



Don't Miss the Great Banquet!"

Luke 14:15 - 24

July 21, 2019

We are going to be in Luke Chapter 14 once again this morning. I want to let you know that leading into this time, it has been my prayer that the glory of Jesus Christ would shine in each and every one of our hearts.

I pray that His glory would outshine the hardships and difficulties and the heaviness and the challenging things that I know you are facing in this fallen world that we live in. It has been my prayer that the enemy, that Satan would not have his way on his attempt to veil the glory of Jesus Christ in your eyes, but instead it would be so bright as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in this place—not only in this place, but as we go step by step into the lives that the Lord has called us to.

Before we get into Luke Chapter 14, look at these words that the Apostle Paul was given to write to the people in Corinth in the First Century. Paul said in II Corinthians 4:3-4:

³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Brothers and sisters, right now there are over 18,000 people living to the northwest of us in the city of Bellflower. Right now, there are over 51,000 people living to the east of us in the city of Cerritos. There are over 80,000 people living to the southwest of us in the city of Lakewood. That is about 150,000 people right here in our neck of the woods, in our backyards.

I want to let you know that right now at this moment, there is probably just a fraction of those people that are giving praise to the King of kings and the Lord of lords, assembled among the people of God, filled with the Spirit, giving Him praise. I think it is fair to say that we are among the minority.

Here is the thing about it: If I know the people that I have lived my entire life among, a very few of these people will actually demean Jesus and His Name in some kind of an outright way. Most of them would probably say that they have some kind of admiration for Him, that He is a great teacher, that He is an example to follow.

I would say that many of them have a nostalgic tie to learning about Jesus in their childhood, or about singing about baby Jesus at Christmas time. This land is filled with such people. However, brothers and sisters, they do not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ who is the image of God.

They don't perceive the magnitude and the substance and the awesomeness of who He is, that He is the invisible God now in visible form, that He is the Creator of all things who has punctured the veil of time and space and who has entered into this world. He came the first time in a human body. He is now God as man.

Jesus came into this world and they don't understand the great importance, the infinite importance, of what He did on the cross to atone for human sin. A part of it is that they are living in a world that is under the influence of Satan. Another part of it is that they are fallen in sin and they just don't care to find out much more about Jesus Christ.

On the one hand, you have so many people who like Jesus. They are cool with Jesus. However, on the other hand, they are not taking seriously His call to Lordship, His call to come into the Kingdom—to come and walk with Him. So what happens? The land is filled with excuses as to why people don't walk with Christ and take His truth seriously.

Before I begin sounding like some kind of a self-righteous man up here, let's just all acknowledge that even those of us who are here in the church, similar kinds of apathy can overtake us, so that those of us who have understood the Gospel, we can be apathetic in the call that He has given to us to walk with Him daily and to serve His Kingdom with all our hearts. Excuses, excuses, excuses, excuses!

As we enter into the text that is before us this morning, what we find is that King Jesus is aware of all of the excuses. There were so many of them there in First Century Israel and Jesus knows that they are here in our land today. He knows that those same excuses are among the churches today. Here Jesus addressed it and He spoke of it.

Let's look at what Jesus had to say in this *Parable of the Great Banquet*. Luke Chapter 14 and Verses 15 through 24:

¹⁵When 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!' ¹⁶But he said to him, 'A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. ¹⁷And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸But 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.' ¹⁹And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' ²⁰And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹So 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 the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' ²²And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³And 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. ²⁴For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

Here in this portion of Scripture we have this so-called *Parable of the Great Banquet*. Jesus delivered this parable while He was at a banquet Himself. If you were here with us last week, you will recall that this is Part 2 of what we started last week.

A prominent man of Israel, a leader of the Pharisees, he invited Jesus to come to a dinner, to a banquet, in his home. He also invited a whole bunch of his Pharisee friends. Jesus was with them. What we recall from last week is that we left off with great tension hanging the air, because Jesus managed to offend just about everybody at that dinner party.

