



Everyone's Invited, but Discipleship is Costly (September 15, 2022)

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:1-14) and Counting the Cost (Luke 14:28-33)

"It is extremely significant that this passage is addressed to large crowds. Jesus offered himself to all, but he also was honest from the very beginning of his preaching about what the journey would involve. What Jesus asks for is first place in one's heart. That is what successful discipleship requires." Darrell Bock, IVPNTC, Luke

Finding a Common Theme in This Week's Parables

This week we're studying a parable about a wedding banquet hosted by a king and a separate parable about building a tower and going to war. On the surface, these hardly seem to have anything in common. But as we dive into each parable, I hope we'll see a consistent theme emerge: God shows his **grace** by inviting everyone into his Kingdom, but he demonstrates his **righteousness** by requiring everyone to live up to a high standard of discipleship.

The first lesson about God's **grace** was an important one for the religious leaders of Jesus' day to hear. They assumed that they were the only people God truly approved of, based on their external acts of righteousness and their rigid commitment to the Law. When Jesus started talking about a King who invited *everyone* to his banquet—the good and the bad—he had these overconfident religious leaders in mind. He wanted them to hear that God was calling everyone into his Kingdom, no matter their background.

At the time same, Jesus did not want the pendulum to swing too far in the other direction. He didn't want to

convey or imply that God had eliminated all standards of holy living. Instead, in both parables he emphasizes the **high cost** of discipleship. Yes, everyone is invited, but they doesn't mean the journey is easy. Even though the king cast a wide net of who he invited into his home, he still expected the guests to act in a way that was worthy of the occasion. When someone was found to be treating the moment with contempt, they were promptly kicked out. Likewise, Jesus' parable about counting the cost before building a tower or going to war emphasizes the necessity of understanding what will be required of us as disciples before embarking on the journey of following Jesus.

Jesus didn't preach these parables in a vacuum. Instead, his stories are informed by God's relationship with Israel throughout the Old Testament. Specifically, God had such high hopes for Israel to be a light to the world, but they ended up turning away from him instead of towards him. Perhaps we should consider Israel's rejection of God and his prophets as the backdrop to these parables about being invited, making excuses, and counting the cost.



1. The Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:1-14)

“We often forget what an honor it is that God would offer relationship. We can get so accustomed to people begging us to follow God that we forget what a miracle it is that we are invited.” Francis Chan, Multiply.

1. Historical & Cultural Context.

- Banquet invitations / expectations for hosts and guests

2. Literary Setting.

- Jesus is speaking in Jerusalem during his final week before the cross (**Matthew 21:1-10**).
- This week is marked by mutual confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders:
 - Jesus clears the Temple (**21:12-16**)
 - Jesus curses a fig tree (**21:18-22**)
 - The chief priests and elders interrogate Jesus about his authority (**21:23-27**)
 - The parable of the two sons—The older son (Israel’s leaders) promised to do what the Father required, but never followed through. The younger son (ordinary sinners) said no to the Father, but ended up obeying anyway. (**21:28-32**) “Even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe”
 - Parable of the tenants (**21:33-46**) — The vineyard workers attack the owner’s servants and kill his son — who does that sound like? “They looked for a way to arrest him”
- **Subtext:** Israel’s rejection of God’s message in the Old Testament and their persecution of all the prophets he sent to guide them back to the right way of living.

3. The Main Point

- God is inviting everyone to his Kingdom, but we all have the free will to accept or reject the invitation. We just need to understand that our actions have consequences.

