

Passage

- We are continuing our series on the parables of Jesus this morning with a parable from Luke 14:15-24 - *The Parable of the Great Banquet*.
- There is a somewhat similar parable in Matthew 22:2–14 called *The Parable of the Wedding Banquet*, but that is not the one we are concentrating on this morning.
- Before we get to today's parable, let me give you an idea of the situation
 - Which is given in Luke 14:1:
[One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, ...](#)
- The dinner probably looked something like this picture.
- The Pharisees were one of the groups of religious leaders in Jesus' time.
- They were not quite sure about this Jesus fellow and what He was teaching.
- Some Pharisees acted hypocritically – that is as a pretender, their behavior didn't match what they said.
- In Jesus' time, honor was very important. It was an honor/shame culture. Where you sat at the table indicated how honored you were by the host.
- At this meal, Jesus observed (v. 7) how the guests picked where they sat at the table. They tried to sit at the places of honor at the table.
- Jesus spoke up and told them (vv. 7-11) that they should humble themselves and let the **host invite them** to a place of honor.
- Now we know the situation for today's parable. Starting with Luke 14:15:
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¹⁵When 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 (heaven)."

¹⁶Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷At 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.’ ”

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Parables

- As I said, our parable occurs just after Jesus taught at the dinner about being humble. In response, one of the guests proclaims:

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¹⁵ ... “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

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- This proclamation can be interpreted in a couple of different ways.
- The guest could be agreeing with Jesus but I think that the guest is saying
 - that everyone at this table, as good Pharisees, would of course get into heaven and be with God.
 - This was not being humble
- Either the guest didn’t get what Jesus was saying or was just trying to smooze up to everyone at this dinner party.
- Jesus responds to clarify what He meant with the parable that we just heard.

- A parable is a type of literature found in the bible among other places.
- They are quite simple and true to life but not about an actual event.
- They illustrate a point
- Jesus used parables a lot as a teaching tool.

Guest comment

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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.'

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- **[[pause]] so people can see what is on the screen [[/pause]]**
- In v. 16 it says that this was a "great" banquet. A big deal.
- The host would have previously sent out the invitations and gotten confirmations from all who said that they would come.
- The host had to do this because he was probably going to slaughter livestock. The host wanted to be certain that there was enough for everyone but not too much
- They didn't have accurate clocks like we have today, so on the day of the banquet, the host send word to the guests when the meal was ready.

Three refusals

- What did his guests say?

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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.'

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- As you just saw in the skit,
- the first says that he has bought a field and must go look at it.
- A lame excuse. If you buy land, you certainly go look at it before you buy it.
- Meals like this were evening affairs. It may have been already dark – how can you look at land in the dark!
- Lastly, since he has already said that he would come to the meal – it wasn't a surprise – this was just being rude.

- Technically he gave an excuse, in reality, the first guest didn't have an excuse.
- "Evangelist Billy Sunday defined an excuse as, 'the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie.'"¹

- I'm reminded of a rejection that I got when I was still single.
 - I asked a woman out on a date and her response was "I've got to paint my toenails that night."

- The second guest has a similar non-excuse.
 - Do you buy livestock without looking at them? No.
 - Can you properly look at them in the dark? No.
 - Is the dinner a surprise? No.

- The first and second guests are wealthy and likely important in the community. It takes money to buy land. An individual farmer doesn't need five yoke of oxen. Someone with large farm and many employees needs five yoke of oxen.

- The third guest's excuse has the echo of some substance. In Deut. 24:5, there is a one-year exemption from military duty if you are recently married.
 - ⁵ If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.
- However, it doesn't exempt you from dinner parties that you knew about and had said that you would attend.

- Getting married in that time was a long drawn out affair planned well in advance. It was no surprise.

- Another lame excuse.

- All three have given the host a skin of acceptance stuffed with a rejection.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Skillful* ("Be" Commentary Series; Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 87.

Host's reaction

- So, what happens?
- The host becomes angry, he has been insulted. The host tells the servant:

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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.’

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- Now the host invites people from the city.
- The host invites people from the lower classes.
- The host invites those who have no hope of every repaying the dinner invitation.
- In Jesus' time, being handicapped was not just a medical condition but was wrapped up in social stigma as well. They were looked down upon.
- The host invites people across social barriers.
- The host has an attentive and experienced servant.
- The servant had anticipated the host's desire and had already done what his Master wanted.
- And there was still room.

- The host expands the invitation list. He says:

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²³ ...'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.' "

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- Now the host is inviting people from outside of the city,
 - those on "the roads and country lanes."
- What types of folk are outside of the city walls? Maybe outcasts and non-Jews.
 - The Jews of Jesus' time had a clear sense of
 - us Jews versus those others-everyone else or Gentiles.
 - A good Jew would not eat with a Gentile.
- This was an extreme invitation. It goes not only across social barriers but across religious and ethnic barriers as well.
- Another part of the invitation is described in v. 23.
- It says to "compel people" to come.
- This doesn't mean that the servant should physically force people but rather to compel this by force of argument.

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- Jesus concludes the parable with the host proclaiming (v. 24):
'not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet'
- By filling every seat, there would be no room for one of those who refused to come, even if they change their mind.

