

Everything is now Ready

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Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Well good morning, a few announcements before we begin. First of all, just a thank you to everyone involved in yesterday. I could go through the names, the name one by one, but in case you miss any out, we're just saying just now in the session room and just the night, the time we had yesterday, the time of fellowship and of fun and of freedom and just how much a fun day it was and a good time to gather together. So just a genuine thank you to everyone involved, everyone who came along and everyone who contributed to making the day as successful as it was. There'll be a short Kirk session following a prayer meeting this Thursday and finally next Sunday morning will be our family service. So please do encourage anyone at all you know who have kids in the community, who haven't perhaps been to church before but who might be interested to come along next Sunday morning, 12 o'clock, our family service for prize giving straight afterwards.

We're here to worship God. Let's sing to God's praise. First of all in the Scottish Psalter and Psalm 51. The Scottish Psalter, Psalm 51.

I can sing verses 1 down to verse 7 of the Psalm. Psalm 51 verses 1 down to verse 7. It's on page 280 of the church psalm books. Psalm 51.

After thy loving kindness, Lord, have mercy upon me. For thy compassions great blot out all mine iniquity. Me cleanse from sin and throughly wash from mine iniquity. For my transgressions I confess my sin I ever see. Psalm 51 verses 1 to 7. To God's praise.

Psalm 51.

[2 : 1 7] Psalm 51. Now thee connection to me. And that's a sky of grace. And that's a to gewoon to the flesh upon me. See, Lord, have mercy upon me. I hear with you. By the advantage of mine iniquity. If an axolisk my sin I have mercy upon me. If an axolisk my sin I see.

And that's a of the essence of my sin I am an important way. If an axolisk my sin I see. How may a disaster in my sin I am getting ■■■■ tonight. For my concern. The church I confess, my sin I ever see.

It's the only hour I sinned, when my sight of the sea.

That when I see, thou get me just, I will be a vengeance too.

Behold, I am in it, when it was on the whole way.

[3 : 4 3] My mother also belongs to me, when him did he ask him.

Behold, I am in it, when our hearts will do it like it art.

And with thunder shall be me, O within the hidden heart.

If I will, in the dark, I shall be lanceless, O.

Ye, once the new and the new I shall be white, your landless home.

[5 : 0 9] Amen. Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for this once more gathering together, this chance once more to spend time in prayer and praise.

This chance once more to come and to be in your presence, knowing that as we gather just now, we gather as brothers and sisters. We gather as sons and daughters. We gather knowing that you're here with us.

Lord, help that never to become routine for us. Help us never to lose the wonder what it is to know that the living God himself, that he has chosen to make his home in and with and alongside his people.

That sure eternal knowledge that we have, that no matter where we go in this world, as your people, no matter what we do in this world, wherever we find ourselves, mentally, physically or spiritually, whatever distances we may travel, that you do not leave us.

You never forsake us. You never leave us on our own. Help us, Lord, we ask for a short time together to truly have our hearts and our minds focused on you, on who you are, on your great many promises towards us, on your love that you show towards your people, on your mercy you show towards those who as of yet have not come in, who as of yet have not come near, who as of yet have not responded to the invite after invite to come and to sit down at your table and to take part in the glorious feast you're providing for all who come.

[6 : 51] As we give thanks, Lord, for your wonderful mercy towards us, we thank you especially, Lord, for ourselves as a congregation. But in your love you have established a people here for yourselves. But for many years now I've sought to worship you in spirit and in truth.

We thank you, Lord, for what we are today, a gathering of your people, of sons and daughters and brothers and sisters. We're here today of various ages, various ages physically and various ages in terms of our spirituality too, Lord.

There are some here today that we are perhaps newer in the faith, younger in the faith. There are some here and we are more mature perhaps in our faith. There are some here who are almost mature, Lord, who are almost at the end perhaps of what it is to walk in this world with you, Lord, who will one day soon perhaps see the next.

But we know that these things are not in our knowledge, that we don't know the times and the days, but all these things are known to you. You know, Lord, the length of our days in this earth.

You know how long you have given us to serve you here, to worship you here. All we ask is that you would use us in the days you have given us to worship you well, to serve you well.

[8 : 07] As we remember ourselves, Lord, we also remember, as always, our brothers and sisters next door. We remember them once more in our time of vacancy. We do ask, Lord, we would hear perhaps one day soon, if it's your will, one day soon we would hear that they would have one over them once more, who would lead them and who would guide them, who would shepherd them.

I pray, Lord, for gospel blessings, true gospel blessings, as we seek to see your name known in this place. As we seek to see your name glorified and praised throughout this village, throughout this district.

Lord, we know we live perhaps in a day of small things. We give you praise that even in a day of small things, you give us so many gospel tokens. We praise you especially just now for the work that took place yesterday.

We thank you, Lord, for the work of your people and also those who are not yet your people, but who are happy to do the work, Lord, for you. We ask that even as they seek to help the community, you bless their community-mindedness and turn that into a love for you.