4. What Do We Learn About the Kingdom of God?

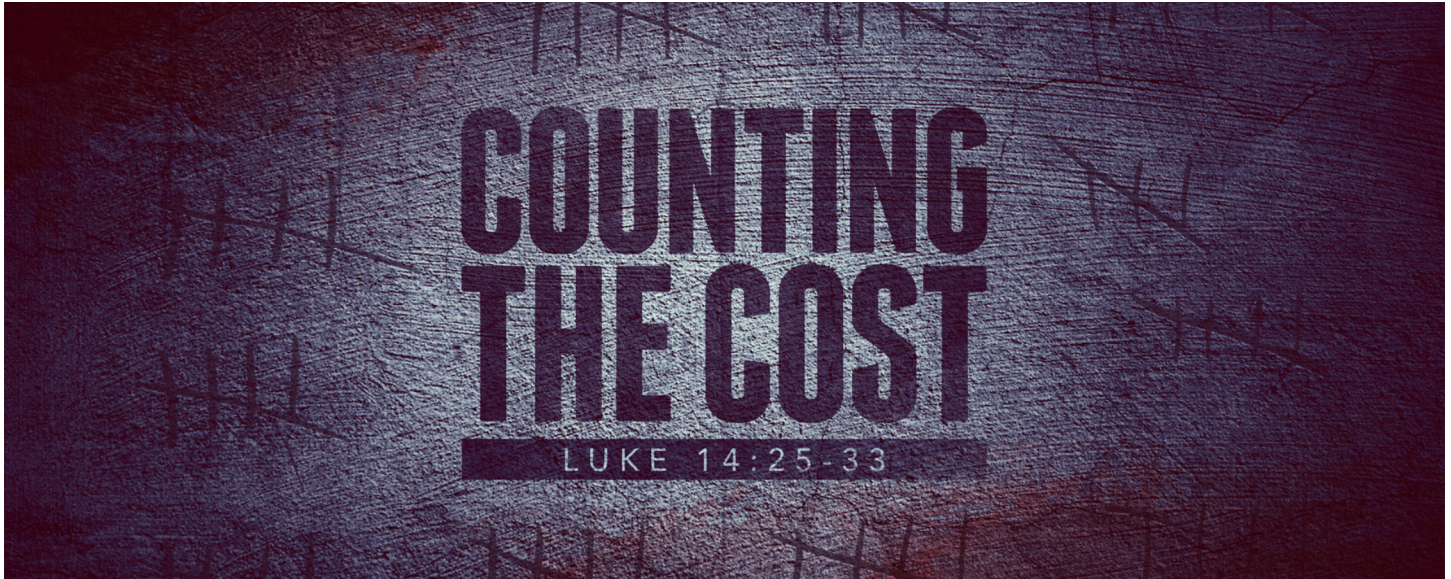
- God wants the banquet to be full, but he won’t force anyone to come.
- A wedding banquet for the Prince would be a joyous celebration with the best food and drink available.
- Everyone is invited, but we still need to accept the invitation and follow through appropriately. There’s still a dress code.
- God won’t lower his standards to make it easier to accept the invitation.
- Our actions have consequences

5. Individual Application

- Don’t make excuses... be ready to say YES!
- Don’t expect God to lower his standards for you
- The guests don’t decide who is worthy of an invitation, the host does. Don’t worry about who does or doesn’t belong at church.

6. Application for the Church —

- We shouldn’t play favorites by focusing exclusively on people we deem worthy.
- We might have special favor as God’s children, but that’s not a license to brush God off forever.



2. Counting the Cost (Luke 14:28-33)

“What is demanded of disciples, however, is that in the network of many localities in which all of us live, the claim of Christ and the gospel not only takes precedence, but in fact, redefines the others. This can and will necessarily involve some detaching, some turning away.” Fred Craddock, *Interpretation: Luke*, p. 182.

1. Historical & Cultural Context.

- “To hate” was a Semitic expression that meant to “turn away” or “detach” (Fred Craddock, *Interpretation: Luke*, 181-182)
- “‘Hate’ is used figuratively and suggests a priority of relationship.” Bock, 254.

2. Literary Setting.

- Speaking with large crowds of people who were following Jesus.
- Immediately after the parable of the great banquet in Luke 14:15-23.
- Immediately before the “Lost” parables of Luke 15 (coin, sheep, son).

3. Main Point.

- The cost of following Jesus is high: “In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.” (v. 33)

4. What Do We Learn About the Kingdom of God?

- God has high expectations for his followers and he wants us to carefully consider if we are ready to accept his invitation.
- While the cost of discipleship is high, “the cost of non-discipleship is far greater.”

5. Individual Application

- What is Jesus asking me to give up, that I am struggling to really let go of?
- In what ways am I making costly sacrifices for Jesus?
- What can I do in my inner life with God to prepare me to say “yes” to costly discipleship?

6. Application for the Church

- Be up-front and transparent about the cost of following Jesus.
- Resist the temptation to make following Jesus so attractive that we give people false expectations about what it requires.
- Strengthen and equip the congregation to be ready for difficult tasks.