

PM Luke 14:1-24 "Come, for everything is now ready"

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Date: 13 March 2022

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0 : 00] Now, before I start, I'm just going to make a request. I have some water here, but I don't actually have a plastic cup to put it in.

Apologies for the sneeze in the middle of the psalm. It's not a cold or COVID or anything like that. I'm just allergic to lots of things. Thank you, Norman.

Thank you. Well, let's turn now to the Word of God and Luke 14.

And we'll take by way of text verses 16 and 17. But he said to him, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

And at the time for the banquet, he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready.

[1 : 22] We've been looking for some while now at the great invitations of the Bible.

And today's invitation comes in the midst of a parable. The parable of the great banquet or the great feast.

Here is a story about a feast told at a feast. Jesus himself had been invited to a feast in the house of one of the leading Pharisees.

It's very striking in the Gospels how willing Jesus was to mix with anyone, great or small.

We find him here, eating with the Pharisees. Glance on into chapter 15 and you find the Pharisees grumbling.

[2 : 36] Glance on into chapter 15 and you find the Pharisees grumbling.

This Pharisee would have been a very important person, probably a very wealthy person. But Jesus is proving to be a very awkward guest.

He does everything that they don't want him to do. First of all, he heals a man. The man with dropsy.

Well that you would think is a good thing to do. If you invited someone for lunch and they were to heal someone, right there in your house, in your presence, you would be thrilled.

And they should have been too. But, this was the Sabbath day. And this healing was a deliberately provocative act.

[4 : 04] Jesus knew full well that the Pharisees had their own rules about the Sabbath. Rules that went way beyond the Scriptures. And according to their rules, for him to heal a man was work.

And therefore forbidden. He heals him deliberately to make a point. And then he challenges them with that wonderful saying about pulling an ox out of a well.

If that's okay, then surely it's okay to heal this man. Then he criticises the guests for squabbling over the best places at the feast.

They all want to be up at the top table. Perhaps you've been to a banquet, maybe a wedding feast, where there was a table plan.

And you look to see where you are. No, you're not on the top table and you're not on the next one. Well, table number 10, right down by the door.

[5 : 22] It's a test of your humility, isn't it? Well, these people here were proud. And they wanted the top places. Jesus gently rebukes them.

By means of a parable. If you're invited to a wedding feast, he says, don't head straight for the top table. As if that was your right. You might get a nasty shock and you'll be told to go somewhere lower.

Go to the lowest place. And who knows, you might be invited to go up higher. And again he comes out with a wonderful saying.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted. If only they had known it.

Jesus himself was the supreme example of that. He had humbled himself already to become man. He would humble himself still further.

[6 : 28] Dying on the cross. But in due course, the father would say to him. Come up higher. And he would be raised from the dead.

Exalted to heaven. And set at the right hand of the most high. But then the Lord goes even further. And he criticizes the host. You just don't do that, do you? If you're invited to a feast. You don't criticize your host. But Jesus does.

And he criticizes him for his guest list. When you give a feast, he says. Don't just invite your friends and your family.

And your rich neighbors. Expecting that they will invite you in return. Invite the poor. The crippled. The lame.

[7 : 25] The blind. People who can't repay you. And then you will be repaid. At the resurrection of the just. You see, Jesus has looked around him.

And here are all these Pharisees. Here are all these rich people. All these self-righteous people. Where are the poor? They're outside.

They weren't invited. And he dares to criticize the host. Now I would imagine that by now.

The atmosphere was very tense. You could cut the air with a knife. As they say. And one of those who reclined with him at table.

Tries to lighten the atmosphere a little. Taking up perhaps that mention of the resurrection. He says in verse 15.

[8 : 24] Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. Sounds very spiritual. Maybe the man meant what he said.

But it does rather sound as if he's changing the subject. Let's stop talking about earthly feasts. Upsetting everyone who's here.

Let's talk about the spiritual feast instead. Well yes. Let's do that. Jesus says in effect.

Let's talk about the kingdom of God. And he tells them. This parable of the great banquet. And the gist of it is.

Yes as you say. Blessed is he who sits down to eat bread. At that feast. But will you be there? Many of those present he implies won't be.

[9 : 28] Because they don't really want to be. But there are others who will be there. Taking their place. Well I want us to look at that parable tonight.

