

The Invitation of a Lifetime

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[0:00] Read down through verse 24 where the Bible says this, The first one said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go see it.

I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and go to prove them. I pray thee, have me excused. Verse 20, And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

I don't know why that verse makes me chuckle every time. You get married, you just can't do anything anymore, apparently. Verse 21, Jesus is giving an invitation, really, to this group of men at the table who thought they were in, who thought they were a shoo-in for the kingdom of God, and yet they're outsiders.

And Jesus wants everybody to understand that this is the invitation of a lifetime. This is not one of those where you say, well, I'm busy, and I'm going to have to, maybe next time. Listen, there's no rain check when it comes to eternity.

There's no next time. And so Jesus makes it very clear that all are invited, but the question we have to answer is, have we accepted the invitation? So let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask him to help us this morning.

[2:12] Father, thank you for this time. Thank you for the songs that have reminded us of how good you are to us. Lord, I pray you would help us, even in this sermon, to fix our eyes on you. And that we would be able to look at you and to understand the truth of your word here this morning.

I pray that you would just use it to speak to hearts, Lord, to encourage, to challenge, to convict. Lord, I pray if there is somebody here that does not know you as their Savior, Lord, that today would be that day.

Lord, I pray you would be with me, that you would just clear my mind and my thoughts, that they would be only what you would have, that my words would be a help to the people here this morning. Lord, would you cleanse me of self, empty me of sin.

Lord, fill me with your Spirit. Lord, I need you, and Lord, we all need you right now. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Thank you for standing. May be seated. I mean, I'm sure all of us in here have received an invitation at some point that we were genuinely excited to be a part of.

Somebody said, hey, you want to go here? You want to do this? I mean, we just jump at the fact. I mean, maybe it's a wedding. Generally, I've said this before, I go to weddings for cake. So if I know there's going to be good food, it's like, what's on the menu?

[3:18] Then I may be excited about it. It may be a special event, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In 2015, somebody called me, and they said, hey, would you like to go to the Masters Golf Tournament?

Let me check my calendar. Listen, if I was getting married that day, I still would have went to the Masters. I mean, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I wouldn't want to miss. Listen, I think we've all received something like that.

We couldn't just wait to accept it. And then maybe when you're little, too. It seems like when you're little and you know something's coming, it's years away. You know, that's why we don't tell our kids, well, especially Maddie, we don't tell her when we're going somewhere.

Because as soon as we tell her, every day she's going to ask, is it today? And it could be six months from now. But here's the idea. She's excited about it. Now, I'm sure we've also received an invitation that you were super excited to decline.

Sometimes we get stuff in the mail. I look at my wife like, do we have to go to this? Like, do they really need me there? Like, why don't you just go and represent our family? Because that does not sound fun to me.

[4:19] And really, sometimes it's because maybe something else seems more important. Maybe we had something we wanted to do that day and now this is conflicting with it. Like, man, I didn't want to go and be a part of that.

And as we come to our text today here in Luke chapter number 14, Jesus gives a parable. He gives this story about an invitation that's being sent out. And it's not just a normal invitation for just a small meal.

No, he makes it very clear in the opening verses that this is a great banquet. I mean, this is a feast that would be so significant that nobody in their right mind would want to miss it.

And yet we read that that's exactly what happens. The invitation has been sent out. The meal has been prepared. Everything is ready. And yet the people who are invited begin to make excuse after excuse after excuse.

And through this parable, Jesus is going to help us answer a very important question. Why do so many people miss the kingdom of God? Why do so many people reject the invitation that Jesus has given?

[5:25] Because he's given it multiple times here in Luke chapter 13 and Luke chapter number 14. Now, before we really jump into the parable, this is really a continuation of the sermon that we looked at last week.

And we kind of need to have some context to make sure that we understand what's going on. Jesus is here in the first 14 verses. Jesus was invited to a dinner. He was invited to a dinner at a chief Pharisee's house in verse number one.