Lord, we ask, Lord, you bless all who are involved behind the scenes in making yesterday a success that it was. Lord, we thank you, Lord, for the boys and the girls who came along. Thank you, Lord, that they enjoyed themselves.

[9 : 25] We thank you that because they enjoyed themselves, we enjoy ourselves too, Lord, that day of fun and a day where you show us once more that you're a God who gives all good gifts. The good gifts of laughter, of fun, of time together, as truly a church family.

As some have noted, Lord, already, that it felt like a family yesterday. Lord, help us to indeed feel that way every single time we gather together, whether in public worship or in times of private gathering or in times of public fellowship like yesterday.

We need to see each other more and more as a family gathering together, as brothers and sisters seeking to worship your God. Lord, we pray, Lord, for the few faces there yesterday who are not often here, the few faces who perhaps have never come near this building, the few faces there yesterday who have perhaps for the first time seen what it was to see a church gathering together and having time together.

Lord, we ask you bring these, Lord, few folks to this congregation. Bring them to this building. Bring them, we ask, to hear the word, to hear the good news for themselves. Lord, we ask that they would have been blessed by their time yesterday, that they would have felt even a small part of the love and the care that we had for them yesterday.

We thank you that you brought them to us. As the days, Lord, and the weeks and the months lie ahead of us this year, as long as you give us in time, help us as a congregation to be willing and to be ready and to be in preparation now going forward, to be ready to witness to this congregation, to this community, to, as a congregation, be ready to share the good news to our homes, to our neighbours, to our family and friends in this place, knowing that we do so in love.

[11 : 13] We must do so gently, but also we must do so earnestly, knowing that the time is near, knowing that time is short, knowing that time and days are not given to us, are not guaranteed to us.

But we have the great and glorious good news of the gospel. We must share that good news. Or give us wisdom, we ask. Give us gospel opportunities.

We ask that for ourselves as a congregation. Give us wisdom, we ask, in how we proceed, how we move forward in this community, and how we faithfully, and how we properly, and how we effectively share the good news to those who are in desperate need of hearing it.

We pray, Lord, also the same thing for ourselves individually, ourselves and our family circles, and our friends, as we seek to share the good news to those who as of yet have no care for their souls, who as of yet have no understanding as to the danger they are in.

Lord, we ask that even as they hear the gospel once more from our lips, you would use that to bring them to yourself. We pray once more for ourselves as a gathering here this day.

[12 : 20] We pray, Lord, for those here today who are mourning. For those who are mourning recent loss, Lord, we ask you to come alongside and comfort. And be there, Lord. We know that our words, they fail us.

Our words, they fall so, so very short. We give you praise that our words fail us to comfort. That you provide, and you promise the ultimate comforter of the Holy Spirit, that his comfort is an eternal comfort to all who call out for that comfort, Lord.

We pray that all who mourn today would know that. Those who mourn recent loss, and loss of many months, and perhaps many years, and at times decades ago. We know, Lord, that grief never leaves us.

It just changes as time goes on. But, Lord, we know that we all still mourn the loss of loved ones. We all still mourn the absence of those who have gone before us. Lord, help us and be with us, as we ask each one of us, as we face times of suffering, and times of grief, and times of pain.

We ask the same for any who are suffering here today. Physical illness, or mental illness. Lord, you alone know. Those who are going through trials, and pain just now. Those who are finding themselves suffering just now, and perhaps having no one to confide in, but you and you alone.

[13 : 36] We ask you to come alongside them, and be with them, and support them. For those of them who know you, Lord, you'd bring them to yourself, and show them that you have not left them, even in their suffering. For those of them who are suffering, who as of yet don't know you, you would use even these dark, strange days to bring them to yourself.

We thank you once more, Lord, for our time together today. We pray especially just now, once more, for the boys, and the girls. We thank you for them. For those who have been to Sunday school this past term, or those who have listened so carefully, we thank you, Lord, for the boys and the girls.

Thank you for their parents, and grandparents, and great-grandparents, and everyone who looks after them, and who loves them, and who brings them to church week after week. But we ask you to bless them also.

I ask you to bless the Sunday school teachers, who have worked so hard this term, who have worked hard every term, over many years now, to bring the gospel to the boys and the girls, week after week, to help them to see, and to learn more about who Jesus is, and why it's so important that we follow him.

We pray, Lord, for them just now, as we look forward to a summer holiday, keep them safe, Lord, and keep them happy. We ask for them to come back after a long holiday, and come back and be ready to hear more about Jesus, about who he is, and what it is to follow him, and to love him.

[14 : 54] Help us, Lord, we ask today, to be of one mind and one spirit, as we come to worship your one God. We pray just now, especially for those here today, who as of yet, cannot say that Jesus is theirs, and they are his.

Lord, as we come to look at your word later on, as we come to read of the simple gospel invitation, Lord, we ask for that, the invitation would be heard, and would even today be received, by those here, who as of yet, are waiting on the outside, despite many invitations to come in, who are still refusing to come in, Lord, we ask that today, will be the day they come in, and hear the gospel, and truly listen to the gospel, for the first time, and hear the invite, that's the invite, that's for them.