It began with the man that was planted at the party, it would seem, who was suffering with a condition called dropsy. Jesus saw what was going on and asked, *Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day or not? We have been through this time and time again.*

Jesus went ahead and healed the man and He confronted all the Pharisees for valuing their principles above people and lacking the compassion that they needed. So, Jesus went right after their legalism.

Jesus continued after that and He went on to admonish all the guests that were there at that banquet because they were all very consternated because they were trying to figure out how to get for themselves the seats of honor that they thought that they all deserved. Jesus told them, *Stop trying to get the seats of honor. Just sit in the lowest seat and maybe you will be elevated through the practice of some humility.*

After admonishing all the guests, Jesus went on to admonish the host, saying, *Why is it that you have this banquet and the only kind of people that you invite are the people that are certain that they deserve the seats of honor? Why not invite the cripple? Why not invite the blind? Why not invite the poor that you can practice that kind of love to them and be rewarded in the Kingdom of Heaven?*

That must have been some kind of dinner party. Things were not boring when Jesus was around! So we left off with all this heaviness filling the room. Can't you just imagine it? Then you must love how this portion of Scripture starts off, because it seems that there was some well-meaning fellow who tried to break the tension in the room.

He said, *Oh, but I always say blessed are all of those who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God.* He was trying to smooth things out. *Let's just think about what all the Jewish people will enjoy in the age of come.* It was kind of tense in that environment.

This was a signal from this man for Jesus to change His current course of discourse. That was His nudge and His hint, *Hey, Jesus start talking about something else. Talk about something happier, okay, like when we all get into the Kingdom of Heaven...*

Instead, Jesus used this as a launching pad to fire more scud missiles their way. Oh, blessed are all those who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God and the essence of this parable is: Are you so sure you are going to be a part of the Messianic Banquet?

Jesus laid it out for them with such boldness, because Jesus knew that all throughout the land of Israel, while there was great interest in what He was doing and saying, in the end it was just a fraction of the people who actually responded to His call to repentance and to worship and to the Gospel.

Many people were assuming too much, so Jesus gave this parable to challenge His knowledge that people were just making excuses as to why they were dismissing the heart of His message to all of them. Jesus filled that room with electricity. It was like He had the jumper cables out, with energy in His heart say, *Okay, who wants to get livened up here?* These are strong statements that are meant to spark life

You might be a person who is outside the Kingdom, you have not come to a living faith in Jesus Christ. You have not come before the Lord telling Him that you are sinner in need of forgiveness. You say that you will do it later. You will do it some other time, because you are not sure. There is excuse after excuse after excuse. Jesus was saying to get the jumper cables attached! But even for those of us who have come into a true and living faith in Christ, apathy for many of us comes very easily. We need to see what Jesus was doing here and ask the Lord to liven us up.

I want us to see two parts of this passage. To help wake us up to the glory of His Kingdom, we observe two parts. First, we see a shocking series of excuses. Second, we will see a stunning gathering of guests that end up coming into the Kingdom of God.

First, let's notice:

1. A shocking series of excuses (14:16-20)

Looking at Verses 16 through 20, we read that this is, in fact, a great banquet that is being prepared in this parable. It is not a small intimate dinner, with a few friends. It is a big deal with many, many guests being invited.

In Verse 16 and 17, we see reflected the ancient custom of the double invitation. The person who is going to have such a party would start by sending out a general invitation to the people weeks, maybe even months in advance, to let people know what was coming.

Yes, just like in our day, the first invitation would have had a *repondez s'il vous plait*. That's French for *please respond*—*RSVP*. Yes, they had RSVPs back then. They needed to know how many animals to kill and how much meat to barbeque and how many settings to place and how many tables to set up, just like in our time.

The first invitations would go out, then the people would respond. Then the day of the banquet, the second invitation would go out. The host would send out his servants to tell everybody that it was time to meet, greet, pray and eat. That's the Baptists motto, right? Meet, greet, pray and eat!