And it seems like a good invitation, but it was not sincere. It was a complete setup from the beginning. The Pharisees did not like Jesus. They were looking for opportunities to trap him.

And not only was he invited, but they invited him on the Sabbath day. Not because they wanted him to have a good meal, because they were putting him in a situation where he would violate the law of the Sabbath.

So what they did, and you see in verse number two, that there was a man which had the dropsy. He would have been edema. He would have been swollen probably. It would have been very obvious this man was sick.

[6:24] And they knew Jesus loved people. And he would have seen this man. He would have had compassion on him. And he would have healed him on the Sabbath. And boom, they nail him right there. They trap him.

They have him exactly where they want him. But Jesus obviously knew what was taking place. He asked the question there in verse number three. Hey guys, I got a question. Is it lawful to do good to heal on the Sabbath day?

Who's going to say no to that? Because he understood and they understood the truth. But they were so worried about the law and the rigidity of it that they didn't care and have compassion for people.

Well, they didn't have an answer. So what Jesus does is he heals the man, exposes their hypocrisy, and really gives a master class on what it looks like to live for the kingdom. See, because they thought they were in.

But he's reminding them, listen, that's not how people in the kingdom live. They were all about exalting themselves. When they would show up to the feast, they would find the best room, the highest seat, the most prominent position, and they would take that.

[7:25] But Jesus reminds us in verse 11, For whoso exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. And so he's kind of, Jesus has put a damper on the crowd.

I mean, on this dinner party, it's kind of like real dreary right now. By the time we come to our text in verse number 15, this dinner party is hanging on by a thread. You ever been in a situation like this? Maybe it wasn't obviously like this, but you were maybe in trouble growing up. You know, when I was in trouble growing up, dinner wasn't an exciting thing. I was so interested in the food on my plate, and I just, that's kind of how I picture this dinner.

They were just staring down. Everybody was so fascinated with the food, nobody wanted to make eye contact. I mean, because Jesus is just, every time they try to say something or don't say something, Jesus just kind of just lets them have it.

Because they were missing the point. He wasn't, he wasn't trying to bury them. No, he's going after their soul. Because he wants them in the kingdom. But, but they're there, and nobody dared ask

another question.

[8:29] I mean, nobody wanted to become the next sermon illustration. That's kind of what's taking place here. But there's always one person that's going to stand up and say something. You know, you need to have somebody that's just going to break the silence.

And, I mean, Peter was the disciple that did that. And we come to verse number 15, and in an attempt to try to get the crowd moving and get the dinner party rolling again, this man stands up and says, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

I mean, that sounds good. I mean, who, what would Jesus disagree with that? Because on the surface, it seems spiritual. And that sounds like a spiritual thing to say.

It seems encouraging. It sounds like something you might hear in church. Like, hey, blessed be God that we're going to all be together one day. What a day that will be in heaven. And then there's a great thought behind that.

But here's the problem. This man wasn't expressing humility. He was expressing confidence in himself. And the men that were gathered around this table, these Pharisees, these religious establishments, establishment, he assumed his seat in the kingdom of God was already reserved.

[9:36] Here's what he's really saying. Hey, Jesus, we all know people like us, people around this table right now, we're going to be eating that feast with you one day. I'm glad I'm going to be there, am I right?

That's kind of what he's saying. He's looking for some confirmation. But his confidence was placed in the wrong things. And because Jesus loved these men too much, because he cared for their soul, he cared for their eternity, he wasn't just going to leave them in that misplaced confidence. And so what he does here in the rest of the text that we read is he gives this parable. It's a story that has a heavenly meaning and it has a theological depth to it, but it's something they would understand.

It's a great illustration. And so as we walk through this text, we're going to see this idea that God's invitation to salvation is freely offered. It's offered to everyone.

But yet so many miss the kingdom because they value other things more than they value Christ. And that was the problem with the men around the table. They value their appearances.