Ask all these things, confessing sin, Lord, we have sinned against you, this week, this day, this hour, in our thoughts, in our words, in our actions. We give you praise, as we come just now, confessing that sin.

We come just now, also acknowledging, that you are a God, who forgives sin, who through the finished work, of your son, forgives all the sins, of all your people.

Help us to cling, onto that finished work, as we cling on to him, Lord, we cling on to one, who holds eternally, onto us. Ask all these things, in and through, and for, his precious name's sake.

[16 : 13] Amen. Boys and girls, come down. I'm in my way down. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thanks. Morning. about mmm coming supine. Good morning. Are you very quiet and chirpy today?

You're very quiet and nice, actually, I've seen you shoving water, balloons up my nose, but there we go. Morning, boys and girls, how are we all? Good. You guys, you guys, you're tired? You're not tired.

How are you not tired? Everyone spoke to, all the adults, who were very tired from yesterday. My bones are really sore. I ran and our elders ran yesterday more than we did in a week, a month, maybe the whole year before yesterday.

You guys enjoy yourselves, good day wasn't it? Yeah. What did we have yesterday that we're very very thankful for that the very very busy ladies in the kitchen helped and did so much work for. We enjoyed lots of tasty food. Nice barbecue wasn't it?

[17 : 15] That was tasty wasn't it? Do you guys have one burger, two burger, three sausage rolls? What did you have? None at all. I had two burgers, I had fatty burgers. It was very tasty wasn't it?

I was thinking this morning to a barbecue I had a few years ago now. It wasn't here, it was back, it wasn't in Graver, it was somewhere else, I wouldn't say we were on the island. And we had a disaster. We had a barbecue for 30 people and guess what happened? How many people came to the barbecue?

Was it 30? Was it 40? 50 people came to the barbecue and we had food for 30 people.

Now we're so glad to see lots of people come, but we had this barbecue quite far away from shops. So can you imagine we made all the food, 30 burgers and 30 sausages and 30 rolls.

And we saw the food coming and we saw, okay there's 20 people, good, there's 30 people, good. There's 31 people, there's 35, there's 40 people now. And what do we do?

[18 : 18] So we had to go and do almost an hour and a half run to go and get food. Then we had to go and get food, then back again and we bought all the food in the shop, almost all the meat they had, all the burgers, all the sausages, all the bread.

And to the last five people, there was no bread left at all in the shop. They had to have a burger and a napkin with some sauce on top, some onions on top and they ate it. Now what mistake did we do?

How could we have solved that problem in the first place? How silly? Simple answer. What? Haspare food. Haspare food, yeah. What more food? We should have prepared ourselves to have loads more food.

We didn't. And because we didn't we were panicking and it was crazy and it was a sad day and those didn't get much food. Now what happened yesterday? Was there, was a panic yesterday? Was there no spare food yesterday?

There was in fact lots and lots of food yesterday. Quite a spare food. And it all went away, everyone went away full up didn't they? Lots of puddings. How many puddings were there? Nine puddings, ten puddings.

[19 : 22] You guys all get lots of pudding too, an ice cream and things. Yeah, you had pudding, okay good, good, good. It was lovely wasn't it? So tasty. Later on when you guys go to Sunday school, your last Sunday school of the year. It's crazy isn't it?

Yeah. So next week, you're coming next week, but we're having one big family service next week. It's like one big kids talk that mums and dads are involved in too. They don't know that yet, but they're hearing that just now.

So we'll see how good they are next week after listening to how you guys are. But last Sunday school, last Sunday school in the hall for this year. Anyway, later on we're going to look at a bit in the Bible where Jesus tells a parable.

Jesus tells a story. And this story talks all about, not a barbecue, but a big, big feast. Like we had yesterday, a big feast. And that feast, Jesus says a man made a feast.

A man, a rich man made a feast, right? And he invited everyone. Every invited made excuses. You guys didn't do it yesterday. You guys all came yesterday and we're so glad you did.

[20 : 18] But the guys, this man invited, he invited his friends. All his friends made excuses why they couldn't come. All these excuses weren't real excuses. We were just talking lies. They couldn't be bothered going to this man's barbecue.

This man's feast. The man then invites everyone else in the village. Everyone else in the town gets invited in. And Jesus says this is like God's kingdom.

Who is invited to church? We ask a question way back to the start. Who's welcome to come to Tulsa Free Church? Everyone. Everyone in Tulsa. Even people in Tulsa who don't know much about Jesus.

People in Tulsa who have moved here in the last few weeks, the last few months, the last few years. Even people who perhaps don't know if they believe in Jesus or not.

Okay, so everyone's invited. Well that's the story the adults are going to hear today. The good news is, the Bible tells us, right? That God invites everyone who listens to come and to take part, not in a barbecue, but in a feast that will last forever.

[21 : 27] But in heaven, God, is this an image, a picture God uses? But he tells us that heaven's like one big feast. That everyone can come and sit down and enjoy. Like yesterday.

