

# The Undesirable Dinner Guest

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Preacher: Rich Chasse

[0:00] Well, good morning. Good to see you all today. Hey, you ever have an undesirable dinner guest?

Years ago, we had been here maybe a couple of years, and there was an older couple who was visiting the church, and they happened to be visiting on a Sunday that we were having a fellowship meal after the service.

So after the service, we'd go downstairs and have a meal together, and I don't remember what the occasion was, but this particular couple, they seemed very nice, very pleasant.

They wanted to sit with Sherry and I, and so we did. And as we were eating, they pretty much wanted to tell us about things that they could or couldn't eat.

Like, one of them, I can't eat dairy, can't eat sour cream, can't eat cheese, and I'm thinking, should I be sitting next to you then? A little concerned about that.

[1:20] And as the conversation went along, found out that they were... Michael Jr., a Christian comedian, talks about this. People who were over-saved.

You ever heard that terminology before? Or perhaps someone who was a religious God-talker. They could take a conversation about anything and turn it into something religious or spiritual or whatever, however they would do that.

They would talk about a running back running through the hole and talk about how Jesus was doing something with that. I don't know what it was, but that's how they were. And it was kind of a little uncomfortable as they spiritualized almost everything in the conversation.

Every topic turned to that. And as they were leaving that day, this is what I remember specifically about that moment, I said to them, take care. It's a normal greeting for me as people are leaving. I will just say, take care. And by that, I'm just meaning, you know, be well and, you know, Lord be with you, that kind of thing. But just take care.

[2:30] And the woman basically was, how dare I say such a thing? And I was a little taken aback, put back on my heels by that.

But her comment was based on this passage, casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. In other words, we should be casting all of our cares onto the Lord.

And so how dare you tell someone to take care? I mean, pick up their cares and take them with them. We should never say that to people.

And by saying take care, I wasn't saying, oh, yes, all the burdens of your life, please keep them upon yourselves and keep them. Do not at all cast them upon Jesus.

That's not what I'm saying when I say take care. Anyway, it turns out they, I don't know, I don't remember specifically if they were out of towners or if they were just not interested in our church any longer, probably saw the expression on my face.

[3:31] In a different way today, we come across a story in Luke chapter 14. It's all the verses that we're going to be looking at, verses 1 through 24 of chapter 14.

And they all take place at basically what is a dinner party. And in a different way, Jesus was very much so an undesirable guest, at least from the viewpoint.

And that's how we're going to start to look at this, from the viewpoint of the Pharisees, from the people who were there at the dinner. He took some inappropriate actions, at least again in their viewpoint.

He was insulting. And he was downright rude. At least, you know, that's the way it might seem for the people who were at this dinner party.

And so the question that we're going to be starting with is, who is it that invited this guy to dinner? And we're going to start with how Jesus started by breaking a religious taboo.

[4:44] A religious taboo. And before we read the story, I want you to imagine with me that you yourself are hosting a fellowship dinner. Fellow believers are gathered at your home and you're getting ready for the meal to start.

And so you are, as a good Christian would do, you're going to say, let's everybody bow our heads and pray for our meal together.

And so everyone does that and you begin to pray. And as you are praying, there is a younger man who was there who has a ball cap on.

And you notice that he hasn't removed his ball cap. And it's like, oh, well, doesn't this guy have any manners?

What's going on with this? And of course, the only reason that you're able to discern that, to see that, is because as you are praying, you are praying with your eyes open.

[5:48] But you're peaking. But, you know. And then as you're praying, and this is no small prayer, you know, God bless this mess, amen.

This is, you know, a serious prayer because you're gathered here with a group of other Christians. And so you pray a little bit longer before the meal. And you notice that this same young man gets up during the prayer, takes his plate over to the buffet line, and begins to fill his plate with food right there as you're praying.

And you're thinking, oh, my, has nobody taught this young man what is right and what? I mean, he's just dishonoring God and dishonoring.

