

# Why People Need a Saviour But Say 'No'

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, we're going to discover in this text why people need a Savior and think about why people say no.

Luke 14, verse 1. One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body.

Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

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? And they had nothing to say. When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable.

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. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, give this person your seat.

[ 1 : 08 ] Then, humiliated, you'll have to take the least important place. 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'll be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. 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'll be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you'll be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you'll be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

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. Jesus replied, a certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.

At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who'd been invited, come, for everything is now ready. But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, I've just bought a field, and I must go and see it.

[ 2 : 20 ] Please excuse me. Another said, I've just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me. Still another said, I've just got married, so I can't come.

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.

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

I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet. Let's begin with the observation that the real Jesus often takes people by surprise.

I say the real Jesus because I was reminded this week, the English novelist G.K. Chesterton, the first time as an adult he came to read the Gospels, he had in mind what to expect.

[ 3 : 32 ] He was expecting gentle Jesus. He expected to encounter someone who was good, some kind of wise guru. But as he tells of his conversion, he wrote that he discovered here was a man, the Son of God, who was casting out demons, who was rebuking storms, someone who made a whip and drove people out of the temple who were spoiling it with false worship, one who was

confronting his enemies.

Everybody needs to know the real Jesus. Sometimes he surprises people. In our story today, we see something of the strength of character of Jesus.

We meet Jesus deep in enemy territory. On the surface, he's here having a nice meal, but we're told that his enemies are watching.

They are keen to lay a trap for Jesus. But in the heart of this, Jesus takes on their hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of their organized religion.

He exposes their double standards that they don't even adhere to the rules that they have set up. He targets their foolish, complacent pride.

[ 4 : 57 ] And again, it would be really easy to come to this kind of story and to love it. We love these kind of stories. You know, the stick it to the man kind of story, the little guy taking on the institution.

And we can say, here is Jesus taking on the Pharisees in organized religion. That was great. It's a great story for then. But what we need to do is to allow God's Word to speak to us, to let this meal become a mirror on us and on our hearts today and right now.

Because when we do that, we'll discover that Jesus will help us to answer some important personal questions. We're going to see why do we need a Savior.

Those first 14 verses, Jesus shows not just the problem in society in the first century, he reveals the ongoing problem in every human heart. And at the same time, he's giving pointers to why Jesus the Savior, why he's the better way.

But then following that with the story that he tells, we need to ask the question, why is it that so many people say no? No. Here is the picture of the kingdom of God. Here is Jesus inviting people to a feast to experience joy and generous grace.

[ 6 : 14 ] So we need to think, what lies behind the rejection, the tragedy of saying no? And as we do, we'll tie this to Advent and the two comings of Jesus that we need to think about.

But let's begin with this first question, why do we need a Savior? And we're going to look at these first 14 verses. Now, I imagine some of you at least will have favorite figures in fiction.

There are books and characters you love. For me, I love Hercule Poirot. And I love, I don't care how kind of often it happens. I love the climax of his stories, Agatha Christie's stories.

You have a whole room of suspects. And you have Poirot controlling the room. And the finger of suspicion points to each character until finally guilt is revealed.

Think about what's going on here. Jesus is sharing a meal. And we hear him talking to the whole room. So in verse 3, we hear him talking to the religious leaders.

[ 7 : 26 ] Then in verse 7, he talks to a fellow guest. And then in verse 12, he turns to speak to the host. So he's speaking to the whole room.

And he points out heart problems. He points out the problem, exposes the guilt that lies within.

In this religious gathering, among a group of self-righteous and self-confident people, people who would say, God will accept people like me, of course.

Jesus wants to burst that bubble. When people are applying the wrong standard, God will accept me because I'm living by my human rules, but they've ignored God's holy law.

God's holy law, feeling satisfied in themselves while they're comparing across society rather than comparing themselves against the holiness of God, which should humble them and make them realize why they need a Savior.

[ 8 : 29 ] So let's notice how Jesus diagnoses the problem, first of all, or diagnoses the problems. First thing he notices is a lack of mercy.

In those first six verses, it's obvious. There is a need of mercy. There's a suffering man who comes in, and he's suffering from this swelling, so his joints and his body is in pain.