A time of fun. With friends together. Enjoying time together. But that is like heaven, but forever. And ever and ever. And God says, unlike my barbecue which had no food left.

Everyone who comes to Jesus. And boys and girls, you guys know this. But this is for boys and girls. But mums and dads, granddads. Everyone who comes to Jesus, He never says, there's no food left.

There's no space left at the table. He says, there's always more space. So come. There's always much more space. So keep on coming. Boys and girls, you guys remember that as you go up.

As you get older and get older and get older. Think. Never ever think that Jesus doesn't have room for you guys. Wherever you go in life, wherever you do in life, you guys might do amazing things around the world.

[22 : 27] You might stay in Tulsa, do amazing things here. You might go to Storny, do amazing things in Storny. Whatever you do in life, just remember, Jesus tells us, He always has room for you guys.

Mums and dads, guys and granddads, there's always room for you too. For everyone who comes to actually believe and trust in Him. You guys listened so well. So, last Sunday school and then next week, see you back here and we'll have a wee family service.

I believe there's a few prizes to give out, I think. A few prizes, a prize giving away. I think that's the plan. So good? Go and enjoy the last few hours. Hours?

Don't worry. The last short time of Sunday school together. As the boys and girls go to Sunday school, let's turn to read in God's Word. Gospel of Luke, chapter 14.

Gospel of Luke, chapter 14. That's on page 820 of the church's Bibles.

[23 : 31] Luke, chapter 14. We're actually reading from page 821. Luke 14 and verse 12.

Luke 14 and verse 12. Let's hear the word of God.

He said to the man who had been invited, who had invited him. When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. If you will be repaid of the resurrection of the just.

When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. But he said to him, a man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

[24 : 44] And at the time of the banquet, 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 have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them.

Please have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come. So the servant came and reported these things to his master.

Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servants, go out quickly to the streets and lanes of a city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

And 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 to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.

[25 : 49] For I tell you, none of those men who are invited shall taste my banquet. Now great crowds accompanied him and he turned and said to them, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it.

Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build and was not able to finish.

Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able to have ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand.

And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any of you, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

[27 : 08] Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for manure pile.

It is thrown away. He who has ears to ear, let him hear. Give praise to God for his holy and his perfect word. Sing once more this time and sing psalms.

Sing psalms. Sing psalms and psalm 40. And psalm 40. Sing psalms and psalm 40. That's on page 50 of the psalm book. Sing psalms and psalm 40. It's on page 50. It's a new tune that's going to be used.

It's a new tune, I think, to yourselves in the congregation. But it's a tune that I've been told is not a new tune in general. It's a new tune in general.

It was used at the late Queen's funeral. Psalm 40 verses 1 down to verse 5. I waited long upon the Lord. He heard my cry and turned to me.

[28 : 15] He raised me from the slimy pit and from the mire he pulled me free. Verses 1 to 5 to God's praise. I waited long upon the Lord.

He caused my cry and turned to me. He raised me from the slimy pit and from the mire he pulled me free.

He said my king consoled the throne, a place to stand for firm and broad.

He could and you saw me in my mouth, a joyful hymn of praise to God.

Many will do with God in fear, and on the Lord that only died, blessed are they who trust the Lord, who shunned the bow and lost the night.

[30 : 14] The wonders you have done, O Lord, how many and how great they are.

You'll ask for us that are beyond how proud to be the Lord.

Amen. Let's for a short time turn back to the chapter we had. Luke chapter 14.

Luke chapter 14. Looking at that parable, that well-known parable. Luke 14. We focus mostly, of course, on the words of our Saviour as he tells this parable.

Let's take a text we can take, verse 17. And at that time for the banquet, he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, come for everything is now ready.

[31 : 31] Come for everything is now ready. As we look forward as the summer goes on, and as we look forward perhaps past the summer and start to begin to plan past the summer, looking forward to times where we as a congregation will seek to begin to reach out perhaps to those in this community, those who as of yet have not heard the Gospel.

As we look forward to these times, we can look over the next few weeks, the next few months as time goes on, at some of the examples of the great calls we find in Scripture, the great calls to come and to follow, the great calls to come and to serve.

And of all these are great calls and texts that the Christians here we know so well, you might think, well, why are we hearing this again? Why are we hearing this text again?

We've heard this text countless times over the years. Every minister seems to preach in these same verses. Because as Christians, and those here have been Christians for quite a while, you will know yourself and I with you, how quickly we become comfortable in our Gospel knowledge.

We'll lose sight perhaps as to the urgency of the Gospel call. And in this section today, in this parable, we're reminded as to the urgency, but also the breadth of the Gospel call.

[33 : 05] And of course, the truth is, we come to passages like this, the reality is, I am speaking, well, the word of the Lord is speaking quite simply and quite plainly to brothers and sisters, yes, but also speaking today to friends.

Friends here today and who may be listening perhaps in the weeks and months to come. Friends, we are so thankful you're here. We're thankful every time you're here. And we hope you know that joy we feel as you come and gather with us.

But these are passages which are talking to you. And there's no great joy, I assure you, in singling out you today, you who as of yet don't know Jesus for yourself.

