it's a tsunami. He hasn't caught the wave but the wave caught him. These clergymen no doubt felt it was a great honor for Jesus to even be invited

to their glamorous event. In this parable before us they are the invited ones. And their hardness of heart will keep them from the table of life.

It's hard to ignore how easily this fits into our culture's current circumstances, where the word of God, the prayers in the name of Christ, the Law of God are becoming more and more scrutinized and less and less tolerated. The person and work of Jesus is being deemed unfit for public consumption. The culture is paddling with no eyes to see the wave that will inevitably catch them.

When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15)!

A Banquet

It is difficult to determine the motivation behind the words of the one who reclined with Jesus. Was he converted? Was he testing Jesus? Was he being sarcastic? Was he truly rejoicing? Apparently grasping his motives is not important. The statement is nonetheless accurate.

The unsearchable and unspeakable joy of the kingdom of God is compared to something that most of the world throughout the majority of history could only dream about—a banquet of rich food and well-aged wine. We read in Isaiah:

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. ⁷ And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸ He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. ⁹ It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:6-9).

The work, the obedience, the sacrifice, the patience and all the virtue to which Christians are called should never overshadow the heart of our faith—that we have been invited to a banquet. The food and the wine of the Lord's Table should ever remind us that Jesus, by His body and blood, has swallowed up death forever. Truly the life of the Christian can be viewed as a battle. But the heart of the Christian rejoices in the banquet.

The words of this man become the impetus for Jesus' final parable at this event.

But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.¹⁷ And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.'²⁰ And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come' (Luke 14:16-20).

An Invitation

We see here an elaborate banquet. Those who had been invited are now informed that everything is ready. It's time to pull the trigger on this event. Certain social networking services allow you to advertize events and send invitations. The person receives the invitation and can do one of four things: They can indicate their intention to attend, not to attend, maybe attend, or just ignore it. The people in this parable are people who have indicated that they will attend.

There is a unique original audience to which this parable is applied; the nation of Israel during the time of Christ. It is impossible to read the New Testament without recognizing that the Jewish leaders were Christ's premiere detractors. Their hard-hearted, conspiratorial rejecting of Christ served to bring redemption to all men.

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:46, 47).

This is yet another example of God using the sinful choices of evil men for His own just and holy ends. This is not to be thought of as anti-Semitic or to suggest that the Jews are excluded from the kingdom of God. It is to say that a true **"Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit" (Romans 2:28).** And this all leads one to faith in Christ.

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me (John 8:42).

A person’s ethnicity simply does not matter.

This parable may have a unique historical application to Israel who will have the kingdom taken from them (Matthew 21:43). What’s not very unique are the excuses we’re about to hear.

Excuses

Not to overly analyze the excuses, but some have suggested the three excuses (going to see the purchased field, examining purchased oxen or having gotten married) serve well as examples of the **“the care of this world” “the deceitfulness of riches” and “the pleasures of this life” (Matthew 13:22 and Luke 8:14);** all things Jesus taught that **“choke the word” (Matthew 13:22).**

The legitimacy of these excuses all prove wanting upon any deep observation. Didn’t you examine the field before you bought it? Won’t it still be there tomorrow? Same with the oxen! And even though a newly married man, according to Jewish law, was not to serve in the military or public duty for one year (Deuteronomy 24:5) this does not include not attending banquets—an event to which he could have brought her!

Instead of worrying about the field that was bought, perhaps people should consider whether or not they have been bought (1 Corinthians 7:23). The one man wanted to examine his oxen. The Apostle Paul uses the same word in calling men to **“examine”** their own hearts (1 Corinthians 11:28). And the newly married man may want to consider whether or not he is included among those called to be the bride of Christ (John 3:29).

So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’²² And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’²³ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet” (Luke 14:21-24).