With that note of warning in mind. Three groups of people are described here. And we'll look at each of them in turn.

There are those who are invited. But refuse to come. There are those who are brought in. And are happy to come.

And there are those who are compelled. To come. First. Those who are invited.

And refuse to come. In verses 16 to 20. A man once gave a great banquet. And invited many. And at the time of the banquet.

[10 : 30] He sent his servant to say to those who had been invited. Come. For everything is now ready. But they all alike.

Began to make excuses. The first said to him. I have bought a field. And I must go out and see it. Please excuse me. And another said.

I have bought five yoke of oxen. And I am going to examine them. Please excuse me. And another said. I have married a wife. Therefore I cannot come. Now this is a parable.

An earthly picture. Of spiritual things. So who is who. And what is what here. Now various interpretations.

Are possible. But the simplest. It seems to me. Is that the man in the parable. Giving the feast. Is God. And that his servant.

[11 : 36] Singular notice. Is Christ. Jesus often spoke of himself. As the servant of the Lord. Prophesied in Isaiah.

As Paul says in Philipians. Though he was God. He humbled himself. And took the form of a servant. For our sakes. As for the banquet.

Well we could take it. As the marriage feast. Of the lamb. In Revelation chapter 19. The man whose remark. Triggered this parable. Obviously thought of it.

As a future feast. He thought of it. As a feast. Which would take place. When the Messiah. Finally came. And established. The kingdom of God. On earth.

Death. But I think. There's a hint here. That Jesus. Has in mind. A present feast. What we might call.

[12:38] The gospel feast. He had after all. Been preaching. For some while now. The kingdom of God. Is at hand.

It's here. On your doorstep. And in the parable. He says. Come for everything. Is now ready.

This is what the Pharisees. Had missed. They were waiting. For the kingdom of God. Yes. But in the future. They'd missed the point.

That the kingdom of God. Had already begun. On earth. With the coming of Christ. Yes. There is a great feast.

Yet to come. In the future. But there's also a feast. To be enjoyed now. And these Pharisees. Were missing out on it. Now in what sense.

[13:42] Could he say. Everything is now. Ready. Well. It was ready. In the sense. That the long years. Of preparation.

In the Old Testament. Were over. It was ready. In the sense. That the Messiah. Had now come. And it would soon.

Be ready. In a deeper sense. Jesus would shortly. Die on the cross. For our sins. So that we could be forgiven. And reconciled. And brought into fellowship.

With the Father. That death on the cross. Would accomplish. Our salvation. And therefore Jesus said.

When he died on the cross. It is finished. It's ready. Perhaps he has in mind.

[14:38] Proverbs 9. Wisdom has built her house. She has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her beasts. She has mixed her wine. She has also set her table.

Everything. Is ready. For the feast. Christ. That I believe. Is the parable. God the Father.

Giving a great feast. Christ the Son. Coming as the servant. To announce. Everything is ready. Come. To the feast.

Christ. But it works equally well. If you want to apply it. To us preaching the gospel today. We are after all.

Servants of God. Sent out by Christ. In the name of Christ. And with the gospel of Christ.

Proclaiming both the gospel feast. And the great feast.

[15:35] That is yet to come. But what is the response? That is the real point. Of this parable.

Isn't it? These differing responses. Well this first group. All alike. Or with one accord.

As the AV puts it. Make excuses. And refuse to come. Now this is astonishing.

The man who is giving this banquet. Is obviously a very rich man. A very powerful man. You would think they would be honored.

Excited. To be invited. Twelve years ago. I received the ultimate invitation.

[16:29] A letter postmarked Buckingham Palace. And inside was a card saying. The Lord Chamberlain. Is commanded by her majesty. To invite Mr. and Mrs. Robert Dale.

To a garden party. At Buckingham Palace. On Thursday 22nd of July 2010. From 4pm to 6pm. Okay.

So I was only one of 30,000 people. Who were invited that year. But even so. This was the Queen. There was no question.

Of turning that invitation down. Whatever else I had planned for that day. That could wait. This came first. You'd think that these people here in the parable.

Would feel the same about this great invitation. But no. They all make excuses. And the excuses are all very weak.

[17:30] I have bought a field. And must go out to see it. Who buys a field. And goes out to see it afterwards. Yes it's very exciting.

