

Responding to the Invitation, Part 1

Luke 14:15-20

Jesus has been invited, Luke 14:1 says he's been invited to dine at the House of a ruler of the Pharisees, and it's a Sabbath day, it's after a synagogue service. So this invitation to Jesus as a guest preacher in that synagogue is ostensibly to show honor to the guests preacher. But the Pharisees, it says in verse 1, were watching him carefully, so whatever honor is meant in the invitation, it was undermined by their true intention, which is to trip him up. Hoping to gather evidence against him.

In this case for violating Sabbath tradition set by the rabbis. Healing a man on the Sabbath, which was a no, no. So Jesus once again he looked through all that, he spotted their hypocrisy. He healed the man anyway, because that is the righteous and compassionate and loving thing to do. And then he turned his attention to the lawyers and the Pharisees, those in whose company he was, and he chose to love these men as well.

And he did so by telling them the truth. He did so by teaching them.

The theme of his teaching, as we have been seeing in the past couple of sections, the theme is humility and it's in view of a profound social and religious pride on behalf of his host and the guests around the table. A great pride. So when he was teaching, he started with the guests. He noticed in verse 7 it says, "He noticed that they chose places of honor around the table."

So he noticed this jockeying for position, and so he told them look, don't do that. Take the lowest place at the table. Humility, not self-promotion, not self-seeking, not social posturing, humility is the path to true honor and glory. He turned his attention to his host, the man who had invited him, a ruler of the Pharisees in verses 12 to 14. And this man was a man of great stature, great wealth. He had lots of experience in hosting dinners and throwing banquets, but Jesus believed he had a few things to learn about putting together a guest list. And

so he gave the man a few pointers in that regard. And he told this man to use Kingdom priorities.

In verse 13, he says, “When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed,” the word, *makarios*, “you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” That forms a segue, then into the Parable of the Great Banquet. One of the guests at the table is a man sitting there, verse 15, says, he’s seated near Jesus and he’s hearing these things that Jesus taught and he says to Jesus, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

Whatever his intent was, the effect is to blunt the sharp thrust of Jesus’ teaching. To file down any of the hard sharp edges that might potentially offend or even worse, bring conviction. People like that, fancy themselves as peacemakers. But they are acting glib and superficial, and in doing so they are undermining the work of, the good work of, conviction, in the hope that it will bring lifesaving repentance.

So whether it's through ignorance or hypocrisy, this man is doing the devil's work. And notice the man assumed, like everybody else around the table, that he would be eating bread in the kingdom. He's gonna be there. Well, Jesus is about to challenge that assumption, in the form of yet another parable. Take a look at Luke 14. We'll just start there in verse 16.

Jesus said to the man, the man who spoke up, but he's speaking so that everybody can hear. “A man once gave a banquet, a great banquet and invited many. 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.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I've bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.’

“So the servant came and reported these things to his master, and 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.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 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. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

They're all sitting at a meal and they're talking about a banquet, so that's very natural. But the deeper significance is to illustrate the most important invitation of all. It's not any earthly banquet. It's to enter into the Kingdom of God. This is about salvation. Jesus is talking about one kind of call, and it is the call to salvation. This is an evangelistic call. It is an appeal to sinners to listen and heed God's invitation to come into the kingdom. This is a call that has been issued to the nation of Israel many times over the years.

In many forms, in many occasions, many ways. It's been the abiding preoccupation of Jesus' ministry. As we have seen all through Luke's gospel, it's a call with one aim, with one

intention, that is to bring sinners into the Kingdom through spiritual salvation. Responding to the call involves turning away from the things of this world, in order to turn toward and enter into the Kingdom of God.

The nation of Israel has been especially privileged to hear this gracious call of God. And the nation of Israel has also been quite remarkable in its stubbornness to heed the call. As we read in Romans chapter 10. In fact, if we're just looking ahead, Jesus begins a parable in verse 16. He tells of a man planning a great banquet and he's inviting many. It represents that standing invitation to the nation of Israel that has come throughout the centuries through the prophets. By the time the banquet is ready, verse 17, God sends out his servant to announce that it's ready. And notice the servant, that's John the Baptist, that's Jesus Christ. This is the messianic pronouncement. They come to the nation and say, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. It's here."

Sadly, when Jesus came to announce the commencement of the feast, those who represented Israel, the scribes, the Pharisees,

the elders, the chief priests, Jesus says about them and all who follow them, in verse 24, "none of those men who are invited shall taste my banquet." So God's rejection, of the nation of Israel in Jesus' day, that opens a new window of opportunity. It opens a doorway, a pathway. And that's where you and I come into this parable.

