

The Parable of the Great Supper

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Date: 20 September 2009

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[0 : 00] Let us turn for a little to the second reading, the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 14. And we'll read it just at verse 16 there.

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 servants to say to those who were invited, Come, for everything is now ready. Now we know that the Jews loved their feasts, loved their banquets, and they loved fine dining. There's a program which has become incredibly popular, Come Dine With Me. And there are many people and groups of people all over. And I know it happens here. And people raise money for charities in this way. And a group of friends come together. And that's a great idea. In a sense, the Jews, in the time of Jesus, they were very much into this way of life, into this fine dining.

[1 : 08] And there were many feasts. And we find Jesus, in his time, in the three-year ministry, was often invited to some of these feasts. And he went. And we saw that last week of how he said, look, he was seeing the people there.

And he was aware that those who were inviting tended to only invite those who could, in turn, invite them back. It tended to be people just, as it were, on one particular rung of the social ladder. And Jesus is saying, no. You've also, it's good to invite your friends all out. But make sure you invite those who cannot invite you back. Invite those who can never repay what you've done. And Jesus is showing that that is the true Christian way. And, of course, his teaching is always radical. And it was radical here as well because this parable or this story that he gives develops out of this very thing.

Because as he was there eating around the table, he was very conscious because Jesus was always observing and taking note and dealing with what he was seeing. And he could see very clearly that the Jews there had such a great sense of their destiny.

[2 : 24] And they were persuaded that they were already in the kingdom of God simply because they were Jews. And so Jesus deals with that particular assessment that they had.

And Jesus is showing that it's not according to their Jewishness that they became part of the kingdom. It was, it's only one way and one way only.

That is by accepting himself. There is an acceptance of the personal invitation that he gives. And so he deals with that situation by way of the story that we have here.

Now, Jesus pictures the gospel as a great supper or a great feast or a great banquet. And that is so true because here we are in this world.

And it's a great world in many ways. But it's also a world that is full of stresses and strains and difficulties. And it doesn't matter not being gloomy or pessimistic, just being realistic.

[3 : 28] Although life can often be so great and thrilling and satisfying, we also know that life can be difficult. It can be full of disappointments and pains.

We can often feel let down and confused and hurt and sore. And we often feel wounded in spirit. And we're conscious of these things.

And we're also aware of our own, I suppose, a sense of our own sin, for want of a better word, which affects us. Sometimes we're not sitting down there and saying, oh, it's my sin.

But we're often dissatisfied with ourselves. We're often disappointed with ourselves. And, you know, when we find that dissatisfaction and that disappointment with ourselves because we realize we're not really what we should be, that is an awareness of who we are really before God, that we are not attaining to who and what God would require of us.

And it's for this very reason that we cannot be what we should be that Jesus came into this world. He came to make for us a way to God.

[4 : 47] He came to deal with what we couldn't deal with ourselves. Now, some people think that the gospel is boring. And some people think that when a person becomes a Christian that really they wave goodbye to liberty and freedom.

Well, it's the very opposite. Jesus said that he gives freedom. He said, Christ shall make you free. And that is so true.

And it's not until a person comes to accept Christ and to know Christ as their own Lord and Savior that they discover this actual freedom, this actual liberty in life.

And when we receive Christ as Savior, Jesus himself comes through the Spirit into our heart. And he gives us a sense of direction in life. He gives us a purpose in life, a meaning in life.

And there's a sense of love. There's a sense of belonging. There's a sense of peace. And the thing is that this is rooted in himself.

[5 : 54] It's not in the circumstances of life. You know, a lot of people can be very content in life. And they can really enjoy life when everything is going well.

But when everything crashes round about them, then the contentment and the peace that they had enjoyed in life, it goes as well.

It crashes along with the circumstances all around them. For the Christian, there is a difference. Now, that doesn't mean that the Christian doesn't get hurt and wounded. That doesn't mean that the Christian can crash as well.

Of course, he or she can. But the fact is that Christ remains constant. And if we are receiving joy in him, that joy remains irrespective of what happens around us.

That is why Paul was able to rejoice in the prison. He wasn't rejoicing because he had just been beaten silly. Of course not. It would be something weird, something wrong with that person, if they were thinking like that.