[10:44] They value their position, their influence, their wealth, their religion. They valued all of these things more than Christ. So as we move through this text, we'll ask this question.

What keeps people from entering God's kingdom? What keeps people from entering God's kingdom? The first thing I think Jesus wants us to see is found in verse number 16 and 17.

We see the danger of presuming on the invitation. The danger of presuming on the invitation. I think we can see very quickly in verse 16 and 17 that we mentioned already this is no ordinary meal.

This is not just, hey, find something. You know, Sunday nights at my house, it's like, what are we having? Whatever you can find. Anybody else operate that way too? It's just like, well, there's nothing. Make something. Figure it out.

I mean, cereal is my go-to. It's very easy to make. And that's not what this is. This is a magnificent banquet. This feast right here, and they're kind of sitting there.

[11:42] I mean, you kind of see the picture of what Jesus is doing. These feasts, this one that Jesus would have been invited to, it was a social event of the year. I mean, TMZ would have been here. Who's who is going to be in this dinner party?

And they're like, oh, so-and-so Pharisee's here. Oh, man, look at this new outfit that he's wearing. I mean, they wanted to be at these events to be seen. And you would not miss it. And the invitation would have come out, and they would have said, man, I can't miss this.

I mean, my reputation's riding on this party. I need to be there. I need people to let them know how awesome that I am. We may read over a little bit, but in these first couple verses, there's an important cultural detail that really helps us understand what Jesus is saying.

Because in the ancient world, formal banquets would have involved two invitations. So there would have been the initial invitation sent out to the guests informing them that they were invited.

We kind of do this today when somebody's getting married. We send out a save the date. And then you leave it on your fridge, and you forget to save the date, and you're like, oh, man. You know, one of those things. That's kind of what it would have been.

[12:47] It would have been a save the date. And understandable in these days, the complexity of putting a party together like this, the amount of food that would have been there. There wasn't a

Walmart. They couldn't door dash it to them.

I mean, it would have taken some serious moving around to figure it all out. And so what would happen is they would send this invitation out, and then those invited would essentially RSVP in advance.

They'd say, okay, yeah, we're going to be there. But the thing is, is many times the date wasn't on there. Because they didn't know. It's kind of whenever they could get the food. Whenever they could get it all together. But they wanted to know this.

Just be ready. The feast is coming. Hey, I want you to know, and you're going to get another invitation, and you'll be ready to go. And that's the second invitation. That when everything was finally ready, a second invite would be sent out to those that had already accepted the invitation. So that's what we see there in verse 16, that a great supper had been made, and he bade many. So that's the first one. And then he sent his servant at supper time saying, hey, it's ready. Come. So that's what's taking place.

[13:52] That there in verse number 17, the meal's prepared. The table is set. The food is ready. The feast is waiting. The only thing left is for the guests to come. It's for them to show up.

So when they come here in verse number 18, we're going to see this. That they are not rejecting an unexpected invitation. It wasn't like, whoa, we weren't ready for this. We weren't prepared.

No, they are rejecting an invitation they had already said they would be there for. That the meal would already be prepared. And now at the moment of fulfillment, they say, hey, sorry, can't make it anymore.

Last minute changes. You think, what is Jesus doing here? He's painting a picture that these men especially sitting around this table would have understood very, very clearly.

Because you go back to the Old Testament and you realize this, that Israel had received the first invitation. That the Jews were God's chosen people. And when he called Abraham out of the earth, the Chaldees, and he had set all this up.

[14:52] And for centuries, God had spoken through the prophets. He had spoken through men like Abraham and Moses and David and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel. And the list goes on and on and on. And here's what they said.

There's a Messiah coming. There's a Savior coming. And he's going to pay the payment that it wasn't always supposed to be the law and the tabernacle and the sacrifices. No, there's coming a day that there's going to be a perfect lamb.