Again, this passage, this parable, does have importance for Christians and we'll touch on that. But for you here today, and if as of yet you cannot say that you know Jesus, that you love Jesus, that you follow Jesus, then listen please to this parable today.

Listen to the words of Jesus and hear what he has to say to you. Just three very simple and obvious headings for us to tackle this passage.

[34 : 18] First of all, we see the banquet itself, verses 16 and verse 17. Then we see the excuses, verses 18 down to verse 20.

Then we see the guests, verses 21 to 24. To the banquet, the excuses and the guests.

First of all, the banquet itself, verses 16 and verse 17. We find out at least three, maybe four things about the banquet.

Verse 16. But he said to them, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. A man once gave a great banquet.

Of course, Jesus here is using the man, but he's talking about God. When God invites men and women and boys and girls, when God tells men and women and boys and girls to come and follow the one he has given.

[35 : 28] When God tells us that he has created for us and given to us a way of salvation. God is a gracious God. He said to the boys and the girls, God does not follow my type of barbecue planning, my type of banquet planning, where I buy little and expect little and many turn up.

God is a gracious God. A man gave a great banquet, a large banquet, an extended banquet. God's a gracious God.

When God makes promises, he doesn't make small promises. When God says, I'm inviting you to a banquet, it's not to a small gathering. He's inviting you to a great, glorious, eternal banquet.

Of course, a banquet is just an image, just a metaphor of God's goodness and God's provision and God's care and God's feeding his people. God doesn't do things in small measure.

God, the God who created all things and sustains all things, when he invites anyone to come and to dine with him, he does so knowing he is able and ready and willing to feed the person he asks to come and dine with him.

[36 : 56] When we give out the gospel call today to come to this banquet, to come and to eat, to come and spend time with God, we don't say that hoping God has enough space left over.

We'll say that later on. God says the banquet is large enough. The food order is big enough. The capacity is large enough. It's a great banquet the Lord is offering.

Friends, the table is set. Note here what is taking place. The table is set. When we come to God, we come to one who has done everything.

The banquet is good to go. God does not say, come to me once you have done X, Y and Z. Come to me once you have made your life look more holy.

Come to the banquet once you have dressed yourself up properly. Come to the banquet once you have sorted this thing out and that thing out. No.

[38 : 06] The table is set. Come to the banquet. You have been invited. The banquet is set. It's a banquet where many are invited.

He's invited many. All nations, of course, are invited to the banquet. All backgrounds are invited to the banquet.

All levels of knowledge, of faith, all small faith and large faith are invited to the banquet.

And in the context of this parable, of our time here today, because we're reading this word of the Lord together just now, this includes you.

This includes you. As you read these verses together and hear these verses being read, this is you. You become part of the many who are invited.

[39 : 07] He invited many to the banquet. Dear friends, you are now part of this many. As you hear this gospel message once more, you're once more being invited to come and spend time with the God who made you and who knows you.

And if you leave this place today, having not listened to this, having not even given a second thought to this, you leave this place today once more, having ignored the God who has invited you graciously to the banquet.

And you do that, and you do that, and you do that again and again. Dear friends, God is a gracious God. And He invites, and He invites.

We'll see that in a second. And He invites. But do not keep ignoring the invite. He invites many. All sorts of people. All shapes and sizes.

All backgrounds. All stories. Everyone has an access. God calls many to come to the banquet. And what is the instruction given?

[40 : 15] What does this man go out and say? Verse 17. At the time for the banquet, He sent His servant to say.

What does a servant say? Come. For everything is now ready. Brothers and sisters, I stand before you just now as a servant of the Lord, and you know that.

And brothers and sisters, we've been sending out this same gospel message. Not just I, but you and I together. As brothers and sisters, this is a message we go out to our homes with, to our village with, to our community with.

And friends, please, this is the gospel invitation I have today. I stand before you today not as a minister in the sense of perhaps how you think of ministers.

No. We are here to give out the gospel invitation. We're here as servants. And the servant's message is my message today. What is the servant's message of verse 17?

[41 : 20] Come. Come. Come. For everything is now ready. Everything's ready. There's times, of course, where it's quite kind to bring some food yourself to a gathering you've been invited to.

And at times that's appropriate. I was thinking just now of an example this morning of this. But imagine this is a wedding invitation. And as our places in scripture, this invitation is called a wedding invitation.

It's shown to be a wedding invite. Imagine Emma and myself when we got married that our guests all appeared to the food that we've paid for and prepared for them and the venue we paid for and prepared for them.

If they came with their own food and came and did their own thing, they were quite offended, weren't you? You were quite bored thinking, I've done all this for you. It's all ready for you. You've come and you've had your McDonald's in the back of a room instead.

You've come and taken your own food, your own packed lunch, and the food is here waiting for you. We've paid the price for it. We've bought it. We've prepared it. Come.

[42 : 33] Come, for everything is now ready. Dear friends, as you're being invited once more to this feast today, listen to the invite.

