

The Great Banquet

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Date: 24 September 2017

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[0 : 00] Well, I'd like to consider with you the words we have here of this parable that the Lord gave of the great banquet.

And as we look once again at Luke chapter 14, we look and see what the Lord has said from verse 17. 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. But the Ola Knight 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, and therefore I cannot come. And so on. Well, each of us gets invited to various functions and different events at different times.

[1 : 13] And when that invitation comes, we can have different reactions to it, depending on our circumstances. And depending on what kind of vocation or function that we are actually invited to.

And whether this particular invitation clashes with something else that we have to do at that particular time. And I'm sure we can all understand that side of things.

And the passage that we are going to consider here today is much the same. But it's incorporated into a parable of the coming kingdom of God.

And someone comments here that those who eat bread in the kingdom will be blessed. And that leaves us with a question then.

Who is it that will eat bread in the kingdom of God? And Jesus here was particularly addressing the Pharisees. And we are in a section here where the Pharisees are questioning the Lord Jesus in so many different ways.

[2 : 23] And trying to catch him out. And so on. And as that question is asked who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then the Pharisees had no doubt whatsoever in their own minds who was going to be at that banqueting table.

And who was going to be with the Lord throughout eternity. They thought that only they would sit at that banquet table.

And they thought that they were the only ones who were going to make it into the kingdom. And they certainly didn't want, as it's called here, the people are called here, the outcasts of society included in this banquet.

They didn't want to share anything at all with them. And they didn't want them anywhere near them. And even in life itself at these times. The Pharisees had separated themselves from the ordinary folk around Jerusalem and around these parts.

And separated themselves even further from those they considered to be outcasts and unworthy of anything at all. And yet what we have here in the passage is a representation of the true gospel invitation.

[3 : 38] And that true gospel invitation is to everyone. And that is no matter who you are and no matter what you've done and no matter where you've come from, this invitation is open to you.

Anyone and everyone who repents of their sins and turns to God and accepts Jesus as their saviour, then they will sit at that table.

And what we understand from that is that those who repent of their sins and turn to the Lord accepting Jesus as saviour are those who will enjoy him in their life here on this earth.

Trusting him with everything. And trusting him to take them with him and to be with him through the endless ages of eternity. And the passage as well, I think, emphasizes the importance of responding to this gospel call.

And it clarifies what happens to those who refuse the offer. And so we have this wonderful invitation from Jesus here to come.

[4 : 49] And I'd like to look at it under three headings. First of all, to look at the invitation itself and what the Lord is expressing or some aspects of what he's expressing within that invitation.

Secondly, we can look at the excuses that are made by the people that we have record of here. And then thirdly, the consequences of making these excuses and refusing the call of the gospel.

So, let's look first then at this invitation. And what we ought to understand here is that the master represents the Lord himself.

And the invitation represents the free offer of the gospel and all of the blessings of salvation. And for those who come who share in the banquet, they are those whose life is now in Christ Jesus. And who will be with him through the endless ages of eternity. So, we see then that the master sends out his servant. And at this invitation, it's given in three phases here.

[5 : 59] In verse 17, we see that first phase. That first phase of the invitation, it represents the announcement of the kingdom of God to the Jewish nation.

And we know from a reading of the Old Testament, and many of those present there would have had many of the Old Testament scriptures present. And the Old Testament prophets, they spoke consistently and circulated news of this great banquet invitation.

And this banquet was to begin with the coming of the Messiah. But the Jewish leaders, of course, were too preoccupied and too satisfied with their current way of life.

And they didn't heed the invitation. They chose to miss out on this banquet. They made their excuses rather than have their life disrupted. And they didn't want to lose all the comforts that they had at that time either.

And most importantly, the Jewish leaders all refused to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

[7 : 14] In verse 21, we see that the poor and the handicapped of the parable, who were brought into the banquet during the second phase of the invitation, we understand them to be the ordinary Jewish people of Jesus' time.

And many of these people acknowledged Jesus as Messiah. They accepted the invitation to come to the banquet. And they experienced God's forgiveness and blessing.

And then, in verse 22, we see the third and final phase of the invitation. So this invitation was extended out to those, as we have it here, who were in the highways and the byways and the hedges, those who were outside the city limits.

