

All In: Say "Yes!"
Glen - February 25, 2018

Series Big Idea: Jesus doesn't just want fans, church attenders or onlookers. He doesn't just want people who sit and watch all the bad going on around us and say; "Oh, what's the use!" Jesus needs bold people willing to take a risk to make a difference and who refuse to make excuses. He wants us to follow him by being a participant and being all in - joining a spiritual revolution. Following Jesus is a no turning back deal. Jesus' call and invitation to us is to be all in. And we are a church that asks you to be all in. This short two week series will look at what it means to be all in according to Jesus.

Message Big Idea: Jesus tells a story that is intended to shock us. The gist of the parable is that it is not enough to say yes to God, but then not really show up! God is calling us to be all in. God doesn't want us to just browse the aisles of faith, but he wants us to be buyer who puts our money and lives on the counter. Ideas and ideals of faith can be interesting to discuss, but Jesus wants us to actually sit at the table of God and engage with him. Jesus is saying that following him is an all in commitment. Jesus invites us to the table, but don't say "yes" and then stand outside. Don't make excuses. Don't let other things fool you as being more urgent. Say "yes" and be all in.

Main Idea: Say "yes" to Jesus' invitation.

Main Text: Luke 14:15-24

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Share a personal story of something you accomplished that took hard work and effort and required, at least for a season, for you to be "all in." It could be in school, athletics, marriage and family, a hobby or anything.
2. Jesus tells a story or parable in Luke 14:15-24. In verses 16-20 he tells about how different folks made excuses for not attending a banquet party. When it comes to your faith, what have been or are the likely excuses you use for when you choose not be all in? What are the things that hold you back from really being all in with Jesus in a radical way?
3. For you what does "all in" with Jesus mean? Be as specific as you can.
4. How does being "all in" look in terms of how you use your resources like time, energy, money and possessions?
5. Finish the sentence: I know I am "all in" with Jesus when....
6. Finish the sentence: I know I am "all in" with my church Pantano when....
7. Are you an All In Partner at Pantano (<http://pantano.church/im-new/who-we-are/all-in-partnership/>)? If yes, why did you make that decision? If not, why have you not made that decision?

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Message: I really do like to watch the Olympics. I keep thinking about how these athletes train for a minimum of 4 years and most have been training all their lives! The effort and cost is almost beyond comprehension. Olympic gold is far more costly than the value of the metal it is made of. For many it requires waking up at 4am every morning to train and that's seven days a week. Then they have to go to work or school. Then they train after work. One Olympian gave up her cell phone during the intense training season leading up to the games. Every four years when the Olympics comes around I'm reminded that the best and most meaningful things in life rarely come easy. The most rewarding things in life are intimately connected to commitment.

Commitment can result in some of life's best gifts. I've seen some great marriages (not perfect ones) and I am blessed to have one. All got there by consistent commitment. In fact commitment is the very foundation of a great marriage takes commitment to doing the hard work over many years. A great career comes with long hours, many risks and hard work. An amazing skill like playing an instrument takes years of dedication and commitment. In the end, when we work hard and get to a place where we are rewarded, we don't regret the hard work. I've never heard of a gold medal winner who regretted the effort it took over all those years.

This is true of faith as well. The life of faith is a high and beautiful calling. But it also takes commitment and effort. Just like when we develop a great marriage, have great relationships, enjoy an amazing career or a skill that is well developed - we don't focus on how hard it was. We enjoy the experience. But we are not being truthful if we say it was all easy. When it comes to faith, the journey or the path is what we call "The All In way." It is the best way to live. And it is not easy.

Recently as I was reading the Gospel of Luke, the third of four of the books that record the life of Jesus, I discovered an emphasis about this idea of faith as being all in through an unusual story. Jesus taught about the path to an amazing faith and how it requires we be all in and what it looks like. And Jesus often taught using stories. We call them parables. Today I want us to look at a really hard parable of Jesus. This story is not one of those "feel good" kind of stories. Let me warn you of that up front. In fact, it is a story with a shocking conclusion. Jesus, when he told this story, intended to shock us out of any kind of spiritual complacency. But this story isn't just a downer either. Its truth brings hope and freedom. We'll find the story in Luke 14:15-24 (pg. 713 - NIV).