And he's going to lay his life down for all Israel. They knew that was coming. They were looking for it. And generation after generation, they had anticipated the coming of the kingdom.

I mean, we've seen it already with the disciples. They kept saying, Lord, Lord, is your kingdom coming now? I mean, they knew something was about to happen. For generation after generation, they had claimed they were waiting for the Messiah.

And now the Messiah is sitting at their table. The feast is ready. The invitation is being extended. And they said, well, this isn't really the Messiah we were looking for.

[15:51] We got big problems like Rome. We got bigger problems. We need to do some things around here. We don't like this Messiah. He doesn't pat us on the back. That's what the religious group thought they were when Jesus showed up and said, man, y'all are doing such a great job.

Man, why don't y'all just keep just burying these people in laws? Man, it's really working for you. No, Jesus came to free them from that, to give them a relationship. And I just want to remind us what these couple verses mean for us today.

Because, yes, we're not Israel. But it does reveal some things about God. That God is not reluctant to save people. Salvation is not a new concept. No, no.

God is not hiding salvation from anyone. It's been that way from the beginning. That He has desired to redeem His people. To bring them back into relationship.

Since the Garden of Eden. God has always been on this pursuit after sinners. And God is not waiting for sinners to somehow stumble in to find Him. No, He is pursuing them.

[16:49] And He is offering the invitation. The entire Bible is a story about a God who initiates. I know we say it, and I've said it too, that, oh, we found God. No, no. Here's the reality.

God found us. He found us in the pit. He found us in the mud and the clay. And we had no hope. And it's a God. The Bible is about a God who seeks and calls and invites. Long before any of us ever thought about God, He was already reaching towards us.

The Bible says that there was a lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. Even before Adam and Eve sinned, God knew this. He's coming for us. Talk about how much God loves you. Just get a hold of that truth for just a second.

And salvation was prepared before we ever came looking for it. I mean, think about the gospel. Jesus lived a life we could never live.

He died a death that we all deserved. And He rose victorious over sin and death. And because all of that is true, the message of the gospel is not work harder.

[17:51] Here's the message of the gospel. Come. It's paid for. It's done. It's finished. The message of the gospel is that all are invited. And maybe there's some here this morning who have convinced themselves that God would never want them.

Friend, I just want to remind you, the invitation that Jesus gives proves otherwise. He's willing to extend it to anybody. We're going to see that as we move through this text. That it wasn't reserved just for the religious Jews.

No. For God so loved the world. That's the heart of the message. God's heart is revealed just by this invitation. The invitation was gracious.

The feast was ready. Everything had been prepared. And the master is just waiting for the guests to come. But that's where the story kind of takes an unexpected turn. Instead of gratitude.

Instead of excitement about the invitation. And instead of anticipation for the coming feast. The excuses begin to roll in. And we see this, number two. We see the danger of misplaced priorities.

[18:58] The danger of misplaced priorities. Look at that first part of verse 18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse.

These were people that had received the first invitation saying, Hey, there's a feast coming. There's a Messiah coming. They said, We're on board for that. Hey, you just, we're ready. When he shows up, we're going to accept him.

But we see the excuse comes. The first says, I have bought a piece of ground. And I must needs go and see it. And I pray thee, have me excuse. Now let's be honest.

Who buys property without looking at it? I guess maybe really rich people are like, Oh yeah, we'll buy it. We'll figure it out later. Normal people, when they're going to make an extensive purchase, they're going to go look at it.

They're going to look at it multiple times. They're going to figure it out. They're going to survey the situation. Here's the thought. The issue isn't the land. No, it's that he values the land more than he values the banquet.

[20:00] This maybe would have been his business. It would have been certain things in his life. And he said, Well, you know, this is my priority right now. And listen, God's not against working. He's not against business. He's not about getting land and a property maybe to live on or whatever it may be.