The first thing Jesus does is he asks a question. We're surprised. Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? Maybe we're asking, why would he even ask that question? He asks that question because according to the religious leaders, they would say, actually, it is against the law.

This isn't a life and death situation, so let's not spoil the Sabbath by showing mercy. Come another day, suffering man. How different is Jesus?

He understands God's law. He understands God's heart. And he knows mercy belongs every day, and especially on a Sabbath. He also points out their double standards, doesn't he?

[ 9 : 37 ] In verse 5, he says, listen, you know, if your child falls into a well or even your animal, you show mercy. So why are you placing limits? That's one of the horrible things that legalism does.

It strangles mercy. But we need to understand that this isn't just a problem and an issue then. We still live in a world where there is a lack of mercy in society.

Maybe we think about the treatment of migrants. Maybe we think about the crimes of modern-day slavery. Maybe we look closer to home, to our own ability to turn a blind eye to suffering when we see it in our streets or neighbourhood.

When we restrict kindness only to my kind of people. Our world is still crying out for mercy, but where will mercy be found? So he diagnoses a lack of mercy.

The second thing he diagnoses is a lack of humility. Look at verses 7 to 11. There's a particular situation that's happening. So whenever there's a feast or whenever there's a wedding and you've got the table set, a U-shaped table, and the top of the U, that was where the most important people sat, they were rushing and people were fighting to get the best seat in the house.

[11:01] Something we see every year, maybe even just when you go down to Prince's Street, you know when the Boxing Day sales come on, it's every man for himself as the bargains come. But that's what we're seeing in the feasts of Jesus' day.

And Jesus sounds a warning. Just like gravity, what goes up must come down. He says, beware, you take the best seat in the house and someone worthy of more honour comes, you're going to end up at the bottom, humiliated.

Self-promotion and pride exposed by Jesus. And again, perhaps we don't need to look too far to see the mirror exposing our hearts too.

My needs and my interests come first. Perhaps it's the pressure of social media to show I am someone. And in this way of living, not just in Jesus' day, the weak will typically be those that get trampled on.

Those in power will typically be puffed up by pride. And we'll all be competing to satisfy personal happiness. A lack of humility leads to cruelty.

[12:20] And then there's the lack of generosity that Jesus also diagnoses and exposes. In the dinner party scene of the first century world, there was this understanding, well, if I invite you, you'll invite me back.

Here was a kind of generosity, but really it was self-serving. It was generosity of a kind, but with strings attached. I scratch your back, give you a nice meal.

You scratch mine, give me a meal in return. And the problem that Jesus reveals is that this mentality leaves no room for sacrificial generosity.

There was that need to leave behind the what's in it for me mentality. Recognizing that generosity needs to be costly, not merely cozy.

It's easy to love those who love us and who are like us. Jesus challenges us to go much further. And so Jesus comes to this feast, and he takes it as an opportunity to diagnose society and to diagnose hearts.

[13:40] And the problem is about a lack, our lack, of true mercy and humility and generosity. As we compare ourselves to God's perfect law, we're invited to recognize we don't reach God's perfect standard.

That if we are to enjoy acceptance, if we are to enjoy life in the kingdom of God, we don't look for ourselves for the answer. We recognize we stand in need of the Savior.

And that's why it's good news that Jesus has come as the solution, as the Old Testament so often pictures the promised King and Savior coming as the light of the world.

And light has that double function of exposing and dispelling darkness. Just think about how different Jesus is. Think about the mercy of Jesus.

Jesus. Everybody at that feast that day saw the need of the suffering man. But only Jesus, verse 4, took hold of the man and healed him.

[14:50] His enemies remained silent. Jesus didn't care what the others thought of him. He didn't care that they thought this was the wrong thing to do. He knew mercy matters.

He had come on a mission of mercy. He was going to the cross where he'd show mercy for needy and undeserving people like us by dying in our place and for our sins.

Think about the humility of Jesus. Compared to the people who are fighting for the best seat of the house, Jesus lives, verse 11, those who humble themselves will be exalted.

