

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET // Luke 14:12-24

Message from the series, The Gospel of Luke

Luke continues the account of the Pharisee's dinner party. In the first part of chapter 14 (verses 1-6), Jesus exposes the **hypocrisy** of the Pharisees, recognizing they had planted a man with dropsy at the dinner in an attempt to trap Jesus. They are outwardly concerned for the law, but inwardly lacking mercy and compassion. In verses 7-11, Jesus uses a parable to teach on **humility**, reflecting negatively on the status-seeking nature of the Pharisees. Now, in verses 12-24, Jesus will teach on gospel **hospitality**. Because they are hypocritical and lacking in humility, the Pharisees use hospitality as a means of scoring social points. Invitations are extended to the powerful and privileged, whose presence grants prestige to the event and who might reciprocate the invitation. Jesus is going to turn up the heat by upending the guest list game, stating that those who should be invited are those who could not repay—the poor, crippled, lame, and blind (v. 13-14).

When his host tries to smooth things over by making an apparently agreeable statement, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God," (v. 15) Jesus responds with a parable that reveals just who is most likely to eat bread in the kingdom—and it's not who the Pharisees expect.

1. The invitation the Lord gives (v. 16-17)

The banquet in the parable is representative of the banquet the Lord will give in heaven. An invitation in the first-century Jewish world would have had two stages. The first alerted the guests that they were being invited—a banquet is being promised. The second stage of the invitation would let the guests know that the banquet was ready and it was time to come. Similarly, God's invitation is given in two stages: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The entire Old Testament is pointing forward to a Messiah that was promised. In the gospels, Jesus teaches that he is the promised Messiah—the banquet is prepared and ready to be received.

2. The excuses the people make (v. 18-20)

The problem with the Pharisees is that they had accepted the first stage of the invitation, but when the second stage arrived, they were filled with excuses for rejecting the invitation. They recognized the Old Testament promise, but rejected Christ, the fulfillment of the promise. In the parable, Jesus points to the ridiculous nature of excuses—a newly purchased field or set of oxen must be inspected, or a new wife has been married since the initial invitation. Jesus is calling them out for their lame excuses. What is the real reason for their rejection? They just do not want to go. When we consider what Christ is offering, what he accomplished on the cross, we recognize the incredible rudeness of those who reject this invitation.

3. The mission the church receives (v. 21-23)

But, Jesus will fill his table. He will transfer that invitation to those who seem the most unlikely to come. He wants people who will say, "I do not deserve to be invited." Jesus is enlarging and expanding the scope of the invitation, outside the religious elite, even to the highways and the hedges. He has a missional focus and so should the church.

4. The warning the world needs (v. 24)

Jesus is the Lord of the banquet, the host who rules over the invitation. When he declares to the Pharisees, "none of those men who were invited will taste my banquet" he is issuing a dire warning. Man bears full responsibility for rejecting the invitation, missing heaven, and finding hell. Don't miss the banquet. Come as you are. Accept the invitation. God did not sacrifice his son so that people can make excuses and miss the banquet. The mission is extended to the church to go to the highways and hedges and to compel, urge, and persuade all to come in.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do we recognize the hospitality of the gospel invitation? How does God's hospitality towards us frame how we are to be hospitable to others?
2. What are the most common excuses you hear for rejecting Jesus' invitation?
3. What does it mean to go to the highways and the hedges? Are we seeking guests for the Lord's banquet?