

Luke

Acts



Have you ever heard a story retold so much that you can picture it like you were there? When I was young my mom told me the story about her best friend and best friends sister showing up to the baby shower for my mom that was in full swing inside my Gigi's house. I can't possibly remember this because I either wasn't born yet or I was under two years old, but I can picture the whole thing because I know the people and the place. The two ladies at the door had their arms so full that they couldn't open the door and it had started pouring rain on them. They were banging not he door with their feet, but there was so much fun going on inside that no one could hear them. They started laughing so hard at themselves being stuck outside of the party in the rain that they both wet their pants laughing before someone finally found them out there. If only they could have put down everything they were carrying, they could have gotten into the party they were invited to.

Luke 14:15-24

15 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."

A particular vision of Messianic hope had developed that when Messiah showed up and established his Kingdom/reestablished the throne of David, that after he conquered Israel's national and political enemies there would be a massive celebratory feast that included eating a Leviathan sea monster. To be present at that banquet was to be part of God's kingdom.

Side note: the Kingdom of God being compared to a wedding feast, the happiest and most fun of occasions is not an accident. Whoever teaches that Christians should be somber and serious and never have fun is wrong.

Jesus had just stepped on everyone's toes by healing on the Sabbath and calling everyone out including the host for being so worried about rank and status. There was probably a collective gasp and held breath wondering what was going to happen next. Just then some dude (probably tipsy) is like, "Whoo! Yeah! I wanna be at your party."

Sound like someone from a family reunion? "Won't it be great when the Messiah finally gets here and starts his Kingdom? It would be so rad to get to eat a meal with him and be part of that!" The guy certainly was thinking that he was part of the "in crowd."

And Jesus is like, “Funny you should mention that.” and then goes on to reveal through his next parable that the banquet they were all looking forward to that marked God’s Kingdom coming is already prepared and the guests have already been invited. But the people who end up at the banquet might not be who you would expect.

It was common practice to send out two invitations. The first was to let people know the banquet was going to happen and get their RSVP. The second was announced when the banquet was prepared and it was time to come to the party; those who had RSVP’d ‘yes’ would be notified that it was time. To back out when it’s time to sit down to eat after already accepting the invitation would be a HUGE insult to the host.

In the parable invited guests have obviously flimsy excuses for why they changed their RSVP. This was before Zillow made it possible to look at a house or property inside and out without being there in person. The idea that someone would buy a piece of property sight unseen is silly. And if they did why would they need to go look at it right now when the banquet that has been so carefully prepared and they have already agreed to attend is ready. The property will still be there tomorrow to inspect.

And the excuse of testing out the oxen. That would be like buying a commercial size planter for your farm and not testing it first to make sure it works. If this is your income, your livelihood you would test it out and make sure it's worth the purchase first. Plus, if this guy has bought FIVE yolk (10 oxen) he must have a lot of land and would most defiantly have people working for him that could handle this. And once again, even if he didn't, why does it need to be tested right now?

The last guest is the most rude. He doesn't even ask to be excused like the first two do. He uses a loophole for getting out of military service on his gracious host as if a great marriage supper were something one would want to dodge. Since there were two invitations the groom would have said yes and known the banquet was coming. In a small town no one would plan a wedding that overlapped with someone else's wedding banquet. To the audience all of these excuses would have sounded ridiculous and increasingly insulting.

“An excuse is simply the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie.” -Billy Sunday

I think there are two levels of interpretation here. Most immediately Jesus is clearly talking about the dynamic of the Jewish people and the entrance of the gentile believers into God's covenant people.

Jesus shows up announcing to Israel that it's time for God's dinner banquet! It's ready! It's here! Come and get it! This is the moment they have been waiting for. Messiah has come and the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been on the list of invitees for thousands of years. But they are now making excuses as to why they are declining the invitation. Some scholars think these excuses are related to the temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness or maybe the reasons Jesus said in another parable as to why only a few of the many scattered seeds grow to maturity:

- cares of this world

- deceitfulness of riches

- pleasures of life

Maybe. They certainly seem to cover all of the major things a person would be worried about: stuff/ livelihood, and relationships. Regardless, they have come up with a whole slew of excuses that, to God, seem every bit as weak and illegitimate as the ones in the parable.

“He doesn’t look like we thought he would. He’s not as violent as we’d hoped he’d be. He doesn’t fuel our isolation and elitism like we thought he would.”

(BTW, remember this is parable, a form of figurative speech. So when we read ‘None’ = hyperbole. Understand as hardly any.)

But the host, who put all this together at great cost to himself is undeterred, this house and this table **will** be full of guests.

First the servant is sent out to invite the people that wouldn’t be expected inside their society; the same ones that Jesus recommends the Pharisee invite to his dinner- not people who can repay you or make you look good; Tax collectors, the blind, the needy. But that wasn’t enough. He sends the servant back out to look for people outside of the city. This is hinting at the Gospel being opened up to not just to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles- to everyone!