We've been thinking about the journey of Jesus towards Jerusalem, towards the cross, but we can think of the journey of his whole mission, leaving the eternal glory of heaven to enter the womb of

the virgin, to be born to live as the suffering servant, to live a life of perfect, loving obedience that would climax with him dying, to complete the plan of salvation for sinners on the cross. It's Philippians 2. Think about the generosity of Jesus. Luke's gospel, when you read it, is so full of Jesus showing care for the weak and the poor and the marginalized and the excluded.

[16:22] Jesus loves to show his generosity to surprising people because we're saved not by our merit. We're saved not because of who we are or our family background or our religious background.

We're saved by God's free and loving kindness to us in the Lord Jesus. And Jesus is so generous to us. When we put our faith in Jesus, simply because of his loving kindness, we have right standing before God.

We can be accepted. We can draw near. As a gift from Jesus, by trusting in him, we have forgiveness. We are free of guilt.

God will never be angry at our sin and place that anger on us because that anger was met by Jesus on the cross.

Jesus gives us the gift of eternal life. We get to know and enjoy life with God today with the promise of knowing and enjoying life with him forever.

[17:35] Simply by a gift that we receive by faith, we're brought into the family of God. So when we compare and contrast what's happening, it's almost like there's two feasts going on.

You know, we've seen the ugliness of legalism. We've seen hard hearts towards suffering. We've seen people fighting to be seen. We've seen a focus on kindness towards the people who can benefit us.

It's not a great picture, is it? It's not a great window onto society. It should stick in our throats in that sense. But then we have Jesus at the feast showing us a better way, a way of love, a way that satisfies.

That in his mercy is the answer to our spiritual need, ultimately dealing with our separation from our God because of our sin. In his humility, we have a king, but a king who serves, who will suffer and die, who will be exalted on a cross so that by his grace, we might be exalted to glory.

And in his generosity, the entry to the feast of God is opened up. A world of eternal joy for us to experience future resurrection life.

[19:09] And so at this feast, and as we think about why do we need a savior, we're invited to see that Jesus holds out the promise of a better world. It's an invitation to use our imagination for a moment.

Imagine a world. Imagine a kingdom. Imagine a community like this where the unimportant are really valued.

Where sacrificial kindness was extended. Where people really believed that the way up is by going down. That we practiced genuine humility, glad to serve others.

Where hospitality became an expression of God's grace and kindness to us. What a wonderful society that would be.

How attractive that would be. And you know, the church, we as the people of God, we're called to this life. We're called to be the light of the world, attracting others to Jesus, the light of the world.

[20:18] We are called to bless others as we have been blessed. To give people a window into the hope and the joy that Jesus himself offers.

It's our calling as we follow the way of our savior with the help of the spirit. As we wait for his return to set up this kingdom and this kingdom that will never end.

So he shows us why we need a savior. Because the problem in our hearts and he presents himself as the answer. Are we trusting in Jesus and his salvation?

We turn from sin to place our hope in him. Takes us to our second question. Why do people say no?

This is from verse 15 onwards. Again, notice that Jesus uses his setting. He's at a meal, so he tells a parable about a feast. There's a statement in verse 15, blessed is the one who'll eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.

[21:25] And he takes that and he makes the parable about that, but he also wants to challenge everyone who's listening. If you think there really is blessing to be found in God's kingdom, are you part of God's kingdom?

Have you received his grace? Have you received his savior? So let's get into our parable together. And maybe to help us, let's get into the first century world just for a moment.

So this is a story of a feast and of invitations. Now we know when we get an invitation, maybe we'll get it through the post and it will say, here's the date, here's the time, be there, RSVP.

They didn't have clocks in the first century. Timing worked a bit different. So there was in the sense a double invitation. Servants would be sent. In a few days' time, there's going to be a great banquet. Do you want to come? If you say yes, there'll be a second invitation. The servants would then go again and say, now the banquet's ready. Now's the time to come on over. So that's what's happening here in our parable.

[ 22 : 28 ] We also need to get into the first century mindset. Some of us, this is easier than others depending on our culture. Because remember, this is an honor and shame society.

And in an honor and shame society, it's a terrible thing. It's an awful thing to cause someone to lose faith. To dishonor someone and to do that publicly.