But it's not the most important thing. But that, it was to him. He said, Listen, I know it's going to be the feast of a lifetime. But I bought some land. I really need to check it out. Just let me go do that. Verse 19, we see the second excuse come in. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen and go to prove them. I pray thee, hath me excused? I mean, this would have represented some considerable wealth.

This man apparently had spent a significant amount of money, and now he claims he has to inspect him. Kind of like the people buying the land. What are you doing, man? Like, I think you're doing this backwards. Like, you're supposed to look at it and then make a bargain with him and try to buy it.

No, but he buys this and buys this expensive livestock. And really, it's the same thing. He's valuing something more than the banquet. The banquet sounded really good when he didn't have the livestock.

[20:59] But now he's got other things that take up his time. He's got some other things that fill up his calendar. And then the third man there in verse number 20, we already read it. And another said, I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come.

I mean, this man, he just believed marriage exempted him from anything. And the issue wasn't his wife. That's not where we're going with this. The issue is not marriage. Marriage. The issue is not the relationship.

I mean, God designed marriage. He instituted it. But his affections were elsewhere. Maybe he thought he was doing the good biblical thing and he's going back to Deuteronomy where they could exempt.

But that was from military service. That wasn't from going to a dinner party. He's saying, well, you know, I'm just going to follow the Bible and I can't do anything for the first year. That's not what is going on here. But I think we see a pattern.

Different excuses, same heart. Different priorities, same problem. All of these people here in this story Jesus is telling, they all valued something more than the banquet.

[22:01] And the tragedy is not that they chose bad things. It's not that they were living in just awful, wicked sin. No, the tragedy is they chose good things over the best thing. Yes, they had to take care of their family.

They had to make sure their business was real. They had to make sure their livestock, which would have been their livelihood. They had to take care of their family. These are good things. But sometimes good things replace the best thing.

And our priorities get out of line. No, we're to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength. That's the first and great commandment. Great commandment. But a lot of times in our life we know that commandment, but certain priorities get above that.

And then life gets out of whack. And that's what's taking place here. And I think we can still see that in our world today. Because very few people just openly say, I don't want anything to do with God. No, they understand maybe the importance of it. They understand that there's probably some things and we'll go to church when it's convenient. But many people, here's what they do. They just simply value something else more than God.

[23:04] It might be a career. It might be possessions. We see it here in the text. It could be relationships. It could be hobbies. It could be dreams. None of those things are necessarily sinful.

But are they the best thing? Because many of these things, you know who gives that? God. God will give us the things. He wants to bless his children. But what he wants more than that is he wants our heart.

He wants us to put him as the priority. Maybe you've said it. I've said it before in certain areas when God is maybe laying something in my heart. I'll do that later.

I mean, that's what husbands do say. My wife's back there, so don't tell her this. She'll say, hey, we need to do this. I'll do that later. I don't mean it. And I'm wrong for that.

And she knows that. And she just looks at me like this. You know, where they shoot lasers out of their eyes. One of those kind of situations. I'll say, you know, maybe I've said this when I was a teenager. When I get older. I'll get more serious about things when I get older.

[24:06] Listen, we're going to youth camp. And I already asked you to pray for our teenagers. And I want you to be serious about it. You don't have to wait until you're older to serve the Lord. Hey, today's the day. We don't have to wait until you're...

Life's never going to slow down. The time is now to serve the Lord. Hey, when life settles down, when I'm ready, when all these things... We have all of these excuses. That's what's taking place here. And some of the excuses, they seem valid.

But they're not. Because we're just saying this. Lord, I love you. But I do value something more than you. I'm going to put this in front of you. And one of the greatest dangers in life is not just open rebellion to God.

But misplaced priorities. Because we begin to deceive ourselves. And think, well, I'm in church. And I'm doing some things. But maybe God is laying something on your heart. And it's not hatred towards God.

It's just continually putting something just a little bit ahead of God. That's what's taking place here in this text. And at this point, the listeners, they're thinking, is this story going to end?

