

SS. Invitation.02. Inviting Different Kinds of People

This morning, we continue our series on building a “Culture of Invitation” by looking at the parable of Jesus recorded in Luke 14:15-24 about a man who invited many kinds of people to a great banquet and their responses to his invitation

Luke 14:15-24 = *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.’ ”*

As the gospel of Luke records, the greater context of this parable begins with the first verse of this chapter, chapter 14, with the primary theme of verses 1-24 being invitation

We’re told that the occasion for this parable is that Jesus had been invited on Sabbath day to the house of a man who was a “ruler of the Pharisees”

- This means he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme religious, judicial council and authority among the Jewish people, and thus, he was a prominent person in the Jewish culture
- As so often happens in the world, because of the success and influence of Jesus’ ministry among the people, He is now meeting and dining with the so-called “elite” of the culture
- But, in complete contrast to the desire of the two men we looked at last week, Andrew and John, who wanted to seek real relationship with Jesus to become His followers, Luke tells us this was a “set up” by the leaders gathered at that dinner, as he writes, “*they were watching him carefully.*”² And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy (Luke 14:1-2)
- As the Gospels tell us, one of the great controversies and offenses of Jesus’ ministry with the religious leaders was that He healed people on the Sabbath day, so these men at this dinner had conspired to cause something to happen with which they could accuse and attack Jesus
- But despite the fact that Jesus would offend them and cause an occasion for accusation and attack, Jesus healed the man, sent him away, and then boldly spoke to these conspirators with a reasoned argument that exposed their hypocrisy, saying, “*Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?*” (Luke 14:5)

Luke then tells us that because this occasion was a dinner or banquet with these prominent cultural leaders who had been invited and come, Jesus tells two parables

- The first is directed to those who had been invited to this banquet and were “jockeying” for the seats at the table that were “*places of honor,*” and He tells them not to do this, but to humble themselves so that they might be “*exalted*” (Lk 14:7-11)

- The second parable is directed to the host that, rather than only inviting family, friends, and wealthy to the banquet, he should “*invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,*” because, while the wealthy could repay him, these others could not, and he would be “*blessed*” because he would be “*repaid at the resurrection of the righteous*” (Luke 14:12-14)

➔ **These words then move the conversation from inviting someone to a dinner or banquet in this world to the prophetic future and the age to come with the coming of the kingdom of God, the resurrection of the dead, the Day of Judgment, and the reward of the righteous**

We can only imagine the emotional tension and animosity brewing in the room as Jesus not only healed the man on the Sabbath, but “called out” the self-promotion and unrighteousness of these conspirators with these two parables

- It is then, perhaps to relieve the tension, that “*one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, and said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”*”

- In response to this, Jesus tells the third parable about a man who invited many kinds of people to a great banquet and their responses to his invitation (Luke 14:15-24)

This parable about a banquet is like others that Jesus told, because one of the things that God foretold through His prophets about the future kingdom of God was that there would be a great banquet that God would give His people at the resurrection to the righteous

- **Isaiah 25:6-8** = *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.*

- This future banquet was symbolically portrayed in the various annual Feast Days that God instituted in the calendar of His people (Lev. 23)

- And Jesus spoke of this at His last supper when, during the Passover meal, He instituted the New Covenant sacrament of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper saying He would celebrate the fulfillment of it “*in the kingdom of God*” (Mark 14:29)

As we read in this parable, “a man,” who allegorically represents God, is going to give a “great banquet” and sends “his servant” to tell the people who had already received their invitations to ““Come, for everything is now ready. ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses.”

Now what is significant about their excuses is that they were what would “humanly” be understood to be legitimate, and not necessarily sinful reasons for not coming

- The first two excuses were about their business concerns, one being a “*field*” he had purchased, and the other, an large purchase of “*five yoke of oxen*”

- The third excuse was that the man just got “*married*”

While probably most of us would merely be disappointed with the response of a person to decline an invitation to a party we were having, we wouldn’t react to the “excuses” as Jesus says the “man” in the parable did, who allegorically represents God

- Jesus says he “*became angry*” (Luke 14:21)

- But then, in the conclusion of the parable, Jesus declares the ominous and dreadful decree, “*For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet*” (Luke 14:24)
- This means that because the banquet prophetically represents the future kingdom of God and the resurrection of the righteous, these people who were invited but had given, what to them were legitimate excuses, would be cast into hell
- Why is that?
- It’s because they rejected the invitation to salvation that God gave because the motivation of their hearts wasn’t relationship with God to love and live for Him, but for the things of this world
- This was demonstrated by the choices they made to give the priority of their time, money and energies to the things of this world and not to God and His kingdom (See Matt. 6:33)
- ➔ **As Jesus said, the greatest commandment is to love God - everything else is second**