[6 : 57] But his rejoicing was in the Lord. That's why Paul was always saying to us, rejoice in the Lord. That is why our peace cannot be taken away.

Even though things all around us might at one level be causing us distress and confusion, at an even deeper level, the peace in Christ remains.

Because Jesus says, my peace I give you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you. See, the world's peace is fragile, easily broken. It will break by circumstances.

The peace in Christ won't. It remains. And so, that is why when the gospel is presented in the gospel by way of picture, it is always by way of celebration.

It is by the like of a wedding. It is by the like of a feast. It is that which satisfies the deepest part of our being. So, here we find Jesus at this great supper.

[8 : 00] And he tells us, or at this feast, and he uses it, as we said, to tell this story about this great supper and the banquet prepared. Now, in those days, the guests would know in advance.

When a great supper was prepared, the guests would know in advance that this was happening and that they were going to be asked on a particular day. But further notice would be given closer to the time.

So, all the people who were invited had already been notified of what was taking place. And in a sense, that's what makes the refusal all the worse.

Because when the time of the feast had actually come, the servants were sent out to those who had been invited and say, Look, come now. Everything is now ready. This feast which you had been told about before, this feast which you knew about, the time has come.

So, come on. It's all ready now. Now, when Jesus was speaking here, he was speaking primarily to the Jews of his day.

[9 : 06] And he's saying to them, Look, you have the Old Testament. We have the New Testament now. They didn't. But they had the Old Testament. And they were steeped in the Old Testament, which was talking about the coming Messiah and talking about the coming kingdom.

And they often deliberated and thought about what it would be like when the Messiah came. Well, Jesus is saying to them, Really, the Messiah has now come.

And the Messiah is now personally inviting you to come into the kingdom, into this great banquet. But they refused, so many of them refused the invitation.

They wouldn't have it. You know, there's a lot of people today say, You know, if I had been living at the time of Christ, and I had been walking along the street with the crowd, and had seen Jesus, and had watched him perform these miracles, and if I had seen him heal people who were completely

disabled and broken, if I had seen people who I knew all my life to be blind, and all of a sudden, I saw them walking around, and they were, they could see everything as clear as day. If I had been around, and had seen Jesus perform the miracles, and had heard the teaching, and if I had been personally invited by Jesus, if I had stood there, and had heard him say, Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, I would have come.

[10:38] No question. I doubt it. Because the invitation that Jesus is extending today is exactly the same invitation that he extended 2,000 years ago when he spoke it.

Because this word is a living word. And the invitation goes out today with all the authority of the Lord. And we come under the word, and under this invitation, and the invitation goes out to us to come to him.

So if you have not responded to this great invitation, I would ask you today to do so. Lord, help me. Lord, please, I want to respond.

Will you come as he has invited us? Now, we read here that all of those who were invited began to make excuses. Now, sometimes an excuse can be genuine and legitimate and completely justified. Sometimes we have to phone somebody up, and we have to make an excuse for not going. And it's really, it's maybe not so much an excuse, it's more a reason why we can't go.

[11:54] And it's completely legitimate. But sometimes, we do make just excuses. where we may take something that is true, and yet twist it and turn it in such a way that it's not altogether true what we're saying.

But we use this just as an excuse not to go. And the thing is that it's kind of like a truth mingled with a lie.

And I'm sure people always are doing things like that, making excuses about lots of things. The bottom line is you don't want to do this, you don't want to go there, and so you find some excuse to make.

And when we make an excuse, we always try to justify ourselves. But you know, when you look at the excuses, they're not really legitimate. They're not really legitimate reasons at all.

And it's the same with regard to the gospel. It's the same with regard to many, many a Christian. Many people make excuses as to why they don't attend church as regularly as they should.

[13:10] Many people make excuses why they don't get involved in Christian things. And they put forward these ideas to themselves. There are many people who aren't as committed to Christ as they should be.

And they put forward the reason they're trying to justify to themselves why it is the way it is. And if somebody says, why don't you get involved? They will say, oh, there's this and that and the next thing.

My friend, you may make all the justification, all the sort of excuses to yourself, all the reasons to yourself, but it won't cut with the Lord.