It is time and everything is ready. It is all set. The candles are all lit. The plumes of barbeque are still lingering in the air. It is so beautiful. The tables are all set. It is time to eat. And he sends out his servants to gather in all those who said they would come.

Then the stunning responses that we read, the shocking series of excuses. We see it when we get into this text. Verse 17:

¹⁷And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses.

Notice that they all alike began to make excuses, not just a few people. This was widespread. It was a suddenly widespread disinterest in the banquet that was prepared. Then we have a series not of reasons but of excuses. There is a difference between the two.

When there is some kind of an event and you don’t want to go, and you need some polite and proper thing to say to express the fact you don’t want to go, you come up with excuses—these rationalizations. You can’t just say that you don’t want to go, so you must come up with reasons why. That is why the word *excuses* is here in this text.

We see three of them that are given here. Verse 18:

¹⁸But 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.’

Understand that this is before the whole industry of flipping houses emerged, where people buy the cheapest properties site unseen, so they can develop it and sell it at a profit. That was not happening back then. It would have been unheard for somebody in Israel to go and buy a property site unseen. What do you mean you bought it and had to go see it now? It smelled fishy.

We continue in Verse 19:

¹⁹And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’

This is just another excuse because nobody in their right mind would buy five yoke of oxen, that is the animals, without going first to see how sturdy they were, how healthy they were, and to make sure they were not getting sickly animals but were getting strong animals. They would have bought those animals after examining them.

Giving them the benefit of the doubt, even if he did buy those animals without seeing them first, why couldn’t he just go check them out after eating dinner, a dinner that had been prepared and invested in? He was just indifferent to the dinner party. That is what was going on here.

Then we have a third excuse mentioned that might be the best one. Verse 20:

²⁰And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’

What does that have to do with it? This young man, he was telling the host, *Hey, I am recently married, and haven't you heard of the thing called the honey-do list? It is so long! I have so much to do.* He said he could not come because he was now married.

To be fair, there was a principle in the Law of Moses in Deuteronomy 24:5 that says:

⁵When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be liable for any other public duty. He shall be free at home one year to be happy with his wife whom he has taken.

This was not a military draft and it was not a jury summons. It was a party. The wife probably wanted to go! The husband did not want to go. Game night, wife let's go. Man, ah!

In the end, what we are supposed to understand here is that this is shocking because everything was ready. It was all set and it is shocking because the excuses were so widespread, and this gracious host was left high and dry.

Bringing this into our day, Southern California is filled with people who make similar kinds of excuses. They have enough religious Christianity that they think they are in, but they don't walk with Christ. They are not taking it seriously when it comes to a true and heartfelt response to the magnitude of sin and its offense before the holiness of God, to the graciousness of His cleansing blood, and the walk that we are now are called into as those who are in Christ.

They too have so many excuses as to why they just go about the affairs of life and assuming they are in, when they are negligent of the King. People are the same yesterday, today and through this age. When you look at their excuses, you will hear the reasons and the ways people get distracted and, therefore, getting distracted from the distractions they start coming up with all kinds of excuses not to take their walk with Christ seriously.

There were three excuses in the passage, and they remain diversion to a serious walk with the Lord in our day too. What is number one? Possessions. We get distracted with possessions. Verse 18, *I have bought a field.* I will plant crops on that field. I get to build a house on that field, and I will get to gather all kinds of furnishings in that house. It is going to be my lavish little piece of paradise on earth. Possessions!

Second, vocation. Verse 19, *I have bought five yoke of oxen.* I got to work hard. I got to keep getting ahead. Got to enlarge my territory. Got to expand my resources. Got to increase my accounts. Now is the time. I will get serious about the Lord later. Vocation!

Third, affections. Verse 20, *I have married a wife.* There are other people and other relationships that I really need to invest in instead of coming to this lavish banquet of the King and entering into a serious relationship with the host. I have kids now and those kids need to be involved with so many extra-curriculars.