So here's the context. Jesus was invited to a meal at a prominent Pharisee or religious leader's home. These leaders didn't like Jesus. He didn't play their religious game the right way. They actually invited him in order to trap him. Well, I suspect they brought a man who had severe swelling to the house to see what Jesus would do. It was the Sabbath and by the rules of the religious leaders you were not to heal anyone on the Sabbath. Jesus challenges them on the ridiculous rule.

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Then he notices that the guests at the dinner are jockeying for the best place and to sit in the seats of honor. So Jesus teaches them about humility and instead of just inviting important people to dinner, to also invite the poor and disadvantaged. The point is that right from the start he's not going to play it nice but speaks the truth in love. He's being Jesus! It is then that we pick up the story in verse 15 - ***When one of those at the table with him heard this, [that they should invite the disadvantaged that can't repay you] he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."***

¹⁶ Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

¹⁸ "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

¹⁹ "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

²⁰ "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

As I read the story Jesus told I say to myself: "Those are very legitimate excuses!" Right!? One guy just bought a field. In our day it be like this: "I just closed on a house and I'm ready to move in. I've got the move all lined up and don't want to pay rent any more at my old place. I need to move now. Thanks for the invite, but it will have to wait."

Another guy had just bought five yoke of oxen. In our day that might be like this: "I just bought a new car and we have a road trip planned. I just can't make it this time. Thanks for the invite, but it will have to wait."

Another said he just got married. Today it would sound the same except maybe we might add: "Look, I just got married and we are getting ready to leave on our honeymoon to Hawaii. Thanks for the invite, but it will have to wait." These all sound like the kind of excuses I would make! They seem very legitimate.

But the fact is that things were a bit different back then - 2000 years ago when Jesus told the story. Back then there was no regular mail service, phones or internet. So if someone, like the man in the story, was going to throw a huge banquet, he would let everyone know well in advance - like weeks or even a month in advance. He needed to prepare well and know who was coming. A feast back then took lots of planning as there were no Costcos or grocery stores. The planning had to be done well in advance of the event.

But you see, the folks who had these excuses had already said "yes" or RSVPed for the party. The story opens assuming that these folks had said "yes" and so Jesus' story starts with the announcement that all the preparations have been done and the food

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and drink is ready! These folks should have not RSVPed or should have excused themselves a long time ago!

Know right from the beginning that in this story Jesus is "that certain man" preparing a banquet. The banquet is more than a meal. It is our life with God and describing it like a party with great food is a great way to describe what it is like to have an eternal relationship with God. Folks please hang in here with me for a minute. Jesus is saying that faith is like a great party with a banquet of food and drink. It's a party with our best friends. And the host is the most amazing, kind, generous and fun host ever! The banquet is sitting at a table with God in joyful relationship. He's the head of the table and we get to join him. And Jesus is inviting all of us to this kingdom party. It starts here on earth. It continues for eternity in heaven - it just gets better and better!

But we are humans. We'll always have excuses why not to go, why we might leave early or why even if we show up we really haven't shown up. We are self-centered folks who think more about our own life than the party we are invited to. How does Jesus, oops, I mean the "certain man" or master respond to all the excuse giving? We pick that up in verse 21 - ²¹ ***"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'***

²² ***"'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'***

²³ ***"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"***

When folks don't accept the invitation, then Jesus will invite all kinds of people, especially the kinds of people not usually invited to such a fancy banquet! Don't miss what Jesus is trying to say through this story. The religious people got the first invite, but they were too busy or distracted. But Jesus doesn't limit the invitation to "good" people alone. Anyone is welcome to the Jesus party. There is always room for more at God's table.

You see in this story, the ones originally invited were the people of Israel. They were God's people, but they said no to Jesus' invitation. They trusted their old ways of doing religion and it kept them from being able to say "yes" to Jesus. So now Jesus is inviting those who were not a part of the Jewish religion to connect to God and become God's children. Jesus is expanding the invitation list and it includes you and me. The pain of this story is that so many miss this amazing opportunity. The point? **Say "yes" to Jesus' invitation.** Jesus has given YOU an invitation! Say yes! Don't miss the invitation to a life of faith and a relationship and party with God. But the only way to be a part of the kingdom of God party is to accept the invitation.