And this represents the gospel going out to the whole world. And this is a change that is coming through Jesus. The change where it's through the Old Testament, they understood that the Jewish nation was a special nation.

And only those would be saved by following the law. But now Jesus is setting out this new way. And this gospel invitation is set out to everyone.

[8 : 28] The highways, the byways, we understand from this, how it is a great close parallel to the great commission of Christ that we have in Matthew 28.

And there, at verse 16, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. And go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

So we have the gospel here going out to the whole world. And this is where we see the transition from the old covenant ways into the new covenant ways, this new way of salvation in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ.

And the gospel call going out first to the Jew, and then to the Gentiles. And the Gentiles are all peoples of the earth, those who are outside of the Jewish nations.

[9 : 43] And an invitation list has been drawn up here. And it's an open invitation to everyone. And all our names are on it.

And we can make special reference to that great verse in John 3 and verse 16. That God so loves his word, He so loves you, that he has given his only begotten Son, that whoever will believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

And what that means is that God's abundant love and grace is now freely offered to all people, to everyone. And that includes everybody here today as well.

And the conditions of entry to this banquet are very plain and simple. That is to repent and to turn away from your sin and to return to the Lord by faith, having faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that he will take care of you and look after you in every way.

And even today, this Banqueting Hall is not yet full. The door is still open and there is still room for you.

[11 : 08] And Jesus is asking you to accept his invitation. And he's asking you to say yes to it today and to turn to him because he's holding out his hand in mercy and in love towards you this day again.

And this invitation is very personal because he really wants you personally to be there. And he's saying something very clear to us as well.

He's saying just come exactly as you are. Never mind anything else and never mind anyone else.

And don't try to sort yourself out before coming to Jesus.

Don't try to make yourself acceptable because you can't. Jesus is the one who makes the changes.

And what he's asking is that you accept the invitation and he will take care of everything else for you.

Jesus says come to me. I've laid out this wonderful feast and it's free because I've paid the price for it. You have nothing to lose.

[12 : 26] In fact you have everything to gain. and he so wants you to share in this great banquet.

And we see in this passage secondly the excuses that are made by those who are invited.

And the first man's excuse was that he had just bought some land. We see that in verse 18. The first said to him I bought a field and I must go out and see it.

And we have to really think to ourselves well what a feeble excuse that is. Because we know today that if any of us purchases land or purchases any property that you go to view it before the contract is signed and not afterwards.

It's like saying that that look I can't come just now I've had I've just had my mortgage approved and I've paid for my new house and now I need to go and view that property and I need to get it surveyed.

It's like everything's going totally back to frontier but that's essentially the excuse that was made by this man here. And he says please excuse me. And then the second man that was that responds to the invitation that refuses the invitation he uses newly purchased oxen as his excuse.

[14 : 05] And we see that in verse 19. Another said I have bought five yoke of oxen and I'm going to examine them. And here again it's hard to imagine a farmer whose occupation and livelihood depended on ploughing the fields and having good equipment and animals.

It's hard to imagine anyone like that making such a major investment we're told here five yoke of oxen without first proving them and without testing them out.

And we can perhaps understand that in our own day and age to make an excuse of something like this that we've just bought a second hand car and you paid for it and now you need to go and test drive it to see exactly what it's like.

Once again it's putting everything back to front and it makes no sense as it does with this second excuse that's made here by this by this man here. and he also says please excuse me.

And then in verse 20 then we see the third excuse coming out and this man has just got married and he sees that as being much more important than attending the Lord's banquet and it leaves us with a question but why did he not just take his new wife along to the banquet with him?

[15 : 39] So he's essentially saying please excuse me. And it's very obvious that this man like the previous two now had something that he felt was much more important to him and he had lost his desire to attend the banquet.

And all of the excuses in the parable of this great banquet if we look at them they involve activities that were not wrong in themselves.

I mean buying property making a living and getting married are proper and right things to do in life. But even good things can become excuses for staying away and for prioritizing these things over and above the gospel and above the Lord.

Please don't lose out on the greatest of blessings in the gospel in Jesus Christ just because of wrong priorities in your life.