[25:05] I mean, they've been through the ringer. And maybe they expected it to. Hey, the invitation was given. People refused. So here's what you do. You cancel the feast. That would make more sense.

If nobody's going to show up to the party, then just cancel it. You know, cancel the catering or whatever it may be. Well, what Luke has been teaching us through these past few chapters is that human rejection, it never frustrates God's purposes.

God still has a plan. He knew this was going to take place. He knew that Israel was going to say, hmm, we're good. So here's what he does. We see number three, the blessing of responding to the invitation.

So the servant comes and he went to tell everybody that dinner's ready. He comes back and he says, show these things to his Lord. Then the master of the house, being angry, said unto his servant.

Now, don't misunderstand this anger. You know, sometimes we're angry because we have wounded pride. Like, how dare they? I spent all this money and they didn't show up to my party. I did all these things.

[26:09] I mean, who do they think they are? That's not what is taking place here. Obviously, we can tell that this host, this great man that's baiting it, this is God. And what this is, this is righteous anger because of a gracious invitation being despised.

The people that were invited rejected it. They didn't just reject the meal. Here's what they rejected, the host. This was insulting. You notice the crowd that were here.

They didn't reject this host when he invited them to their house because they wanted to be there for that. But when you would reject an invitation of this magnitude in this day, you were insulting the host for some reason.

And that's what's taking place here. That God's kindness has been refused. His generosity has been scorned. His invitation, it was treated as insignificant. You know, like junk mail.

You get that and you're like, ah, you just throw it right away. I mean, basically this is what I do in my mail. I check the mail and then I just walk to my trash can. And, usually it's bills. I'm like, ah, this is junk.

[27:14] You know. I mean, that's basically what they did. So instead of canceling it, here's what the master does. Go out quickly. He said unto his servant, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring hither the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind.

I think we can feel the silence around the table. Jesus had just described the very people that the Pharisees had spent their lives avoiding.

Those people, they didn't give them any clout. They didn't help their LinkedIn profile. They didn't help them advance in the synagogue. These weren't people that you hung around because they couldn't offer anything back.

Man, you could scratch their back, but they have nothing to scratch your back with. And that's how they viewed them. And these are the very people that Jesus talked about in verse 13 when he said, hey, listen, next time you have a party, man, here's who you should invite.

The halt and the lame and the blind and all of these type of people. And so now Jesus, what he does is in this parable, he says, since you rejected the invitation, they're going to be my honored guest at the feast.

[28:22] They're going to have the best seats at the table. And see, the people who assumed they belonged in the kingdom are now on the outside. And the people who everybody assumed would be excluded are welcomed in.

And really, that's the whole thing with the gospel. That's really the theme that we see in the gospel of Luke. That the tax collector comes in, but the Pharisees are out. That the sinner finds grace and the religious elite reject it.

That the gospel welcomes the leper and the outcast and the broken and the humble enter and the proud remain outside of the feast. I don't know about you, but I'm so thankful that the gospel takes outsiders and makes them insiders.

I'm so thankful that the gospel takes the unwanted and makes them welcome. That the gospel takes sinners and makes them sons and daughters.

That we have a seat at the table, and it's not just a seat, we're family. And God loves us that much, and he cares that much for us. But the story isn't over in verse 22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded.

[29:30] So he goes and he gets all of these people, and he says, and yet there is room. I love that phrase. That God never runs out of seats.

That there is always room at his table. Yes, the banquet is filling. People are coming, but there's still room. Listen, here's who God wants to come into his kingdom. Everybody.

People say, well, why is the Lord not come back? Well, God says he's coming back. What's the holdup? I mean, he just forgot about us? Well, Peter said the Lord's not slack concerning his promises. He has some men count slackness, but he's rather and willing that all should come to repentance.

You know what the Lord's waiting on? That he wants more people at the table. That he wants more people at the banquet. And he's saying, hey, I got a spot for you. Why don't you just come on in? And that's what we see in verse number 23.