First of all, the word is so clear and it comes from a living God. And the living God commands in love and in care. But he commands you nonetheless, dear friends, you must come.

Come. Come to what? What are you being invited to? We invited a feast that is prepared for you. It's all done.

Come with your hopelessness. Come with your backslidings. Come with whatever baggage you have and come. It's all ready for you.

So I can't come to this feast. I can't come to this banquet. I don't know enough about the Lord. I can't come. I sat in this church for years and I've not responded for years.

[43 : 34] It's too late for me. I can't come. I can't come because so and so wronged me so terribly years ago. That elder or that elder said this or did this and I can't come.

That minister once said this thing from God's word and he said I couldn't come so I can't come. So on and so on and so on.

Take what man has said and done aside. Take what man has said and done aside and look what the word of the Lord says to you once more fresh this morning. God speaking through his holy word tells you, bids you, compels you, commands you in love to come.

Come. Come. Everything is now ready. He has done as it were of a hard work. He has done all of the work. You bring nothing to this feast but yourself.

Come as you are. If you hear this invite, then the invite is for you. Not for the person beside you or behind you. Think well, you add qualifications to why you can't come but by doing so.

[44 : 46] And this is solemn. If you say and you hear just now once more the instruction for you is to come. The Lord tells you to come and you say well I can't come because of X, Y, Z.

I can't come to this feast. Then by saying that, and again this is solemn but it's what you are doing dear friend. You are putting yourself in a higher place than God.

And God says to come. And you say I can't because of this reason or that reason. As if God himself isn't able and doesn't already know the reasons.

The eternal Lord God, he knows your reasons. And yet he still tells you, throw it. How call a gesture, throw it. Come, everything is ready. You are not imposing in somewhere you have not been invited.

By coming and listening to the gospel call. By coming and saying that you want Lord Jesus as your saviour and as your king and as your friend.

[45 : 48] You are not imposing somewhere you shouldn't be. If you are here today and you hear this message. This is your invitation once more. You are here. The Lord has placed you here once more to hear this message.

You are where you are supposed to be. And you have been told once more from the Lord this day you must come. It's all ready for you. There is nothing you can do.

Come to the feast. It's ready. It's prepared. It's good to go. The word of the Lord is honest and the word of the Lord is clear.

And as Jesus tells us parable, he knows what people are like. All too well. What happens? The call goes out.

Come, everything is ready. Then we see the excuses begin to pour in, don't we? The excuses come in. We can see there's three of the main excuses.

[46 : 52] There's three excuses given, but just very briefly touching on the excuses. Verses 18 to verse 20. The first excuse is that, isn't it, of the field.

The first said to him, I've bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. You think for a second.

What person buys anything that size or that amount of money? A field or a house without seeing it first.

This is an excuse which has no basis. It's a clear lie the man is telling. I've bought a field, I have to go see it. Rubbish. Utter rubbish.

It's meant to sound silly. It's meant to sound rubbish because it shows just how weak and how poor the excuse actually is. This man has no reason not to come, but he has to think of a reason as people.

[47 : 51] I've bought a field, I have to go see it. Rubbish. It seemed like a good excuse to him perhaps, but it means nothing. This was perhaps his go-to excuse in the moment to get him out of going to this feast.

And the question has to be, do you have a go-to excuse? Do you have an excuse that comes to your mind? When you hear just now the gospel call, when you hear ministers and friends say to you, come and believe in Jesus, come and follow Jesus, come and have him as Lord and Saviour and see him and trust in him, does your mind come up an excuse pretty quickly?

I can't because whatever your go-to excuse is, and you know it's rubbish. You know it's not got a real basis. Perhaps it's genuine in some aspects, but you know it doesn't stand up to eternal scrutiny.

I've bought a field, I must go see it. No, he doesn't. Perhaps he bought a field, but he had seen it before. We then receive the second excuse given.

I bought some oxen. I bought some oxen. A five yoke of oxen. And I go to examine them.

[49 : 05] Please have me excused. Now, the commentators are split here. Some say this is also clearly a lie. Because what person would buy animals without having first seen them?

Or at least having some idea as to what quality they might be. But supposing he is telling the truth, this man. The oxen can wait. It's one single night he's being invited to. One single banquet.

Yet he is placing perhaps here his monetary gain. He is placing his life plans before this great feast. This great important feast.

Dear friends, are you putting, are you putting this day your life plans before Jesus?

I can't believe in him one day. When life isn't so busy. When life isn't so complicated. When life perhaps isn't so good. When I've got a bit more time.

[50 : 10] When I get older. When I have nothing else to do. Then I'll begin to actually listen. And then I'll trust in him. When the kids grow up. When the family move away. Then I'll listen.

We all know that's not how life works, doesn't it? That's not how life works. We all know that life changes in a second. And all our life plans are thrown upside down and thrown away and changed.

In a blinking of an eye. We're not guaranteed. We're not guaranteed tomorrow, this week, next year. You are guaranteed this moment.

This hour perhaps we're guaranteed. This last ten minutes we're guaranteed. Don't waste this time. Don't believe this man who's got such a busy life.