These excuses here are so ridiculous and they point to the fact that these people considered this banquet and this man Jesus to be of little importance.

[17 : 05] And it leaves us with the question that are there folk in here is there anybody in here who fits into this category as well? and I ask if there's anyone here who's just too occupied and too content with your own particular lifestyle at the moment and all your activities and I ask are these things really more important than coming to God and following Jesus?

do you think to yourself now is not the time to worry about my soul I'll come round to that sometime in the future but not now? Are you thinking that your life is just too good just now and you really don't want that interrupted?

These are very serious questions that relate very closely to the passage that we have here today. Are you someone here who doesn't want to spoil what you have and the life you have here on this earth just now even though Jesus is not included in it?

Would you find that to be a real inconvenience? Because the three people here responded clearly found it to be far too much of an inconvenience to come to the Lord and to sit at his banquet.

And if you are hearing that today then I do have to say that God is telling you in no uncertain terms that just as it is here in the parable that we have that he also sees right through each and every excuse that you are making and he does find them unacceptable.

[18 : 51] He is giving you this free offer of the gospel of coming to faith of coming to Jesus and of your salvation. Are you still in here saying no to the Lord?

Maybe there is someone or some people here today who would really want to come but just don't feel quite ready yet or perhaps you don't even know how.

Perhaps you feel it is just too big a step at the moment and perhaps you keep putting it off. All I can say is if anyone feels that it is too big a step to take and that you have to reach some kind of standard first, please don't think that because all Jesus asks of you is to really believe in him and trust in him and place your faith and confidence and hope in him with everything in your life.

And we see here as well in the three phases of this parable that first of all the servant who goes out is commanded to go quickly to come.

Just ask them to come to the banquet. And then secondly we see that the servant is commanded bring them in which is a step more urgent.

[20 : 29] And then finally when the servant goes out a third time the master says to him, compel them to come in. So they ask them to come in and bring them in and compel them to come in.

And that really tells us of the urgency that there is to respond to this call because Jesus saw this call as been extremely urgent.

And the question is do you also see it that way today in your own life? Because when we look now thirdly at the consequences of whatever your response may be it's very clear to us.

First of all we see that God in his love that he graciously invites you to come to him. And he says come to me all of you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

But it's also clear that if you keep refusing this invitation then this invitation will be withdrawn and when it is withdrawn then it will be too late.

[21 : 53] So your response to this invitation of the gospel the call from Jesus to come to him your response one way or another will determine where you spend eternity.

And it doesn't matter what experiences you have in this world and it certainly doesn't matter what you've accumulated for yourself in terms of worldly possessions because the only thing that's going to matter on the day of your death is that you have Jesus Christ as your personal saviour.

That you have accepted the call to this great banquet. And what Jesus says here is that if you refuse this invitation for whatever reason then you cannot sit at his banqueting table.

And so we need to ask the question what exactly does this mean? Well the Bible tells us very clearly that for those who keep refusing this invitation and for those who die without Jesus Christ as their personal saviour that they will spend eternity in hell in everlasting torment and where there will be no more possibility of salvation because then it will be too late.

There will be no more opportunity of experiencing saving grace anymore nor for that matter will there be any prospect of experiencing even common grace anymore.

[23 : 34] And what that means is that there will be no more mercy and there will be no more favour from the Lord towards you. And you will endure the wrath of God throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Now that in itself is not solemn and directs our hearts and souls and minds to respond possibly to this gospel invitation then I really don't know what else will prompt you to do it.

But we are told that there are those who will sit at the banqueting table and there are those who place their faith in Christ and there are the ones who will indeed spend eternity with him in heaven and they share in the precious gift of eternal life that he gives so freely and lovingly to all of his people.

They share his blessings here on earth. They have the promise of eternity with Christ taken to be with them at the very moment of their death.

And this will be the fulfilment of this feast that the Lord tells us of here in this parable. God's people will all be gathered to himself.

[25 : 05] Not even one can ever be lost. Having entered into that final rest of God. And the one and the only reason God's people go to glory with him is because they will have washed their robes and they will have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Just as is recorded for us in that great passage of Revelation 7. When the question is asked who are those then the reply is given they are those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The ones who have come through the great tribulation on this earth. And no matter what their experience on this earth is yet their faith and trust is in Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

It is all because of his atoning work on the cross. The Lamb of God who gave himself at Calvary and whose blood was shed for us.