And no doubt he'd like to go and look at it again. And rejoice in such good fortune. To have such a wonderful field. And perhaps he wanted to go out.

And start planting in it. But there's no urgency. That could wait. Until after the feast. I've bought five yoke of oxen.

And must try them out. Well yes. You would want to go and try them out. It's rather like getting a new car. Isn't it? You want to take it for a run. But there's no urgency. It can wait. Until after the feast. At least those first two are polite about it. Please excuse me they say.

[18 : 34] The third doesn't even show that degree of courtesy. I've married a wife and therefore I cannot come. Under Old Testament law.

Well getting married exempted you from fighting. Didn't exempt you from feasting. In any case. Why shouldn't he just politely ask if his wife could come too.

But no. They clearly don't want to come. It isn't even as if the invitation has been sprung on them suddenly.

It's made clear here that they had been invited already. They had as it were received a save the date card. Now the servant has come to say.

The meal is ready. You've been invited. You've been looking forward to this haven't you? Now come. The master of the feast is ready.

[19 : 36] But they're not. So they refuse. And they miss out. The servant reports back.

The master is angry. Others are invited. And at the end in verse 24. None of those men who were invited shall taste of my banquet.

As if that invitation card had been ripped up. They're no longer welcome. They've missed their opportunity.

Who are these people? Well in the context perhaps the Lord has in mind the Jews of his own day. He came to his own and his own received him not.

Some did receive him of course. The disciples were all Jews. But as a nation they rejected him. In particular the Pharisees. The people he was with that day at the feast.

[20 : 42] They had heard the gospel. And they had rejected it. But we can I think apply it in a more contemporary way.

To all the multitudes around us today. Most people today simply can't be bothered with the gospel. They're too taken up with the things of this world.

Buying fields. Testing oxen. Getting married. They were all perfectly legitimate things to do. Nothing sinful about any of them.

But the problem was their sense of priorities. Likewise today many people simply have the wrong priorities.

Their house. Their job. Their car. Their family. Their hobbies. Yes these are all good things. Nothing sinful about any of them. But in their proper place.

[21 : 49] The problem is when they crowd out God. As they so often do. But if these people won't come to the feast.

There are others who will. Let's come now to the second group. Those who are brought in. And come willingly. In verse 21.

So the servant reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry.

And said go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city. And bring in the poor.

And crippled. And blind. And lame. God invites those kind of people to his feast.

Now these people must have been astonished. To receive that invitation. They would never have dreamed of going to a feast at the great man's house.

[23 : 11] That was for rich important people. Not for them. But here was the servant. Coming personally to each one of them. Individually.

Coming to them where they were. In the streets and the lanes. In the highways and byways. As the AV puts it. Inviting them to come in. And to come now.

Immediately. Because by now everything has been ready for some while. The table is laid. The food is waiting. Don't delay. The master himself is waiting to receive you.

All you have to do is come. And they do come. After all. These people have got nothing much to leave behind.

They come willingly. They come eagerly. And they take their places at the feast. So who are these people?

[24 : 17] Well if the first group were Jews. Then these could be the Gentiles. The gospel was preached to the Jew first. And afterward to the Gentiles.

And millions of Gentiles have come in. Including us. But again we can apply it in a more contemporary way.

We can apply it literally. To the poor. And the disadvantaged today. Such people often do come to Christ.

More readily than others. Simply because they feel their need. And we should welcome them. Let me recommend to your prayers.

The weekly drop in. Norman is there most weeks. And he often reports on conversations that he has had. And I am always astonished.

[25 : 15] People so willing to talk about spiritual things. We don't find that generally. We don't find that generally amongst people. But these are people who have hit rock bottom. And they know it.

And in their hearts they know their need. Often such people will come to Christ. But also we can apply it spiritually.

To ourselves. To ourselves. By nature we are all spiritually poor. Aren't we? We have nothing without God. We are spiritually crippled.

Broken by sin. We are spiritually lame. Unable to walk in the ways of God. We are spiritually blind. Unable even to see the kingdom of God.

But Jesus invites us. To come into the kingdom. To come to the gospel feast. It takes humility perhaps for us to realize this.

[26 : 20] That we have hit rock bottom. Even if we live in comfortable houses. And have good jobs. We have hit rock bottom spiritually. And it's a great privilege.