He can't spend one evening to go to this feast. Your life is not too busy to come to Jesus. And you think, well he might ruin things. He might disrupt things. He might ruin my, the plans I have for my life and what I want to do.

[51 : 15] The Christians here will testify. Nothing was ruined by coming to Jesus. Nothing was lost by coming to Jesus. We gained everything by doing so. Gained everything.

The final excuse we see given here is the excuse of a wife. I bought a field, bought some oxen. I have married a wife and therefore, I cannot come to the banquet.

Again, this marriage is not unplanned. He didn't marry this wife out of nowhere. This banquet was, the invite to the banquet was given long, long ago.

And you could see in short, he is putting his, the excuse here is, those put our family before coming to Jesus. I mean, the caveat, of course, family is a good thing. And the Lord has given us family structures and we must prioritize our family when needed.

And that is important. Myself as well as ourselves. You know, as Christians, our first ministry is towards our family. Mine included. My first ministry is towards my family. Of course, second followed very closely by Tolstah.

[52 : 23] But every Christian man knows this. Our first calling, our first ministry is to serve our family well. But brothers and sisters, yes, a family is a good thing.

And yes, our loved ones are indeed our loved ones. And it must be so. It's a good and godly thing to think that way. But if we are letting our family connections stop us from coming to the feast.

Stop us from accepting the invite. If you are more worried, perhaps, about your family or your loved one's response to coming to Jesus When you are about not coming to Jesus, then what an excuse.

At the final day, you say to him, I heard the invitation again and again. I heard the invitation again and again. On the 18th of June, I sat in church and I heard the invitation.

But I thought, I won't accept it this time because, you know, what would he think? What would she think? What would they think? What would they say? And the excuse comes and it lingers.

[53 : 32] The chance comes and it goes. And once more you leave this place, having not heard or listened to the gospel offer. The excuses here are supposed to sound quite silly because they are.

Jesus makes them sound quite farcical because they're supposed to be. Why? Because when you compare whatever excuses we make towards the simple and beautiful call to come and to follow Jesus, all excuses fade away.

All excuses are farcical. When you say, come and know the God who made you, who knew you from before time itself, the God who is able to keep you and sustain you and love you and bring him home to himself and spend eternity with him in joy and peace.

Come and serve him. Come and know him. Come and know the God who loved you so much, who gave his only begotten son. I can't. I'm too busy.

I can't. I've got this reason and that reason. See, it's so silly. It's so silly. The excuses mean nothing.

[54 : 45] In the face of such a beautiful, extensive call. It brings us, finally, to the guests. The guests who do respond.

Dear brothers and dear sisters, we've been given a great calling, haven't we? We've been placed here. We might have been born here. Your family might be from here. But in God's providence, we've either moved to here or we've been born and brought up here and we're living here.

We're here as part of this mission field and we're here as servants. We're here as servants seeking to give out this glorious gospel. Who are the guests who are invited?

Dear friends, you have heard the gospel for years and years. Please, I said it before, I said it again. We get so comfortable, don't we?

We get so comfortable. You're down there, I'm up here, I'm in my collar and you're in your suits. We're so comfortable in our Sunday routines. So comfortable in just coming and going and this is what we do when you go home again.

[55 : 43] This is real. This is real. If I could come down and go row by row, I would. If it would help, but it wouldn't. This is genuine and this is real.

Please don't let your excuses follow you to the grave. Please don't. Because when it comes to that day, the excuses and you yourself will see that they mean nothing.

They mean nothing. The call expands. Those who have heard the gospel. Those who have heard the invite. They have their excuses. So the master then expands the call.

Verse 21 down to verse 24. The call gets expanded, isn't it? Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame.

The unwanted by society, the hated, the rejected. God says, take them all in. The calls for them. Those who have nothing.

[56 : 46] Those who want for nothing. Those who have no plans in life and no idea of life. Those who are so lost, invite them in. The gospel's for them. Then we see the glorious good news.

The servant comes back. And the servant says to the master, verse 22. Sir, what you have commanded has been done. And still there's room. And still there is room.

That is the gospel hope today. Yes, you've made excuses the last 10 years, 20 years, 40, 50, 70 plus years. How long you make excuses for.

Well, surely my time is up. Surely the Lord has stopped giving me chances. Yet there is room.

There is still room. There is so much room in this account and this story that Jesus tells that the master says, verse 23, to the highways and the hedges, to find every vagrant you can find, every person you can lay your hand on.

[57 : 56] And compel them. Compel them to come in. Why? So that my house may be filled. God is not a God who is little and slow and short in his mercy.

He's a God who desires to show his loving kindness, his faithfulness, his love to all who will hear and all who will come.

He's a God who is aware wants the house to be filled up. Every seat to be filled up. Yet there is more room.

There is more room. This is the best news, my friends, you can hear this day. Yes, you've ignored him up until now. But yet there is more room. Yes, you've said to him again and again, not just now.

I've got time just now to follow you. I don't want to listen to the gospel just now. Yet there's more room. You've said to yourself again and again, I'll follow him one day, but not yet. There's still more room.