An Angry Master

We read that the master became angry. Men may be indifferent toward Christ but God is not indifferent toward men. God is the owner of the earth

and all it contains (Psalm 24:1). He has the right of ownership and when men reject God, along with that rejection comes all that is evil. **“All who hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:36).**

We live in a culture that has the luxury to criticize God with our warm houses and full bellies. Again, unlike the majority of history, we have not yet found ourselves overtly oppressed and persecuted. But when those who hate God reign, the attending love of death will eventually touch our flesh. This is already taking place in seminal form in sterile and not-so-sterile clinics throughout our nation. Not to sound alarmist but apart from repentance it will mature.

I don't mention this to go astray from the parable, but for us to recognize that a people who turn their hearts from a wise, loving and gracious God will, by the very nature of the case, turn their hearts elsewhere. It is not as if these choices have no consequences—primarily in eternity but in history as well.

Bring in the Poor

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Jesus mentions the very people who, according to the Law of Moses, are not to go through the veil and approach the altar of the Lord—the **“poor and crippled and blind and lame”** (see **Leviticus 21:17-23**). The New Covenant would again accentuate human inability. God would use **“the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,”**²⁹ **that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).**

The servant communicates to the master that that **“has been done and there is still room.”** The Fire Marshall gives us a room capacity for this facility but there is no human room capacity for the Great Banquet. The Master wants the room full. The reference to **“streets”** (a wide avenue), **“lanes”** (a narrow alley) **“highways”** (a thoroughfare usually between two cities) and **“hedges”** (a path along a fence, often where poor people stayed) pretty much just means everywhere. But Jesus uses a very interesting word at this juncture—**“compel people to come in” (Luke 14:23)**

Compel

He has moved from *invite* to *compel*. I think it is significant because invitations are generally optional. We should not think of inviting people to Christ the way we invite people to a party—God is not waiting for our rsvp. Not that an invitation is entirely inaccurate. Something as gentle as an invitation may be sufficient to bring someone to church and to Christ Himself. But the word *compel* is much stronger. Calvin goes so far as to suggest that he does not:

disapprove of the use which Augustine frequently made of this passage against the Donatists, to prove that godly princes may lawfully issue edicts, for *compelling* obstinate and rebellious persons to worship the true God, and to maintain the unity of the faith; for, though faith is voluntary, yet we see that such methods are useful for subduing the obstinacy of those who will not yield until they are compelled.¹

To what extent that is realistic is its own discussion. I mention merely for us to appreciate that we should at very least have the disposition that people are to recognize their desperate need to come to Christ.

There are numerous obstacles people place before themselves to keep them from faith. They may view themselves as too sinful, too righteous, too smart, too foolish, too rich, too poor, etc. We are not to detach ourselves from the critical nature of their condition. We must care about our neighbor's soul. And we must make every effort to bring them to faith.

We certainly do not get the impression that Paul was listless regarding the spiritual condition of men when he wrote:

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:22).

Should we not seek to emulate the passion of Paul felt in these words:

that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Romans 9:2, 3).

Do you, do I care about anybody that much?

Are there not enough people in Southern California to care about? Does it even pass your mind to pray for someone? To invite them to church (I am not suggesting that Christianity is synonymous with churchianity—but I am suggesting that the closest thing on this earth to this banquet is the Lord's Supper, for which the church is given responsibility.

None Will Taste

¹ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Lk 14:23). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Jesus concludes this parable by informing His listeners that the mere invitation is insufficient. We may view be invited to an event as a sign of good favor by the host who wants us to be at his event. But if men are indifferent to the call of Christ, they will remain estranged from the only source of true food.

Questions for Study

1. Do you ever see men judging God or judging Christ? What do you make of that (pages 2, 3)?
2. How do we see people judging and excluding God today (pages 2, 3)?
3. How should we think of the Kingdom of God (pages 3, 4)?
4. What is the historical context of this parable (page 4)?
5. What kind of excuses do people give for staying away from God (page 5)?
6. Why does it anger God when people reject His grace (pages 6, 7)?
7. Discuss Jesus' use of the word *compel*. How can that be applied to us (pages 7, 8)?