This final image is a reflection of the heart of the master of the banquet. Above all, he is determined that his feast will be full, no matter what the social station or class or pedigree of the persons who come.

-Michael Card

“We see what Jesus is getting at in this parable, starting to be realized and explained clearly in Acts.

Acts:13:46-48 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

““I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.””

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

The host in the parable uses the word “compel.” This verse has been misused to justify and warrant the use of force in spreading the Kingdom of God. The Crusades and so many other national and even private spiritual abuses have happened under the canopy of “compelling” people to come to Jesus. Each one must make their own decision to accept or reject God’s invitation. No one can make it for anyone else. Fear and manipulation cannot and should not be used as a means of evangelism. We are however, to share the invitation with urgency.

2 Cor 5:14 says, “the **love** of Christ compels us.” If we truly know the goodness of the host we serve we will pull out all stops to make sure as many people as possible are at the banquet.

(Psalm 23: radawf. He is chasing people down to sit at the table with him)

Second level: we as Jesus followers, who profess to be remade in his image and are apprenticing under him, must recognize that the gospel demands that we be all in on the ways of Jesus. So this story informs not just who Jesus is for us, but also who Jesus is to be for others through us and what sort of movement we have signed up for. That is, this parable carries both invitation and obligation.

Christians, reading this anywhere in the world, must work out in their own churches and families what it would mean to celebrate God's kingdom so that the people at the bottom of the pile, at the end of the line, would find it to be good news. It isn't enough to say that we ourselves are the people dragged in from the country lanes, to our surprise, to enjoy God's party. That may be true; but party guests are then expected to become party hosts in their turn. -NT Wright

Influence our missiology, how we think about mission and the great commission and evangelism. How often do we relegate our evangelistic efforts to the people who will most benefit our churches? To people we like and consider to already be good people, we just wish they would come to church with us? We often approach outreach and evangelism with a very anti-biblical understanding of grace and aim the bulk of our energy at the people we think already deserve to be in the kingdom and have a place at the table.

What we see, not just in the case of these parables Jesus taught on this occasion, but even more so in all of the table events in Luke in which Jesus is eating with the poor, the sick, and the unrighteousness, is the fruition of the prayer Jesus taught us “Your kingdom come your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Pharisees have this conception of what the coming Kingdom of David’s descendent will look like. Political power. National economic prosperity. Vindication and retribution to enemies. But Jesus keeps redefining the idea of what the kingdom looks like. His Kingdom, his banquet is meant for everyone. No one will be left without an invitation.

Those first invited might not take up the invitation but others would, both Jew and Gentile. God's purpose may be resisted, but it cannot be overthrown.
-Leon Morris, Tyndale NT Commentaries

God's Kingdom will be filled, but it may not be with the people they or we expect.

Lk 14:25–35.

25 Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying,

**‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’
31 Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?
32 And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.
33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
34 “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? 35 It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”**

We don't know if this teaching directly followed the meal at the Pharisee's house or not. Jesus and his disciples could have been headed toward Jerusalem and masses of people who were also headed that way for Passover joined in with Jesus' following. Or if this teaching happened at another time, still late in his ministry because so many people had heard about him and were traveling with him. Luke groups these passages together because they speak to the same issue. Discipleship. The initial invitation to God's Kingdom (the banquet) is followed by another invitation to come join in and excuses come up; reasons to not stay following Jesus. The guests all said yes to the initial invitation and then later decided that the things of life were more attractive or important than the invitation to God's Kingdom. They were unwilling to surrender their stuff, their livelihood, and their relationships. Those are big heavy things to surrender to God; all of the most important things to us in this life. When Jesus presents the excuses of stuff, livelihood, and relationships they sound so flimsy and silly coming out of the mouths of the guests. It's laughable to think that they would put off the host of the banquet for them, but clearly they take up all of the room in our minds. As lighthearted and silly as the parable of the banquet sounds, the reality is if we are unwilling to choose Jesus over everything else then we are turning down the invitation to His Kingdom. Complete surrender is what we are invited to. The parable is presented as silly because if we could only see, taste, experience what we are being invited to the decision wouldn't be hard.

Jesus isn't even berating the guests for having a field (stuff), oxen (livelihood), or a wife (relationships). It is the fact that those things became an excuse to not participate in His Kingdom that is the problem. Discipleship looks like Jesus being your first loyalty.

Vs 26 Jesus starts with what seems like an impossible statement. We can't be his disciples unless we hate our families? This doesn't sound like Jesus does it? He taught us to love our enemies in Luke 6:27 so why would he tell us to hate the people closest to us?

This same language is used in other places in the Bible. Malachi 1 says, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." Genesis 29 talks about how Jacob loved Rachel and hated Leah. Deut 21 makes provision for situations where one wife is loved and the other is unloved and children could potentially be treated unfairly because of who their mother is.