Look at how this parable anticipates us. You and me. It means that this Gospel call, this invitation to enter into the kingdom, this is for us today. This is for us right now. As God turns away from those who reject his invitation, namely, the nation of Israel, there in Jesus' day, he turns his attention to others. Starting in verse 21, he starts with the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, who were in the streets and the lanes of the city. So the city representing Jewish nation.

These are the social outcasts of popular Judaism. These are the ones who will not make it onto the guest list of people like this Pharisee, and then God sends his servant to the Gentiles and verse 23. Those who are outside the city, that's us, we're pictured there as vagrants in the countryside. Those who are

kind of hanging out along the highways and sleeping underneath the hedges, that's us. That's how they picture the Gentile nations.

So the import of that is. Are you my friend, whether you name the name of Christ today or not. Whether you call yourself a Christian or you don't. Whether you are fully assured or whether you have doubts. What Jesus teaches in this parable confronts us all. This is an opportunity for you to confront and expose and turn from any blinding religious pride.

Religious pride gives a false sense of assurance. It twists and distorts the barometer by which we measure how we're doing. The metrics, it distorts it all. It sets in a worldly-minded lethargy that ultimately can prove damning to the soul. If that happens in an unbeliever, obviously damning to the soul, that happens in someone who professes to be a believer and it never changes. Well, it may prove that that person was never a Christian at all.



So look. There's opportunity to learn from this text, to learn from Jesus and what he says here, never to reject the goodness of God. Illustrated so, so clearly in the call of the Gospel, his goodness to offer us salvation. Calling us to enter into the kingdom to participate then in the Gospel work. Let us never reject that, beloved, because that's rejecting the goodness of God.

Instead, let us be humble, soft hearted, heeding the Gospel call, listening to the demands, the implications of the Gospel that come through Jesus and his apostles all through the New Testament. Let us pursue his Kingdom and his righteousness with a God-fearing single-minded passion of zealous worshippers of the living God. That's my prayer for all of us today. As we come through this text, as we listen to this sermon.

So three points for today and the first point is this: The goodness of God's salvation. The goodness of God's salvation. Look back at 6, at verse 16. And let's see the goodness of God represented by him extending an invitation to his banquet in the kingdom. Jesus says, verse 16, "A man once gave a great banquet

and invited many.” The man giving a great banquet, who's that? Jesus isn't talking about some anonymous non-descriptive man. The man stands for God. In the glory of his goodness, in the glory of his greatness. In his magnanimous generosity, his great wealth. The man stands for God in his goodness.

Now look down in verse 21 and it makes it plain. Jesus refers to this man as master. This is the word *kyrios* or Lord, it's a designation that he also uses in verse 22 where the ESV translate *kyrios* as, sir. That's unfortunate, I think. Then verse 23, again it's master, *kyrios*. Also look at verse 21 where Jesus uses a term to describe this man who's doing the inviting, the host. He is using the term there, *oikodespotes*, master of the house. You can hear *oikos*, the word for house and *despotes* which is despot you understand, master.

That highlights the sovereignty, but the sovereignty over this household, which is really the kingdom. It's also referring to his benevolence. It's referring to him as the dispenser of the goodness and the riches and the bounty of this house. It's made even clearer in the banquet metaphor. A metaphor that was

well known among the Jews as this inaugural banquet of the Messianic Age that's described in Isaiah 25 verse 6. Where Isaiah says this, “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.”

That's the millennial banquet. And that's the picture that would come to the Jewish mind as Jesus delivers this parable, he delivers it right on the heels of the man's comment about eating bread in the kingdom, so that's what they're thinking. That's what's in their minds. In fact, the same verb that's used in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 25:6 translated “The Lord of hosts will make a feast.” It's the verb *poieo* in the Greek. It's the same verb Jesus uses here. It's not a man once gave a great banquet, aorist tense, finite past action. It's rather a certain man was making a great banquet, imperfect tense, ongoing action, in the past. He's busy in the past, with his large demand for preparations, he's making all the necessary preparations to get ready for this great, great banquet, where many are going to come.

Preparations obviously think about some of that and what it would take to host a great feast like that. I mean, think about a, a dinner party that you throw at a holiday or something like that, and how much work goes into that. You've got maybe family numbering in the dozen, two dozen range. Think about hundreds. Think about thousands. What are you gonna do then when you call those people to your house?

They would, they would call to mind for them, as they're listening to this all the Pharisees, scribes around the table listening to Jesus. They knew preparations involved processing grains, to make all kinds of breads and pastries and little delights, snacks. Involved the milking of cows to get the milk and the cream, and especially as Julia Childs tells us, the butter. Everything tastes better with, loaded with butter.