And the Lord said unto the servant, go out into the highways and the hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. So now the invitation is extended beyond the city.

[30 : 35] Beyond the familiar. Beyond the expected. To the people that these men would have thought never could make it in. Well, who's in this group? There's different views and commentators.

Many would have believed this would have been the dregs of society. The thieves and the robbers and the prostitutes and people like that. That had no business in their mind being there. But a lot of people believe this as well.

That it includes the Gentiles. They're going outside the city. Maybe outside of the nation would have represented Israel. And he's going to all the world. That God is willing that anybody would come. And that's what we see here that the Jews would have thought, how could a Gentile come to the feast? And God says, invite them. Tell them.

Tell them they're welcome at the table. I mean, what a picture. What an incredible picture of the gospel. That the invitation is still going out. That grace continues to expand. And the kingdom, praise the Lord, is still growing today in 2026.

[31 : 34] Listen, there's still room. Listen, if you don't have a seat at the table, the invitation's here. Come on in. Jesus wants you to be a part of it. He says, go there and compel them to come.

That word compel is not to force. But here's what it means. To urge. To persuade. To convince. Because these people at the very end, they would have probably struggled to believe that such an invitation could really be for them.

Here's what he's saying there in verse number 23 when the servant comes out. Yes, you. The master wants you. The invitation is for you. The master wants you to be there.

There's room at the table. More than you can even possibly think the feast is going to be amazing. I just want to remind us that if you know Christ, apart from him, you were blind.

You were helpless. You were an outsider. You were separated. Nobody at the table deserves a seat. Nobody at the table earned a seat.

[32 : 39] Everybody that enters the kingdom of God enters by grace. For by grace are you saved.

That's how it happens. And if that's how we got in, guess how else everybody else gets in? The same way. I think Jesus just told a parable about the narrow door.

He said there's one way. Everybody can come in, but there's one way. And if that's how we got in, then we need to see other people the same way. We can't look and say, well, they don't look like they want the gospel.

No, no. You know what they need? The same thing you did. You know what we need to do? We need to go out into the highways and the hedges and compel them and to share the gospel and let them know there is a God that loves them and that they aren't just, this isn't just their lot in life.

No, their lot in life is to know Christ. And that he loves them and he died for them. Because if the gospel is truly for the poor and the broken and the overlooked and the forgotten, that's who we should be pursuing.

[33 : 42] That's who God pursued when he found you, when he found me. And here's the beautiful thing. There's still room. There's still room for your neighbor and your coworker and your prodigal child and that person maybe you have given up praying for.

Let me remind you, God hasn't given up on them. If they're still breathing, God is still working and he's calling you to do that. And he says, here's what I want you to do. Give them an invitation.

That's why I tell you all the time, grab some tracks on the way out and invite them to church.

You know what I'm really telling them? Invite them to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because it changed my life and I hope it changed yours. And you should be a little bit excited about it. I mean, what a picture of grace.

But Jesus isn't finished. He ends with a warning. The invitation's been extended. Some have rejected. Some have accepted. But this warning is just as important as the invitation. And we see, number four, we see this, the tragedy of rejecting the invitation. For I say unto you that none of those men which are bidden shall taste of my supper.

[34 : 49] People say, well, I thought Jesus was a God of love. Oh, he is. But he's also just. And he also reminds us that there is a time when it will run out.

Listen, if you hear the invitation, you get an invitation in the mail. You put it on your fridge. You know, our fridge is like a black hole. It's like amazing. How many things, like, how much things can one magnet hold?

Anybody else's fridge like that? And then you're like, you get it and somebody says, hey, are you coming? And you start like going through. You're like, oh my goodness. I missed it. Listen, when the time passes, it passes.

That's what Jesus is saying. The invitation is here. And if you're under the sound of my voice today, it's being extended to you. But there is coming a day where the invitation will stop being extended. Time will be no more.