Got to see all those theme parks on Sundays. Got to go do this and got to go do that. Got these relationships that must be nurtured. Some people know that there are people in their sphere of influence who will frown on them if they have a serious walk with Christ, so they say, no, I can't. I can't now. Affections!

None of these three things, possessions, vocation, or affection, these are not inherently sinful things. Each and every one them can be so very good. With possession, these could be vehicles of thanksgiving and gratitude and blessing in our lives and in the lives of the people around us.

A possession rightly understood ought to be a call to worship the King and have gratitude in our hearts for what He has given, and it ought to strike some generosity within our hearts for others who don't have all that we have. Possessions could be a very good thing.

Vocation is a good thing. The Lord wants us to work hard. The Lord wants us to have skillful hands and minds that get things done, does He not? We are made to work. Didn't the Lord call Adam and Eve to work that garden?

Affections, of course, we are to love people. Yes, the fruit of the Spirit is love. As Warren Wiersbe put it though, *If good things become the main things, then they become bad things*. It is possible for good things to be elevated to the throne of life, so that the great host is pushed off the throne. That is when those things become idolatry. We are worshiping other things, rather than the King of kings. And, boy oh boy, our hearts are idol factors, in the language of John Calvin the reformer.

There is a tendency even with us in Christ who are fighting the good fight of faith to want to nudge the King from the throne and put possessions and the pursuit of them, success in the pursuit of it, and other relationships where only God belongs. Then all kinds of excuses start getting rattled out as to why we are not walking with Christ first in our lives.

Meanwhile, King Jesus has this wonderful and gracious and lavish banquet in eternity that is being prepared for us. If we could just see the goodness of His grace, guess who would always be in first place? We would be meditating on those things and being renewed by the transformation of our minds, being transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Notice the host's response to the shocking series of excuses. In Verse 21 it says:

²¹So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry

Do you blame him? He was left with a clean and decorated house with a table set, with candles burning and meat roasted, and the house was empty because everybody backed out at the last minute.

What about God the Father who sacrificed His Son that we might enter into His Kingdom, and who in Christ has already done more than our hearts could ever imagine and who is preparing for us an eternity in His Kingdom that is beyond compare?

Yet, in our sin and in the idolatry of our hearts we go running off after every other thing. We must see these things and we must say, *Lord, line my heart up with that which is true and supreme that You would be first in my life, as You ought to be. You have done so much for me.*

Now, to continue to help us wake up, we see:

2. A stunning gathering of guests (14:21-24)

The heart of the host, he wanted people in the house. He wanted people there and had his initial list of people that were going to come. They all scorned him. He had so much that he wanted to share, so he sent his servant out.

Let's see what comes next. Verse 21:

²¹So 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 the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

The servant would have known exactly where to find them. He knew the streets and the alleys and the lanes, because that is where he would find these people collecting alms, and begging, and asking people for any extra change or loaves of bread.

The servant went out into the streets and the lanes of the city and he approached all these people and said, *It is your lucky day! You are about to enter into something awesome that you did not see coming when you woke up this morning. Get up on your feet. Everybody let's go because something very, very special is coming your way today.*

It began there, and in Verse 22 there is more:

²²And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³And 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.'

The first sweep was in the town, where there were familiar people who were the residents of the city that they lived in, and who would collect alms.

The second sweep moved outside the town to the highways and the hedges. The highways were the streets that stretched out beyond the borders of the city that would have ran through the wilderness to connect these different cities and towns that were miles apart.

Then the hedges were the shrubs that would have been bordering and enclosing the vineyards and the orchards outside the city. In this area the servant would find vagabonds and sojourners and aliens.

People out there were taking advantage of a welfare system in the Law of Moses that they were allowed to go in and take from the clippings of the farmland to nourish themselves. So, this man was sent to this region to compel them to come in. These were people they did not know, people that they had not been introduced to before.