The Lord knows what is true and what's not. The Lord knows when we're making an excuse, when we're putting forward reasons that don't cut with Him.

Remember, one day we have to give an account if Jesus has done everything for us. We always have to ask ourselves, what in turn are we doing for Him?

[14:15] Because this is what He's requiring us. He doesn't want us to become Christians who are sitting in a corner involved in everything else in life, but not involved in His kingdom.

And this is part of what is being spoken about here. So you see, Jesus' message is often hard-hitting and we've got to look in and say, right, where am I in relation to all this and all these things?

And so we find that all these people, they began to make excuses. And again, there are many people who remain outside the kingdom and they're making excuses.

One of the main excuses, so often you'll hear people say, as to why they have not become Christians. Why are you still, why are you, you've been attending church for years, why are you not a Christian?

Oh, I look around and see some of these people. I know the minister, I know, I know the assistant, I know some of these elders, I know, I know, and I see things, I see inconsistencies.

[15:22] You know, it's a great argument, a great excuse for not being a Christian. Tell you something, it doesn't cut with the Lord, not at all.

Because it's not to other people that we are to look to, it is the Lord. And the Lord will say at the end of the day, you never looked to me. You were looking to other people, I never asked you to look to other people, I asked you to look to me, and you have refused.

So, you see, we cannot take out, we cannot excuse ourselves for not becoming a believer because of what somebody else is or does.

And the other side of it is that Christians will have to answer themselves for their own inconsistencies and for their own bad witness.

Because these are solemn things. The Christian is responsible and accountable before God. But anyway, we see these excuses and you can see how really kind of useless they are.

[16:32] One says, I bought a piece of ground or a field and I've got to go and see it. Well, I think you and I know that nobody buys a piece of land without first going to have a look at it.

That's one of the first things he would do. You'd say to yourself, there's a piece of land for sale. I'm interested in buying a piece of land. I'm going to have a look at it. You wouldn't buy it without having ever seen it.

So, straight away, this person's excuse doesn't work. Then the next person says, I bought five yoke of oxen. If you were to put that, I have to go and examine them. Well, if you were to put it into modern day terms, it would be like, I suppose, buying a second-hand tractor and maybe plow.

And again, if you bought a tractor, I reckon you would give it a wee test drive first. You would check it out. See if it worked. See what it was like. So, again, this person's excuse doesn't work.

Then the next person says, I've married a wife, therefore I cannot come. Well, again, surely if one is invited, the other is invited as well. Now, the point that Jesus is making is not that it's wrong to buy a piece of ground.

[17:42] It's not wrong to buy a tractor or five yoke of oxen or whatever. It's not wrong to marry a wife. In fact, not only is it not wrong, these things are all positively good.

In fact, when you strip it down, these three things really constitute what life is all about. Our work, where we're at, our relationships, in fact, the three sort of key areas and key areas of life are our homes, our work, and our families, our relationships.

These are the three key areas and in them come the great blessings to us in life of home, of work, and relationships and families. Can you imagine how awful life would be without these?

They're at the very heart of what we are and they are blessings given to us by God. However, this is what Jesus is saying. These great blessings must never come between our shelves and the Lord. and as we look at our frenzied lives as we're and the thing is, everybody knows today we are busier and busier and busier.

[19:02] We don't have time. The difference in 20 years or 40 years or even in the last 10 years, everybody today is so busy.

We don't have time and nobody can understand. You have so many things to do. You can't get near it because all of a sudden your day is flooded with other things and you're saying the things I was going to do and the places I was going to go to and the people I was going to go to and the people I haven't had a chance and then it gets we're being swallowed up or consumed in this frenzied rush, rush, rush.

We can't stop it. It's like being on one of these treadmills that's just getting faster and faster and there's no button or anything to slow it down. It's just the way society is going but in and all through these things we've still got to ask where do our priorities lie?

Because even in these wonderful blessings if our home, our relationships and families and if our work is relegating the Lord way down so that we don't have time for the Lord.

We don't have time for our soul. We don't have time for our Christianity. We don't have time for our Bible reading, for prayer, for doing anything for the Lord because we're so busy the Lord is saying hey, hold on.

[20:31] Your priorities are all wrong. So we've got to look at these things and examine them.