And that's exactly what we see from the folks who say no to the invitation. So there's a real power in Jesus' parable here. First, there's a wonderful invitation that's given.

Look at verse 16. A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. Okay, so it's an elaborate, wonderful feast, great provision.

And it's a very generous host. Many people are invited. And actually, Jesus will show just how generous he is that when the first people say no, he is determined to fill his house with people who will say yes.

[ 23 : 32 ] Yes. But the other power of the story is to recognize the shock when the guests say no. And they make these really lame, false excuses.

Nobody buys a field without checking to see if it's usable. Nobody buys oxen for farm work without checking to see if those animals will be good for the job that they were called to.

And just because a person gets married doesn't mean you say no to all your pre-existing arrangements. They're shaming their host. And at the same time, they're missing out on the feast. Let's hope that goes away. There we go. So we've got a double shot going on. The first is, why in the world would anyone say no? Why would anyone say no to a feast?

And remember, this is a parable about the kingdom. Why would anyone say no to King Jesus and his love and salvation? Why would anyone say no to belonging to God, to receiving his grace and kindness, to a feast of joy that lasts forever?

[ 24 : 53 ] It seems so shocking. But the second shock is when we see just how determined this man is to welcome people into the feast.

Think about that in verse 21. The servants come back and say, oh, these guys have made their excuses. The owner of the house became angry and ordered the servant. And we might expect ordered a servant to, you know, shut the thing down, quickly into the streets and alleys, bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, invite the lowest and the least.

It's like in verse 13, because this is God's feast, because this is grace. This is God loving to save and to welcome unexpected, undeserving people.

And then in verse 23, when it's discovered that there's still room at the feast, go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in so that my house will be full. People are just walking on by, strangers who don't even know the person that's running the feast, who need to be persuaded, who think this seems too good to be true.

Compel them to come in. I want people to share my joy. Here's a picture of the generous, joyful heart of God who loves to save people and welcome them into his kingdom.

[ 26 : 15 ] The kingdom of God will be a full house, will be feasting. But while some people share the joy, some will be outside, because they rejected God's king and savior.

They dishonored God by saying no to his offer of salvation. And we need to think about why would that be the case? Why would anyone do that?

Let's think about worth and wonder for a few moments. Let's think about worth, for example. I think one reason why people might say no is that people don't see Jesus as worth following, worth living for.

Maybe you're here today and you're not a Christian and you're not sure what's the fuss about Jesus. Other things seem much more compelling. Jesus in Matthew 6, verse 33 said, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Think about the excuses that were given. There was one person saying, my stuff comes first. My work comes first. My relationship in this moment, it has greater worth to me than the invitation that you gave to me.

[ 27 : 36 ] This is my treasure. So I'm rejecting your offer. Thanks very much. And that's something that we're doing all the time. We assign value ratings to things.

I think this is really valuable. I'm not so bothered about this. One man's trash is another man's treasure. We're always looking for something to find our hope, our security, and our joy in. And the value that we place determines our behavior, determines our dreams. And Jesus in this story warns us against finding all our worth and value in what is small and what is temporary so that we would ignore the invitation to the feast.

Because remember, that feast isn't just a one-time party. This is about the kingdom of God. This is about eternal life of being with God in His perfect world forever. Because Jesus knows that worth is connected to worship.

What we value most is what we choose to worship, what we build our life, our security, our hopes and dreams on. And so Jesus in this story is saying, don't choose created things, the property, the job, family, good things, they're not God things.

[ 28 : 56 ] Don't choose those over God's invitation to salvation through faith in Jesus. Because Jesus wants us to be part of this feast, to hear this invitation and to respond positively so that we would know living hope and joy, that we would enjoy life with our God.

people say no sometimes because they don't see the worth. Another reason people say no maybe connects to the sense of wonder, where we either miss or we lose a sense of the wonder of who Jesus is and why Jesus came.

Perhaps there's especially a problem if we've been around the church or in a religious community. Maybe you know the saying, familiarity breeds contempt. You know, we live in one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

People will travel from all over and we'll take photos of everything and we'll get in our way for the next wonderful scene. But if we've lived here for a while, I imagine we take it for granted.