It meant selecting, slaughtering all kinds, various kinds of animals, provide the guests with a variety of meats to choose from. Like one of those Brazilian barbecues, or you keep putting the flags up, you know, and different kinds of meat keep coming to the table, but it meant pressing olives to extract the oil to

cook all kinds of those foods in that rich olive oil. It involved tapping the caskets, in which the wine had been aging, aging, aging, waiting for the time, set by the master to pull it out of the casket, pour it into the glass and serve it to the guests.

Preparations involve preparing accommodations for traveling guests, so boarding, caring for the guests' animals. Cleaning, preparing comfortable rooms for overnight guests, taking care of any other logistics that might come up during a prolonged feast like this one. Oh, and at the end of verse 16, preparations involved inviting the guests. In fact, that was among the very earliest of the preparations the host had to know from very early on how much of everything to provide. So invitations had to go out early, in order for the RSVP's to come in. In order that he may commence with all the rest of the preparations.

Notice this isn't just any banquet. It's a great banquet. It's supplied by the great wealth of the host, all for the purpose of giving a gift of good things from the table over and over and over to the many, many people invited to this share in

that table. Jesus, he's brief here, but he is alluding to a scene of great plenty, of comfort, of great satisfaction, of rich contentment, of great rejoicing. Stop for a moment and think about this picture, Jesus is giving, ever so briefly, but a picture of the Kingdom of God.

This is where Jesus has gone, according to John 14:2-3, he's gone to prepare a place for his people. Come again and take us to be there. Consider the place that we will one day enjoy. Sitting around the table as it's inaugurated in the millennial Kingdom. Think of the delights that are going to penetrate to the deepest places of our souls. Using all the God designed avenues in the human nature, the human essence, to delight us. Physical senses and nonphysical perception alike. Material pathways to joy and blessing and satisfaction, but also immaterial pathways of contemplation of deep reflection, of satisfaction, intellectually, spiritually, fully and completely satisfied. Nothing lacking, physically and spiritually.

Dig into your, past childhood memories. I hope some of you have some of these and you can imagine the very, maybe the very

best Christmas celebration ever. Like a little kid, think of that. The warmth of the home. Think about the, the sense of security you have in the home. The good smells coming out of the kitchen. The vibrant tastes that explode in your mouth, or the goodies that mom and grandma have made and all of, all of Mom's sisters hovering in the kitchen making, just coming out with cookies and pastries and all that stuff. And there's, there's the just the satisfaction of being in that home, and in that environment and being in the company of your relatives, all those people who, who love you and being a little kid, you're still cute, you know, so they're fawning over you. Everything you do is wonderful and funny and delightful.

The physical elements in those memories that we have and they combine with, and they enrich, and they strengthen all the nonphysical experiences, those intangibles, that remain with us as precious memories of our past. All of that is just a faint, faint whisper of what God is preparing for us. To us, beloved, those who are in Christ, the physical pictures, sure enough, are going to come true in that millennial Kingdom here on this earth, inasmuch as we are physical beings designed to live and

inhabit a physical world. That is not a mistake of God to make us physical and spiritual creatures.

So those physical realities will come true, but the spiritual real, realities that all those things represent, far greater. Far more glorious. They're impossible to comprehend fully now, but because we have such a faint experience of all that now, think about it. Eternal life is nothing less than God sharing with us his very nature. His salvation is about God communicating himself and his communicable attributes to us, his creatures. The full bounty of God's own personal blessedness. What theologians refer to as divine complacency doesn't mean God is complacent and inactive. Complacency, by complacency, we are referring to, theologians are referring to, God's self-satisfaction, his perfect satisfaction, his self-desire.

That is to say that God is completely and perfectly delighted with himself and in himself. Why would he not be? He is the only perfect being. It is his essence to be perfection itself. This is God's delight in being God. It's his supreme delight and happiness in his own being, and God is preparing to



communicate that level of divine blessedness to us, in us. He's sharing himself with us. He's communing with us, and communicating to us a continuous, unbroken stream of holy delight.

That is divine love. That is what compels him to create in the first place. It's all love driven. It's to share, it's to convey blessedness. This is what the invitation is to. This is what the invitation is for, this call of salvation. To cast away all sin. All lying promises of the devil, all deceitful temptations, all counterfeit delights that do nothing but degrade and destroy the soul. Turn from sin, and to embrace the God who created us, who loves us who calls us to himself.

To come home, and partake of his banquet, the feast at his table, and to find in him eternal rest. This Gospel call is an invitation to participate in the goodness of God in his salvation. It's to humble yourself, verse 10, and let God lift you up to that. It's a call to associate with the lowly honoring them by associating with them, verse 14, so that you are blessed, *makarios*. *Makarios*, sharing in that delight of God

himself, and all of it repaid at the resurrection, with that.  
Now that is what it means to respond to the invitation, and  
Jesus summarized the response in verse 11. Humble yourself and  
let God exalt you in his own time. Humble yourself.