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I think there are two main takeaways from this story. First, interest in faith or spiritual things is not enough. Knowing about God and a little about the Bible is not enough. Saying yes, but then not showing up doesn't count. God is calling us to be all in. God doesn't want us to just browse the aisles of faith as a looker only. He wants us to buy into faith. He wants us to put our lives on the line. Jesus invites us to actually sit at the table of God and engage with him. **Say "yes" to Jesus' invitation.** Jesus is saying that following him is an all in deal.

Let me speak first to those of us who have made a decision to follow Jesus. If you haven't done that, please listen in, but I'll come back to you in a few minutes. What does really saying "yes" to Jesus mean? What does it look like to live out a commitment to be all in?

Let me introduce you to a couple who figured out what all in looked like for them. This is **Joe and Marci Natale**. Thanks for joining us today.

- When did you start attending Pantano?
- Optional: how did you know about or decide to attend here?
- One of the reasons why I wanted you to share your story is that you said "yes" to Jesus and "yes" to our church. I mean, you jumped in and were all in right away. What did that look like for you? [Discover, baptism, all in, lead a group.]
- Tell us a bit about the group you lead Learning to Cope.
- How has God impacted your life since you went all in?

Thanks for being all in. Thanks for engaging and making a difference.

If you made a commitment to be a follower of Jesus and you've been here long enough to know that our church is a healthy, safe and genuine church then I want to challenge you to be all in. Here at Pantano, I ask you to make a commitment to be all in every year. If you were all in last year, that was so last year! This is a new year. We make a commitment to be all in every year and now is that time. Take the card in the seat in front of you. For those who are online or using your device, you can access it online. Being all in means you will use your life to join others who are all in to make a difference and bring the love and influence of Jesus to our community. You are saying "yes" to our vision, mission and you are making a commitment to use your life and engage in what God is doing through us. You can fill out the card and put it in the offering bucket or sign it digitally online.

As a church we are asking you to be an all in partner. We are offering you an invitation to come to the table. **Say "yes" to Jesus' invitation.** Don't stand outside. Don't make excuses. Don't let other things fool you as being more urgent. Be all in. Live out your faith. To make a real difference, we need an army of folks who are all in.

Now I'd like to speak to those of us here who are yet to make a commitment to follow Jesus. First, I'm so glad you are here. What I want you to know is that Jesus IS offering you an invitation to come to the table and experience how good God is. No matter what you've done or not done in the past, Jesus is inviting you to a new way of life, the new way is to follow Jesus and his ways. But you have to **Say "yes" to Jesus' invitation.**

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Let me remind you about what Jesus said in his story. You have to say "yes" to the invitation or you are excluded from the table now and for eternity. It is your choice to say yes or not. And this is not just a dinner invitation, it is an invitation to connect with God our Father. It is an invitation to taste and experience how good God is. And the invitation is only through Jesus. So make the decision to follow Jesus. **Say "yes" to Jesus' invitation.**

Here's how you make your commitment to follow Jesus. Jesus and our New Testament teach that we make a promise to follow Jesus with our everything, and nothing less through baptism. Baptism is our declaration that Jesus will be the Lord, or in charge of our life. In our baptism we are saying we are ready to leave behind our old ways and follow the Jesus way.

Maybe you have been following Jesus for awhile but have never been baptized. So it feels a bit weird now to be baptized. I understand. Don't let that hold you back. Make the commitment. Maybe you were baptized as a baby and now you finally realize you can make a commitment that is your decision. Don't hold back. Maybe you are ready for the first time to make a commitment to follow Jesus. Make that commitment in baptism.

Today we are going to have an opportunity for you to be baptized. In a moment we'll sing a song and as we stand and sing, come to the auditorium, no matter where you are, and come to the door down at the far left of the stage. Folks will be there to help you and escort you to our private changing rooms where we have clothes for you to be baptized in as well as towels. For those of you online, your host will help you figure out how you can be baptized. Don't hesitate. **Say "yes" to Jesus' invitation.** So as we stand and sing, come. I'll meet you at the door.

Song: Behold