That Jesus Christ will come back. He's promised that to be true. And the original guess that Jesus says, which he's kind of going back to verse 16 and 17, they were not excluded because there wasn't room.

[35 : 50] They weren't excluded because they weren't invited. They weren't excluded because they weren't wanted. They were simply excluded because they refused to come. That is the only reason.

And that's kind of where this can hit close to home if we're just being honest. The people who missed this banquet weren't strangers. They had heard about this feast for years, generations, millennia.

They had accepted the first invitation. But when the moment came to respond, they chose something else. And that's what Jesus has been just hammering this point home in the last few chapters.

He told them about the narrow door. That many tried to go their own way, but Jesus says there's one way. He reminds them in verse 34 of chapter number 13. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them which are sent.

How often would I have gathered thy children as a hen doth gather a brood under her wings? Jesus said, listen, I just want to bring you into the family. I want to protect you and love you and give your life meaning and purpose.

[36 : 52] But they refuse to be gathered. And then here in our text, they reject the invitation. Don't miss this. The tragedy is not Christ's unwillingness.

The tragedy is man's refusal. That has always been the tragedy. That God has been seeking and saving. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

That includes all of us. But the question is, has we accepted that invitation? Because the men sitting around this table, they claim to love God's promises. They claim to be anticipating the coming kingdom, the coming Messiah.

But the Messiah is sitting right in front of them. And they said, no thanks. Why? Because they love something else more. They love their religion.

They love their status. They love their comfort. They love their influence. They love their position. And the list could go on and on and on. But this warning in verse 24 must be heeded today.

[37 : 59] Because there are many people who sit in churches just like ours every single week. And maybe even in this own church that know the Bible stories. That know the gospel facts. That know the right answers. That assume they're in the kingdom of God.

But are not trusting in Christ and Christ alone. Listen, it's in nothing that we do. There's nothing we do that gets us to heaven. It's what he did on the cross of Calvary.

That we place our full faith and trust in his life, his death, his burial, and his resurrection. That's how you make it into the kingdom. That's how you make it to the banquet. And this parable ends with this one truth becoming unmistakably clear.

The problem was never the invitation. The problem is never the host. The problem is never the banquet. The problem is the response. We must make a response. That you cannot remain neutral about the gospel.

You can't wait until it's a more convenient season. We see that in the book of Acts where Paul is preaching. He said, I'm going to wait for a more convenient time. Paul said, no, no, no. I wish it was today. Today is when you must be saved.

[39:00] So as we close this morning, I just want to remind you the banquet is ready. The invitation has been given. The cost has been paid. The servants are still calling.

The gospel is still going forward. The Savior is still saving. See, the question isn't, has God invited me? The question is, what am I doing with the invitation?

How have I responded? See, because one day this parable will no longer be a story. It's going to be a banquet. We see it in the book of Revelation, chapter 19.

It's called the marriage supper of the Lamb. And the Bible says, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And one day, every redeemed sinner will gather around that table.

And just like Brother Cliff saying, what a day that will be. And you're going to look around that table and you're going to realize, none of us deserve to be there. And Jesus is going to be at the head of the table.

[40:00] And we're going to be sitting with him. And he's going to be our God. The invitation is open. But it's not going to remain open forever. And that brings us back to the question Jesus has been asking throughout these past few chapters.

Will you come? Have you accepted the invitation? Not will you admire the invitation. Not will you talk about the invitation. Not will you assume you belong at the banquet.

Simply, will you come? The people who entered the banquet were not the people who assumed they belonged there.

They were the people who responded to the invitation by the grace of God. That's the only way. Jesus makes it very clear. As we leave this morning, maybe we need to ask ourselves, is there something I'm valuing more than Christ?

Am I living for something else more than what God wants me to? Have I accepted the invitation? Because it's the invitation of a lifetime.

[41:03] Father. Father. Father. Father. Father, thank you.