A great honor. That God should stoop down to us. And invite us. Into his kingdom. Indeed he does more than invite us into the kingdom.

Just as he healed that man with dropsy. At the beginning of this. This event. In this Pharisee's house. So he will spiritually heal us also.

He will open our eyes to see the glory of God. In the face of Jesus Christ our Lord. He will give us the power to live godly lives.

He will straighten out our lives. He will give us spiritual riches beyond our imagination. What an invitation this is.

[27 : 22] Why should anyone refuse it? This second group eagerly go to the feast. But there is still yet another group in this parable.

Let's look finally now at this third group. Those who are compelled to come in. In verses 22 and 23. The servant said sir. What you have commanded has been done.

And still there is room. And the master said to the servant. Go out into the highways and hedges. And compel people to come in.

That my house may be filled. Now this has been grossly misinterpreted by some historically.

As if it gave us the right. Or indeed the ability. To force people to become Christians. It wasn't uncommon back in the dark ages.

[28 : 24] For missionaries to go and preach the gospel. To a chieftain of a tribe. Knowing that he would then force his entire tribe. To be baptized.

Of course it meant absolutely nothing. The vast majority of them wouldn't even understand. What they were doing. Let alone believe in it in their hearts.

You can't compel people. To become Christians. But there is someone who can. I have interpreted the servant.

In this parable as Christ. But Christ. Remember. Acts in the power. Of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit.

Can persuade anyone. That is how I take this compulsion. In verse 23. It is nothing more than the persuasion. Of the Spirit.

[29 : 26] There is no suggestion. Of violence here. We are not to imagine. The servant dragging people. Out of the hedges. Tying them up in chains.

And frog marching them. To the feast. That would be a miserable feast. Wouldn't it? A banquet made up of people. Who didn't want to be there. No. We must take it simply.

As forceful persuasion. There are people today. Who need to be persuaded. People who at first resist.

Maybe resist for a long time. But eventually. They see sense. And they come. It is the Holy Spirit alone.

Who can bring about that change. In their hearts. Yes. We must reason with them. God uses our words. But it is the Spirit. Who gives life.

[30 : 29] To those words. Now I don't know where you find yourself. In this parable. I must admit. That I belong to that third group. I had to be compelled. I resisted the gospel. For years and years. Until the Spirit.

Finally persuaded me. One November day. In 1973. And if I'm honest. I suppose. I belong to the second group as well.

And not just to one of those categories. But to all four. Poor. Crippled. Lame. And blind. I was reluctant to come.

But the Spirit. Graciously. Persuaded me. And how grateful I am now. For 50 years. I've enjoyed the gospel feast.

[31 : 31] And I look forward. To that great banquet. At the last day. When Christ returns. Others of you perhaps.

Have come. Without quite such a struggle. There are people. Who hear the gospel invitation. And straight away come. There are children.

Who come. Early in life. Without any great trauma. If that's. Your situation. Bless the Lord.

For dealing so gently. And kindly. With you. But whether we come. Easily. Or whether we struggle. And have to be persuaded. It is the same spirit.

Who is at work. In us all. The important thing. Is that we come. Remember. In verse 24. None of those.

[32 : 29] Who. Were invited. And refused. Will taste. Of that feast. Ever. Today.

That gospel invitation. Goes out still. Come. For. Everything. Is now ready. There's a grand old hymn.

By Joseph Hart. Come. Ye sinners. Poor. And wretched. Weak. And wounded. Sick. And sore. Jesus. Ready. Stands. To save you. Full of pity.

Joined. With power. And people. Will come. Notice. In verse 23. The grand. Aim.

Of it all. That my house. May be filled. God. Himself. Wants. People. To come. To the feast. He wants people. In his kingdom.

[33 : 28] We look at our. Almost empty church. And we. Feel perhaps. A little discouraged. That more people. Don't come. Don't you think. That God looks down.

With even. Deeper concern. He wants. This and a thousand. Churches. To be filled. With people. Worshipping him. And who will resist him.

If he has desired. To have his house. Filled. If he desires. To have a great banquet. In which there will be. A multitude. No man can number.

Then he will bring it about. God. God. May those empty spaces. Be filled in this. And in. Every church. And may.

Many more. Come. To that gospel feast. Amen. God bless you. Amen.

[34 : 36] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Ve. Amen. Amen.nya vacée is a name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.