Then we see the reaction just moving very briefly of the Lord of the Supper and he said send the servants out into the streets and the lanes and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame.

Go quickly. You see, this is urgent business. Soul salvation, soul's life is all tied in. Go quickly.

It's urgent. See, once a person closes his eyes or her eyes in death, the invitation of the gospel will be given no more. It's here.

It's now. It's in this life. And then we're told go to the highways and the hedges. Everywhere. Go right down all the way from the palace to those who are sleeping in the cardboard boxes, those who are in the gutter, the homeless, into every area of life.

And that's what Jesus has said the Great Commission. Go into all the world. Jesus didn't say you can only go to a select few. Go into all the world. This message is for all nations and for all races in the world.

[21 : 51] And you know, today the wonderful thing is that hundreds of thousands of people have been brought into the kingdom all over the world. And we're told here compel the people to come.

You see, the gospel is dealing in issues of life and death. There are lots of things in life that, okay, if you didn't do it, it might be disappointing, but it's no big deal.

This is. This affects who you are. This affects your destiny. It affects everything. And to ignore it is putting your own life in peril.

And that's why Jesus is saying this is, you've got to compel people. And that is surely what we've got to do as we try and proclaim the word of God is to bring to people's focus the urgency of closing in with Christ and discovering his security, his love.

Remember how the apostle Paul said, knowing that for the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

Yes, Paul believed in the sovereignty of God.

[23 : 01] Yes, Paul believed in the doctrine of election. But Paul reasoned and argued and persuaded and he used all his great intellect and powers to try and convince people of the importance of finding Christ a savior.

And that is what we are to do as well. And then, wonderfully, still there is room, beautiful words. If you're outside the kingdom today, my friend, there's still room for you.

You may be saying to yourself, I don't know if there's any room for me now. Kind of person I've been, things I've done, all the years that have gone by, all the wasted opportunities, too late for me. Hear these words, still there is room, compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

And Christ will fill his house with people from all over the world. People of every color. Red, yellow, black, white, all the different colors that people, the makeup of the world.

[24 : 18] of all the different stations in life. Those who are rich and those who are poor. Those who have everything and those who have nothing.

The disabled, the aged, the babies, from all the different languages and classes and creeds and cultures, everywhere.

The gospel is going in and people are being drawn. And they're being drawn in the same way whether it's in Angola or Aberdeen or here in Storn. It doesn't matter where in the world.

It's still Jesus Christ and him crucified. And Jesus will be glorified through the salvation of every soul that comes to trust in him. My friend, have you come to trust your life, your all?

Just say to him, Lord, save me. Lord, come in to my heart and be Lord of my life today.

[25 : 20] I want to receive. I want to give. I want to lay hold on this invitation because we find in conclusion something incredibly solemn.

It shows a sad end of all those who've rejected, those who made the excuse, those who tried to justify themselves and not going. I tell you, none of those who were invited shall taste my banquet. What a sentence. All those who were given the invitation, who were told about it, were given the invitation, personally sent out and they said no.

And that's how the Lord turned it away and that's exactly what happened in the history of the Jews at the time of Christ. They rejected Christ. The gospel went to the Gentile world and spread throughout all the nations of this world.

The Jews had Jesus and they wouldn't have him. He came to his own as the Bible says and his own received him not. And it's still true to this day you are receiving the invitation.

[26 : 33] What are you going to do with it? Are you going to accept it? Are you going to reject it? Because you know if you think of what it means to reject, you think of all the blessings.

Think of all the spiritual riches in Christ. Think of the future. Think of the glory. Think of an environment where there's no death, no sorrow, no pain, no curse, no tears.

Things that, these are the dark things of this world, this life. the former things are passed away. And yet, people say, no, don't want that.

What do people want? Well, the Lord will give people what they choose. Are you going to choose life or are you going to choose death? That's really what's set out before us.

Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray that these words that we are considering this morning may indeed be words that linger with us.

[27 : 45] They are the words of Christ. And we pray that we may hear what the Lord says and that we might be ready to obey and that we might be ready to bow before the great invitation of Jesus.

Lord, be with us all today and keep us as we go about and as we are involved in so many different things, we pray for grace and help.

Watch over us all and do us good and take away our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.