[58 : 58] But the promise of there being more room is for now. It's for now. Because as we say this and preach this, we know there's more room because it's God's word.

But your time or indeed the whole time eternity could end today or tonight or tomorrow, we don't know. And then there's no more room. The doors are indeed closed.

And look, we will end with this, the solemn, the solemn words of the master as he finishes off the invitation. For I tell you, verse 24, that none of those men who are invited shall taste my banquet.

Once the house is full as it were, the doors are closed. And those who had invite after invite, who were prepared for them, who ignored it and who rejected it.

There comes a day at some point where God says, you've had your time. Death comes to you. And there's now no entry for you.

[60 : 08] Don't wait for a deathbed conversion. Don't wait for a miraculous conversion. Today, this moment, as you hear once more of this invitation, this is your invite.

What disqualifies you, as it were, from heaven? What disqualifies you just now? So you ignore. Do you ignore once more?

As the master calls you in, says, I see your sin. I see your backsliding. Come to the one who has died to make you holy, to make you clean.

In his blood, he can do that. His finished work, he can do that. Come and find it and feel it and know it for yourself. But no, you say, I'm too busy.

I can't yet. I'm not ready yet. I don't want to yet. And each day you ignore him, it's one day closer to the doors, as it were, being shut.

[61 : 10] Do not, please, waste that gospel opportunity. Do not waste that chance you have to come and to know him for yourself. To love him for yourself.

To serve him as God and as King. The invite is clear. The gospel invite is beautiful.

Come. Come. Come, for everything is now ready. Dear friends, that is the invite you have today.

Don't ignore that invite. Dear friends and sisters, as we close, one note to ourselves. Look at the wording. Verse 23. Go out to the highways and the hedges and compel people to come in.

Compel them. And not force them, of course, that's a given. No one is forced into heaven. No one is forced into loving Jesus. But our lifestyles and our conduct and our vigor and our zeal is to be such we should be compelling those around us to come in.

[62 : 19] As we look forward to days we pray of and we hope of gospel blessing and gospel renewal in our community. We know the Lord will do to his wishes. This might be a day of small things.

It might be ten years, a hundred years of small things. But the call is the same regardless. We must go and be ready to compel them to come in. To go out to our families and our friends and our neighbours.

Get to know them if we don't. Get to know those in our village if we don't know them. Show ourselves to be genuine people and compel them to come in. To show them the beauty of who Jesus is.

The urgency of their salvation. And that there is still room for them. That is our hope, isn't it? But it's still room. But don't rest on that hope, dear friends.

Don't rest on that hope for too long. For one day soon the house will be filled up. The doors will be closed. And that's it. That's it.

[63 : 20] You've heard the Gospel. You've heard the invitation. You can't say you didn't. He's been gracious in giving you invitation again and again. Minister after minister for many years. Hear it once more today.

Yet there is room. Come. Everything is now ready. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord God we thank you for the goodness and the love.

The kindness and the mercy you show towards us. Those of us who know and who love you. You've taken us into that feast. That banquet. You've shown us what it is to receive from your hand.

Mercy after mercy. And grace after grace. And love upon love. Love upon love. We ask that same reality of love and peace would be known by our friends here today.

That they today would hear that Gospel call. That Gospel invite. And would themselves come. And know what it is to walk into that banqueting hall. And to have a banner over them.

[64 : 22] And a reading love. Lord help us to leave this place. And to go home today in safety and in peace. Spend this afternoon in your things. And pondering and spending time with you.

Enjoying the beauty of creation. Let's go all these things in and through. And for Jesus Christ in your name sake. Amen. Let's bring our time together to conclusion.

We send to God's praise from Sing Psalms. Sing Psalms once more this time. Psalm 16. Sing Psalms.

Psalm 16. It's on page 16. But we can sing from verses 8 to 11. Sing Psalms. Psalm 16. Verses 8 to 11.

Again these words of hope. Words of course to speak about our Saviour. The words also we apply to ourselves. Knowing that because we're in him. We also will know what it is to be alive with him forever.

[65 : 30] Psalm 16 verse 8. Before me constantly. I set the Lord alone. Because he is at my right hand. I'll not be overthrown. Psalm 16 verses 8 to 11.

To God's praise. God's praise. God's praise. Before me constantly. I set the Lord alone.
Before me constantly. I set the Lord alone. I set the Lord alone.

Because he is at my right hand. I'll not be overthrown. Because he is at my right hand. I'll
not be overthrown.

Death on my heart is sad. My heart with joy will sing.

I'm walking to the rest of the earth. I'm walking to the rest of the earth. I'm walking to the
rest of the earth. In hope and without me.

[66 : 39] Are you in the heart of my soul in death to share?

I'm walking to the rest of the earth. I know. I know. I'm walking to the rest of my soul. I
know. I know. I know. I know. I know. I know.

I know. But I know. You have made known to me the path of my divine.

This time I know I do right now, joy from your face will shine.

Amen. In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both for now and for evermore. Amen.