These are our streets. This is where we live. The view that blew us away once upon a time after a few days, it fades. It's okay when it comes to a city.

[ 30 : 19 ] But it's awful when it comes to God and His good news. It's like the people in the parable saying, wow, to a new ox. Oh, I'm so excited about my new field. But I'm saying no to God and His invitation to joy.

I want to say, wow, to a new device or the next big thing and say whatever. to the coming of God's Son into the world. We don't want to miss the heart-stopping wonder of the journey of Jesus. Because what we have here is a reminder. Remember, who is Jesus? He is the eternal Son of God. Created all things.

And now He's walking in this world that He created. And as He walks and as He works, the power of God is breaking in every miracle, a signpost to what the kingdom of God is like.

A place free of suffering and sin and despair. And Jesus is on a journey. He is the sinless Savior. But He's going to walk to a cross to take the place of sinners.

[ 31 : 34 ] He is going to experience the anger of God that we should know. He is going to face on the cross that sense of separation from God that we should know for all eternity.

He is going to take our punishment in dying to forgive sins on the cross. And He does it gladly to complete the Father's plan.

But then three days later, that same glorious Lord will rise on the third day in victory over the forces that hold us prisoner.

Our fear of death. Jesus defeats death. Our sin that brings guilt that separates us from God. Jesus defeats sin. Light defeats darkness.

And from there, Jesus will then ascend to take the throne of heaven where He sits and He rules and He reigns and He's establishing and maintaining His church.

[ 32 : 31 ] But one day He's going to come back again. And everyone's going to see Him. And He's going to establish the new heaven and the new earth. The world that we all want will be ours to enjoy if we trust in Him as the Savior that we need.

We have a great opportunity in this season of thinking about the first coming and the second coming of Jesus, of celebrating as we wait for His return.

And we have in this story an invitation to discover the wonder of Jesus, to worship Jesus, to treasure Him above all.

As He says to us, listen, the feast is ready. He has done everything by way of preparation. He's been born, He's lived a perfect life, He's died, He's risen, He's ascended, He's sent the Spirit.

And He invites each one of us today, come to the feast, come into the kingdom, come to Him as Savior, turn from sin and trust in Him because He is the Savior we all need.

[ 33 : 43 ] And He would say to us, please don't say no. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank You again for another picture that Jesus gives of the kingdom in His life and ministry.

We thank You so much for His mercy, for His humble service, for His generous grace. We thank You for the picture of the kingdom of God as a feast to enjoy.

Thank You for that picture of Your generosity of inviting the lowest and the least, the weak and the poor, inviting people like us. Lord, we pray that we wouldn't be those who say no, who make excuses, who find other things more worthy of our attention than the Lord Jesus.

But rather, we would joyfully, in amazement, take our seats, take our places. Lord, help us all to respond, to be turning from sin, to be turning from those other things that we look to for satisfaction, to trust in Jesus, to live with faith and to live with joy as we anticipate His return and His kingdom to come.

Amen. Now, let's close our time together singing the hymn, Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery.

[ 35 : 13 ] And the words are up on our screens and we can stand together to sing. come behold the wondrous mystery in the dawning of the King.

Come Behold the wondrous mystery in the dawning of the King, be the theme of heaven's praises robed in frail humanity.

In our longing, in our darkness, now the light of life has come.

Look to Christ who condescended, took on flesh to ransom us.

come behold the wondrous mystery, he the perfect Son of Man.

[ 36 : 36 ] in his living, in his suffering, never trace nor stain of sin. See the true and better Adam come to save the hell-bound man, Christ the great and sure fulfillment of the law, in him we stand.

Come behold the wondrous mystery, Christ the Lord upon the tree. In the stead of ruined sinners, hangs the Lamb in victory.

See the price of our redemption, see the Father's plan unfold, bringing many sons to glory, grace unmeasured, love untold.

Come behold the wondrous mystery, slain by death, the God of life. But no grave could e'er restrain him.

Praise the Lord, he is alive. What a foretaste of deliverance, how unwavering our hope, Christ in power resurrected, as we will be.

[ 38 : 42 ] Amen. Amen.