The servant was told to go there and compel them to come. That is strong language. He told his servant not to take no for an answer. I think the reason why he needed to use some strong persuasion in getting them in is that the people in these territories, they would have questioned what the banquet was all about—*what is the nature of this banquet? What about the house that it is going to be in? Look at the condition I am in. I am going to be so out of place. Don't I need to get cleaned up first? Are people going to be looking down on me because of the place of life that I am in?*

The servant was saying, *No, don't you worry. Nobody there will be looking down on you because they are kind of like you. Don't worry. You don't need to wash your feet before coming in. This master, he is going to take care of you. He is going to lavish you. He is going to give you more than you saw coming. Just come. You just must come, because it will be better than you can even imagine.*

I look at this and ask myself, *doesn't that put a pretty cool spin on the ministry of evangelism?* As we go out and we let people know about Jesus and the Kingdom that He brings, it is true that there are going to be some people that we encounter in this land of ours who, in their self-righteousness, dismiss what we have to say. They will say they don't need that.

However, we are going to be amidst people who know that they are morally soiled. They are going to know that they are fallen in sin. They are going to have the sense, asking, how would I belong among a Kingdom like that.

And we just say, *Oh, no, the graciousness of this host is such that you just come as you are, and He is going to bless your socks off. He is going to take care of you. He is going to wash your feet for you. He is going to provide for you in ways that you could not understand. You just come and wait and see. If you come with a humble heart, good things will come your way.*

That being the case, and seeing evangelism through that view, let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. Let's finish up here this morning by taking a careful look at this parable. It is a parable and we must be careful not to draw too much clear theology from parables. We must look at the general picture of them.

Let's try and think about who the different characters in this parable represent, and where we fit in. Who is here? There is the host. I think that the host of this banquet would represent God the Father—the Master of the house who is preparing this incredible banquet and He wants to bring people in. We have God the Father.

But what about the servant who went out to bring people into the kingdom in this parable—the people who were complacent and who did not care about the banquet and would not go in. Then to the people who say, are you serious, I can go to this banquet?

Who is that servant? Our tendency is to say that is us. We are the servants. We are the ones that are going out to bring people in. No argument there! Yes, that is true. There is a picture of evangelism in this parable.

However, what if we see in this servant a glimpse of the Messianic Servant, of King Jesus Himself, who came into his world as a servant? He went first to Israel. He went into the synagogues and into the temple and He went to the place of religious instruction. He was pleading with them to come into the Kingdom.

When Jesus found so much rejection, He also started going where He really intended to go the entire time. He went among the tax collectors, among the leper colonies, among the Gentiles all the way across the Sea of Galilee, telling them to come. Come. Come! This is just a wonderful picture of Christ who came bringing the means into the Kingdom of God.

Then where does that leave us? Who are we in this story? Do you see the poor, the lame, the blind, the crippled? That's us. We are the recipients of grace. We are those who have nothing in ourselves that can merit the Kingdom of God. Rather, we are those who need to be healed by the Gospel of grace and brought in by the power of God.

That is where we are. This, brothers and sisters, is what Jesus meant when He said, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* That is where we are. Then, the whole process of transformation takes place.

We come to Christ, then we grow to be like Him, and we become Christians—living examples of Christ in this world, where we say, *I am one blind beggar telling other blind beggars where a great feast is to be found. Why don't you come in?* That is where we are. That is us. All throughout His teaching, Jesus taught spiritual humility, that those who are last will become first. That those who humble themselves will be exalted. That is where we are!

I pray that in these things, the Spirit of the Lord speaks into our hearts that He gives us the desire to enter with humility into His Kingdom to prioritize His Kingdom first above all and that we walk in the pattern of the Messianic Servant who came to bring us into something very, very, very special.

May God be with you. May God bless you. May He empower you to give up on excuses and just walk with Jesus Christ first.

Let's close in a word of prayer.

²⁴For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.”