This phrasing was a common Hebraic way of saying preferred or favorite. It was hyperbole. If I said, "I love mangos and I hate apples" in that culture I wouldn't be saying that I actually hate apples. I don't. But, compared to how much I really love mango my like for apples seems like hate. The phrasing is meant to put emphasis on how great the love for the one is not emphasis on disdain for the other. This is still a hard statement in a culture that holds family in the highest regard.

Regular teachers don't ask for this kind of allegiance. Only God can make this demand. So Jesus is saying that as his disciples, our love and devotion to Him need to be so great that we will choose him over all other relationships. He has our heart more than anyone else, even ourselves. We must be willing to suffer and even die if need be because our love for him takes top priority. This is a hard thing to wrap our heads around.



When we go to Jamaica we see dotted everywhere incomplete houses. You can tell that it is meant to be multi-storied and have many rooms and you can also tell that it's not fresh construction. It has been standing that way, maybe even lived in that way, unfinished for a very long time. Pastor Anthony told us that it is a common mistake that people may get an inheritance or a windfall of some money and instead of fixing up what they have or putting money aside to live on and make their current situation better they aim at something they would never have the money to complete. They start a huge building project and when they run out of money the construction stops and they are left in the same living situation they were in to begin with, but now have an unusable start of a house. This is what I think of when I hear this part of the parable about a person starting to build a tower without sitting down and first figuring out if they can afford to finish the project.



And what King would send his troops into war without a strategy, without considering his resources and the size of his enemy? If the numbers aren't in his favor he would send a delegation to negotiate a peace deal.

These two parables were given together to drive home a single point. Consider the cost and what Jesus asks of us in becoming his disciple.

**In the first parable Jesus says, “Sit down and reckon whether. You can afford to follow me.”
In the second he says, “Sit down and reckon whether you can afford to refuse my demands. -A.M. Hunter**

So what are these demands? What are the costs we are counting?

What is Jesus asking of us? Let's look at Luke 14:33 again.

Luke 14:33

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

We are called to total submission. The parables that Jesus uses could make us think that we need to take inventory that we have all of the materials, the guts, the discipline to keep on in our faith or that we have the strength to win our spiritual battles against temptation. But parables aren't meant to be dissected so that every part means something. Especially if there are two back to back. The common point is counting the cost; finishing what you started. What that looks like isn't found in each parable. Jesus tells us what that looks like when he sums up the parables. The cost that we are counting up isn't what we can muster up or do. It is what we are laying down. This loops back to the parable of the feast. No excuse of wealth, livelihood, or relationship is acceptable. We are to 'hate' everything else including our own lives in comparison to our love to Him. We are talking about a contest for our souls; for eternity. Without absolute surrender, finishing the contest is hopeless.

Christian discipleship isn't found in what we pick up, but in what we lay down.

This story of a banquet emphasizes the truth that men are saved, not by their own effort, but by responding to the invitation; if they are lost, however, it is by their own fault. It is tragically possible to reject the gracious invitation....

-Leon Morris, Tyndale NT Commentaries

The chapter is summed up with how great the loss is if excuses are made, the cost is not counted, and discipleship is empty. The idea of salt losing its flavor is foreign to us, but the salt that they used came from the Dead Sea and at that time it wasn't pure. It had other chemical compounds mixed in so it was possible for the sodium chloride, the salt part of the granule, to be leached off and the crystal looking substance that was left to have no flavor. It was completely worthless. If being a disciple means to pattern yourself after the person you have pledged yourself to, to listen to and obey all of their teachings then a person who decides to follow Jesus, but then is unwilling to give up everything for Him is just as useless a disciple as salt that isn't salty.

Luke

Acts



Conclusion

I urge you. I am compelled to make sure that you know you are invited into God's Kingdom; the greatest thing you will ever experience. I have found that the party happening on the inside is so much more exciting and valuable than all of the things some of you are standing holding on the outside. In the Kingdom of God there is healing, love, family, fulfillment, identity, peace, hope. This isn't just a fairy tale or a pick your favorite story genre situation. This is truth and there is no other. I want you to experience what I have experienced. If you would like to say 'yes' to the invitation I invite you to raise your hand.

Maybe you said 'yes' to the invitation at one time, but you have been feeling God tell you that there are other things in your life that you are more loyal to than Him. I want to warn you again, it is possible to miss out on God's Kingdom and reject the host of the banquet by choosing other things or people over Him. If you would like to confess that some of your priorities are off and you want Jesus to take his rightful place as first in your heart and life please raise your hand.

“It isn’t enough to say that we ourselves are the people dragged in from the country lanes, to our surprise, to enjoy God’s party. That may be true; but party guests are then expected to become party hosts in their turn.” -N.T. Wright

God has made his invitation; you are invited. But just as importantly you are invited to invite others. Will you do that? Will you go with urgency to invite others to the great banquet? Over the next few weeks the sermons will be over the Prodigal Son. This will be a great opportunity to invite family and friends that you know need to come home.