Jesus then goes on in the parable to tell how the man giving the banquet wanted his “house to be filled” with guests, and tells his servant, first, “Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame” (Luke 14:21), which would have been exactly what he told the people to do in the previous parable (Luke 14:13)

- But after doing this, the servant reports that there is “*still room*” for more (Luke 14:22)
- ➔ **So, the man tells his “servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled’” (Luke 14:23)**

These words have great meaning for salvation history which is depicted in the three kinds of people who were invited and their responses to the invitation (See Romans 9-11)

(1) The first kind are the people already invited to the banquet but refused

- They represent the covenant people of Israel and their leaders who reject the invitation to believe in Jesus, thereby making Him “*the stone the builders rejected*” (Matt. 21:42)
- Today, this would include people from a Christian culture who grow up in church but reject Jesus, or professing Christians who don’t truly believe in Him as their Lord

(2) The second are the “poor, crippled, blind and lame” in “the streets and lanes of the city” who accepted the invitation

- Being “*of the city*,” they represent not merely the physically weak but the spiritually “*poor in spirit*,” the “remnant” of the covenant people who accept the invitation to believe in Jesus

(3) The third are those outside the city in the “highways and hedges”

- They represent people from Gentile nations “*from east and west*” who accept the invitation to “*come*” and will “*recline at table*” with the Patriarchs in the kingdom of God (See Matt. 8:11)

Now there are several things we can observe and apply to our lives from this parable regarding building a “Culture of Invitation”

(1) The parable reveals the heart of God and His desire that all people be saved

- **1 Timothy 2:1-4** = *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior; ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

➔ **While God “desires all people to be saved,” we are responsible pray for people to be saved and for societies and governments to have freedom to proclaim the Gospel**

(2) The parable is about the reality of the future resurrection of those whom the Nicene Confession declares to be spiritually “the living and the dead”

- The spiritually “*living*” are those who, by the grace of God, have accepted “the invitation,” come to true, saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are “alive in Christ” and “righteous,” and will feast at the future banquet in the kingdom of God (Rev. 19:9)

- The spiritually “*dead*” are those who have rejected “the invitation” to “come” to Jesus and, as Jesus said more than any other person in the Bible, they will be “*go away into eternal punishment*” (Matt. 25:46)

➔ Therefore, as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:11, “*knowing the fear of the Lord, we*” are to seek to “*persuade others*” to accept “the invitation” to come to saving faith in Jesus

(3) We are to have a holy zeal of motivation to seek to “compel” people to “come”

- In this context, the word “*compel*” doesn’t mean we can make anyone believe in Jesus, for the only way a person can come to saving faith in Jesus is by the saving grace of God (Eph. 2:8-9)

- It means that we have a holy zeal and urgency to invite people to come to Jesus

➔ As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:14 that “*the love of God compels us,*” our love of God and people is our motivation to invite people to “*come*” so that His “*house will be filled*”

(4) We need to understand that people will have different responses to an invitation based on the degree of the process of their coming to faith in the Lord Jesus

One of the best tools for understanding this is called “The Engel Scale” of evangelism that seeks to identify where a person is in the process of coming to saving faith in Jesus:

- A version of it is:

(8) No awareness of the One, true, living God

➔ (7) An awareness of God, but no knowledge of the Gospel

➔ (6) An initial awareness of the Gospel

➔ (5) An awareness of the fundamentals of the Gospel

➔ (4) A grasp of the implications and requirements of the Gospel

➔ (3) A positive attitude and “assent” toward the Gospel

➔ (2) Personal problem(s) and recognition of need for salvation

➔ (1) Decision to truly believe in the Lord Jesus demonstrated in repentance

- This decision only comes by the grace of God through the working of the Holy Spirit

➔ This means while we can be discouraged that a person doesn’t immediately accept an invitation because they are on the scale somewhere between (8) and (4), we can keep on “inviting” them for God may be drawing them to Christ or to church and a church event

Questions for Application

1. Have you personally accepted the invitation to “*come*” to true, saving faith in Jesus?

2. Are you praying for people to be saved, for the work of mission, and for societies and governments to have freedom to proclaim the Gospel?

3. Do you have a holy zeal of love for God and people to invite them to come to Christ or to church or a church event?

4. Is there anyone in your life who you have invited but declined, yet you can keep inviting because God may be drawing them to “*come*” to saving faith in Jesus?