Our precious Saviour Lord Jesus who gave himself on that cross at Calvary so willingly. Our precious Saviour who endured that three hours of darkness on the cross battling with all of the forces of evil.

[26 : 33] All that the devil could throw at him. Our precious Saviour who endured losing that sense of relationship and being effectively abandoned by God because God could not look at sin and he was a sin bearer.

And he endured all of that crying out my God my God why have you forsaken me? And he endured all of that for our sakes. But yet he overcome he overcame and yet he has the victory the victories in Christ because he has overcome sin and the devil and he has overcome death itself he has risen and because he has risen then we will all rise.

is only because of all that Jesus has done. That's the price that had to be paid for the redemption of his people because of sin.

And they are all cleansed all of his people in that precious blood of Christ all cleansed spiritually in that precious blood of Christ. Christ. And the beauty and the wonder of this gospel is that it doesn't even matter how your life has been right up to this very point, right up to this very moment today because this is a limitation for a new start for you right now.

If you will respond. in the parable here, as it is with I'm sure some people in here today, the people, those who made the excuses, they actually didn't doubt the existence of God or the fact of the banquet and they didn't doubt that the invitation was genuine.

[28 : 35] The problem here was a matter of priorities. what was more important to them. And so it is for many people today, they are in exactly the same situation as that.

They don't doubt the existence of God and they don't doubt either their need for salvation. It's just a matter of what's more important.

And this is when we come down to what we might call the nitty gritty of it all. God, the question has to be asked, are you so busy with other things in your life that you have no time for Jesus just now when God's offer here of salvation is of little importance or value in comparison to what you hold dear in this world.

God, are you saying to God, please excuse me? These three dreadful words from this passage, please excuse me because I've got something more important to do with my life right now.

Just please, please excuse me just now. And what I say is if you keep refusing God's invitation, then you're effectively saying to God, I don't want you.

[29 : 53] I don't want you in my life just now. And I'm just going to carry on the way I am. And that is despite the fact that he has taken the initiative.

And he's inviting you back to himself. And he's done that by the giving of his one and only son, Jesus Christ. You see, it's only when you value Christ above everything else, it's only then that everything else is put into its proper perspective.

And that's when you realize what is really important in life. But you need to accept, while the invitation is still there, because it's one thing to have the invitation, but it's quite another thing to have Christ as your Savior.

Savior. If you haven't responded, then please, please look deep into your heart and soul and ask yourself, what's stopping me?

What is stopping me responding to this call of Jesus? Because God wants you to respond, and God wants you to accept Christ as Lord. God wants you to be saved, and God wants you to be with him at his banquet.

[31 : 20] The Lord Jesus Christ laying out this banquet throughout the endless ages of eternity. He wants you to be there with him, because there his banner over you will be love.

Let's pray. Lord our God, we thank you today once again for the time we have here and for the word that you have given us.

We pray, Lord, that your name would be glorified through all that's said and done, and may truly be that you would work in the souls of men and women and boys and girls this day, drawing them out of darkness and into the marvelous light of the gospel.

All to your glory. Amen. Well, let's close our service of worship with the words of Psalm 133 from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 133, it's on page 424 of the Blue Psalm books. And the tune is Brother James here. Behold how good a thing it is and how we come in well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

[32 : 55] We'll sing the three verses of the psalm to God's praise. psalm verse 124 Behold how good a thing it is and how be coming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

together such as brethren are in unity to dwell. Like precious oil bent on the head that down the bearded flow, even Aaron's beard and to the skirt stood up his garments go.

Even Aaron's beard and to the skirts stood up his garments go. As termons shoes of youth that does on Zion's hills descend For there the blessing God commands life that shall never end For there the blessing God commands life that shall never Amen.

We pray, Father, that you would bless what is laid aside in the hall now. That will be to the good of our bodies. And we pray that there will be a bond of fellowship with all who gather there.

Now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest upon you, and abide with each one of you now and always. Amen.

[35 : 04] Amen.