The real message

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The Real Message:

- God: The Host of the banquet
- Jesus: The servant
- Us: Those invited to the meal
- Heaven: The banquet
- Gospel: Compelling argument

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- Jesus isn't talking about an ordinary meal here is He?
- Jesus is talking about an invitation to go to heaven.
- The Pharisees that Jesus was speaking to
 - thought that they were on the inside track and were guaranteed to be with God after they died.
- Jesus is telling us that **even if** we have an invitation from God,
 - we must still respond, say yes, and mean it!
- In this parable, it is pretty clear that:
 - God is the host
 - Jesus is His servant
 - we are the invited guests, and
 - the banquet is heaven.
 - I think that the Gospel is the compelling argument to come to the banquet

- The lesson of the parable is that we are **all invited** to heaven.
- We all get to sit at God's banquet table in heaven if we accept God's invitation.

- And Jesus, the servant in the parable, had invited the Jews to His dinner table.
- Jesus invited not only the rich religious elite but
 - also the **"the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame"**.

- During Jesus' life, He preached mostly to the Jews. After His death, Jesus sent His disciples outside of the boundaries of Israel and to **"the roads and country lanes"** of the world to invite the Gentiles to the banquet.
- This was demonstrated in Acts 13:46 –
 - When Apostle Paul and Barnabas arrived in the Greek city of Antioch of Pisidia, they first proclaimed the Gospel at the Jewish synagogue.
 - When some Jews began to heap abuse on them for their teaching, Paul and Barnabas responded:

 - ⁴⁶ ... **"We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.**

- As in the parable, some of the Jews had refused the invitation, but Acts records that the Gentiles were honored.

Compelling argument

- We have Jesus' compelling argument to come to the dinner table.
- It is called the Bible and through its words,
 - we are invited to faith in Jesus and to a seat at the table.
- We are tempted to make the same lame excuses as the dinner guests did.
- Theologian William Barclay notes that people's excuses in the parable do not differ so very much today.¹
- For example
 - I just bought a field.
 - This is like someone working so much that they have **little room** for anything else.
 - Are we so obsessed with what we have in the world that we have **no room** for God?
 - I just bought some oxen.
 - This is like a car collector—Jay Leno—for example who has just bought 5 antique cars that he wants to try out and has **no time** for anyone else?
 - Are we so immersed with our activities that we have **no time** for God?
 - I just got married.
 - Are we so caught up in our personal relationships that we don't tend to our **relationship with God**?
 - Are we too busy texting our friends or looking at Facebook that we **can't pray**?
- Our excuses are no different.

- Another lesson from the parable, is that to have a seat at God’s dinner table,
 - we do not need to be special on this earth.
- God’s invitation is open to everyone—rich or poor, healthy or ailing, insiders or outsiders.
- Some of you may think that somehow you aren’t worthy to accept the invitation.
 - My past is too bad.
 - I’m not good enough
 - I haven’t yet done enough
 - I’m not strong enough
- Let me ask you:
 - Were the people in ‘the streets and alleys of the town, the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ worthy enough?
 - No, but they were invited.
 - Were the outcasts on “the roads and country lanes” worthy enough?
 - No, but they were invited.
 - Were the foreigners, the Gentiles on “the roads and country lanes” worthy enough?
 - No, but they were invited.
 - Are we worthy enough for this invitation?
 - No, but through the **grace of God**, we are invited.
- **Jesus clears** away any barriers that we think are between us and God.
 - Our response to the invitation is to accept Jesus as our savior.

Reservations

- If you have already said “Yes” to Jesus,
 - there is place at the heavenly banquet table reserved for you.
- If you are uncertain if you have a reservation at God’s table,
 - you can fix that.
- To get a reservation does not depend upon me, or anyone else,
 - But only upon your acceptance of the invitation that was given by Jesus.
- It is there, sitting on the pew next to you, waiting for you.
- Don’t delay, the banquet is ready for you now.
- We have an invitation to the table. If you want to accept it for the first time, or even if you have already accepted Jesus into your heart,
 - please read with me this prayer from the Billy Graham Institute:

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Dear God,
I know I’m a sinner,
and I ask for your forgiveness.

I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son.

I believe that He died for my sin
and that you raised Him to life.

I want to trust Him as my Savior
and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward.

Guide my life and help me to do your will.

I pray this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

[Billy Graham Institute](http://www.billygraham.org)

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- That's it!
- If you sincerely meant what you have just said, Jesus will enter your heart and you will be a changed person.
- Not only will you have verbally said yes but your actions will change.
- No longer will you say empty words that claim you are a Christian, but you will act like a follower of Jesus.
- Your "yes" to Jesus' invitation will be stuffed with your commitment.

- By confessing our sin and proclaiming with our voice that Jesus is our Lord,
 - our sin has been forgiven.
- Through Jesus, there is no longer any barrier between us and God.
- We will see each other at God's banquet table in heaven.

- A heavenly banquet table is **not the only table** that we are invited to.
- In a few minutes we will be invited to the table of Jesus' last supper
 - which was first celebrated in the upper room.

Prayer

- Dear Jesus,
- Thank you for Your invitation
- Thank you for clearing away barriers so that we can respond "yes".
- We don't deserve the invitation,
 - but through grace of the Holy Spirit and through your sacrifice for us on the cross,
- We can say "yes", I'm coming to God's banquet, please show me my seat.
- Praise you Jesus.

Todd Misfeldt
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Luke 14:15-24 - The Parable of the Great Banquet
West Valley Presbyterian Church

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- Amen.

1 William Barclay, [*The Gospel of Luke*](#) (The New Daily Study Bible; Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 229.