

For Our Neighbors: Sometimes It Takes A Party
Pastor Josh Fakhoury

Intro:

- Josh Fakhoury – Lead Pastor
- Part 3 of Series: ***For Our Neighbors***

Last 2 Weeks:

- **Why are we here and what do we want to be known for?**
- **If Our Neighbor's Biggest Need: to know God and to live with God**
- **Our greatest need becomes our greatest purpose – help others KNOW GOD!**

Neighborhoods have changed a lot since I was a kid... (area, age/stage, different world...)

- As a kid growing up, I knew a lot of our neighbors (block parties, pool parties, play, etc.)
- As I've gotten older, moved, grown, gotten married, own house, etc...
- Thanks have changed... people kind of keep to themselves...
- When we lived in Richmond, IN... new pastor in town...
 - A couple from our church, had kids same age as ours... (lived just down the road)
 - Invited us to a party at their house – go trick or treating, have food, watch football.... (we were somewhat hesitant at first...)
 - To make a long story short, Dylan and Heather became our closest friends...
 - Getting together multiple times a week to play board games, eat a meal, watch games on tv, play golf, our kids would play, pray/study/SG, trips...
 - We developed a close friendship – ALL of us really needed in that season of life!
 - Remain extremely close friends today!
- **It all started with an invitation to a party...**

Today: **To be FOR our neighbors, sometimes it takes a party!**

- Some of you might be weary of parties – more introvert, partying issues in the past...
- But some of you are like, YES! This is my kind of church! (pastor told me...)
- “PARTY”? → Let me clarify , stay with me..., see where we're going with this...

What kind of party are we talking about here? (Important!)

A party is any effort to celebrate, serve, or enjoy each other in a way that adds value to life.

- A “party” doesn't have to do with ***drinking, flirting, trying to escape life's difficulties...***
- It's about an opportunity to fellowship, connect, celebrate, enjoy each other's company
- I think our culture has gotten away from having THESE kinds of parties...
 - Life gets busy... work, kids, school, sports...
 - Result: lack of connection, don't feel known/loved, loneliness at an all-time high

Many of these underlined words, are part of the purpose of the Church (Christian Community)

As Christians, we need to get better at throwing parties! *(some of you are skeptical...)*

- I understand... but stay with me!

When we look back at the way the early church lived in community with one another...

Look at the life and ministry of Jesus – He went to A LOT of parties! (banquets, social gatherings, meals, weddings...) – ***Jesus thought parties were important!***

- **Jesus' first miracle was at a party!** (wedding reception, ran out of wine, water → wine)
- **Jesus crashed other people's parties.** (Walking down the street with his followers, "hey Zaccheus, I know you're having a party at your house tonight, and I'm coming!")
- **Jesus told stories about parties.** (a lot!... parties as illustrations for important lessons; in Luke 15, 3 stories in a row, Lost Sheep/Coin/Son → each story ends with a party!)
- **Jesus went to so many parties.** (that the Pharisees used that to accuse Jesus... "He's going to too many parties, drinking wine, hanging out with the wrong people")
- **Jesus compared God's Kingdom to a party.** (talking about today!)

Jesus knew that parties had the potential to change people's lives!

- How parties were powerful! – how they could impact a person!
- When people go to parties – relationships change – they form, grow, strengthen (**right**)

Luke 14 – if you have your Bible with you, turn there (on screens)

- This is a story Jesus tells, comparing God's Kingdom to a party.
- Interestingly enough, Jesus tells this story while He's at another party!
 - Scripture: this party is being held at a very important Pharisee's house
 - Would have been a more formal party – a pretty prestigious guest list...
- Even at the party, the Pharisees are trying to make Jesus look bad... (set him up...)
 - So, Jesus decides to start teaching...

Luke 14: 1-6 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ² There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. ³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" ⁴ But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way. ⁵ Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" ⁶ And they had nothing to say.

- The heart of the law is important – not just the letter of the law!

Understand the history of the **Roman and Greek cultures** at the time:

- **Parties/M meal times**, when they weren't private (more than one family), they were typically a time to **show off your wealth!** – kind of show **how important** you were...
- The way these dinners were set up was very strategic... (closer to host, more honor)
 - The rich people sat at one table and got a certain type of food...
 - The next class down sat at another table and got the next level of food...
 - And the lowest class got whatever was leftover... (invite → get invited!) **return**

Luke 14:7-14 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you

will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

¹² Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

- Guests: "Don't think of yourselves more highly than you ought to", humble self/exalt o
- Hosts: "Don't just invite all your buddies (look good; GET/GAIN); invite people in need!
- In response to that teaching, one of the guests says something interesting...

Luke 14:15-24 ¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

- What he's saying: "you know Jesus it's nice that you want to be kind to the sick people and the poor people, but the people who are REALLY BLESSED, are the people like US! (us religious experts, holy; who will be eating at the feast in the Kingdom of God)
- Essentially: "These riff raff won't be invited... but WE will be..." That's the real PARTY!

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.'

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.'"

What is Jesus doing/saying here?

Jesus drops the hammer on the religious people!

- "Oh, you think it's all about you???"
- "You think you are the only ones that God is inviting to His party (Great Banquet)???"
- "If you don't understand that this invitation is for EVERYONE, then your invitation has been revoked!"

Jesus makes it clear that EVERYONE is invited to the party!

- EVERYONE means EVERYONE!
- Think about how that must have felt for the people around that party... (the sick... etc.)

IMPORTANT TRUTH/REALITY: Just because everyone is invited..., **that doesn't mean that everyone is going to make it to the party!**

- Some will get that invitation → “nah, I’ve got other things to do...” “too busy...”
- Some will laugh at that invitation... some will ignore it...
- Some will reject it... scoff at it... tear it up and throw it away...
- Some will say, I’m good right now, but I’ll decide later... maybe I’ll RSVP a bit later...
- BUT EVERYONE is invited!

Because EVERYONE is invited, we ought to be better neighbors!

- We need to change the way we think about our neighbors!
- The ones we like, don’t like...
- Agree with, don’t agree with...
- The ones we want to come to the party, and the ones we don’t want to come...
(WE DON’T MAKE THE GUEST LIST, GOD DOES! → EVERYONE is INVITED!)

TRUTH: **Our neighbors are VIPs to God’s party, and we need to treat them as such!**

- Everybody is invited, so we need to ACT like everybody is invited to the party!

Question: **“How would your words, thoughts, actions, attitudes change if you REALLY believed that your neighbors were invited to God’s party?”**

Challenge: **This week, do something that you don’t have to do for a neighbor.**

- “Pay it forward”
- “Do unto others what you would like them to do for you...”
- Random act of kindness
- Throw them a party! – invite them over for a meal, games, bbq, or something!
- Whatever it is... find a way to show a neighbor that you are FOR them!

Prayer