We're praying. Not only that, he's got a young child with him, and he's helping the young child to fix food on his plate.

And so as you are praying, he is saying to this child, would you like some of this? Would you like some of that? Oh, you want more? Okay. How about that? Oh, you don't like that?

[6:59] And now the guy is just, you know, he's getting mad. And if you were to have someone like that come to your dinner party, how would you respond?

And what's your reaction to those kinds of things? And just to be clear, because we want to be people of the Bible, right?

We want to follow the book. I want to start by asking a few questions about this kind of situation. First of all, the man with the hat on.

Can you show me in the text where it says that you shouldn't have a hat on when you're praying?

Can anybody show me where that's at? It's not in there, is it?

It's not there. Oh. Oh. What about the text that says you should close your eyes when you're praying in public? Is there anybody?

[7:58] Anybody got one of those? How about when someone else is praying, it's wrong for you to get up and begin fixing your meal?

Anybody? Can anybody? Anybody show me? Where? Or to have a conversation with someone while someone else is praying. Is that wrong? I could see work, you know, maybe socially out of place.

And believe me, I'm not suggesting that the next time you're invited to a dinner party, you go be a jerk and just do all of these things at this dinner party. That's not what I'm saying.

But sometimes we can take what we see as socially acceptable or not acceptable and turn them into religious taboos.

We can turn them into something where we say, well, it's just not right. Says who? Who's the one that's saying it's not right?

[8:59] And maybe you. It's you that's saying that it's not right or social norms would say it's not right. And I get that because we do have social norms. We do have things that we want people to have rules in our own household.

Every household has a set of house rules in terms of how you behave and what you do during dinnertime prayer and that sort of thing. And those are fine as long as we're framing them as house rules and not God's rules.

Okay. And so we're going to see that Jesus is absolutely going to break one of these religious taboos. Listen, we kind of beat up on the Pharisees when it comes to their creation of extra rules and regulations.

But we do it, too. We shouldn't be so hard on them because we also have our own taboos, whether they're religious or social or otherwise.

But let's take a look at this from, I think, from God's perspective here. Matthew 15. This is not yet our text. But Jesus, in another passage, says, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

[10:16] In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. In other words, is it possible for someone to be or to appear very religious? In other words, they have all the right religious etiquette, I'll call it.

In other words, they're always going to remove their hat when they come indoors. And they're always going to bow their heads and close their eyes. And they're going to use the proper language when they pray out loud. And they're going to do all the right things.

And they're going to attend all the right services and be there at the right times and dress the appropriate way and yet still be far from God. I think we recognize that just because you look the part and do the things that make you look religious, that's not really an indication of whether someone really is close to God, whether someone really is a believer.

Paul addresses this in the book of Colossians in chapter 2. He says, therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink with regard to a festival or a new moon or Sabbath. This is in reference to Old Testament laws and regulations about what kind of food or drink is appropriate to eat or not eat.

[11:35] And, of course, in the New Testament, all of those restrictions had been lifted. And yet there were still those who were saying, oh, no, you cannot eat lobster. You cannot eat bacon.

To which all of us are like, ooh, I don't know. But these regulations, these Old Testament laws are a shadow of the things to come.

They weren't the reality, the substance, the reality belongs to Christ. All of those Old Testament rules and regulations were simply meant to point us to Jesus.

And Jesus is the fulfillment of all of them. And so now we have been released. We don't have to, we don't worry about new moons anymore and Sabbath days and those kinds of things.

We're not concerned because Jesus fulfills all of that. He goes on, if with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, the way the world views regulations and laws and all of that, why, as if you were still alive in the world, why do you submit to these kinds of regulations?

[12:45] Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. Referring to the things that perish as they are used. Food that perishes as it is used. According to human precepts and teachings.

These indeed have an appearance of wisdom. In other words, I can show you a passage of scripture from the Bible about how this certain type of meat is inappropriate, or this activity on this day, or this set of clothes is not right for this setting.

I can do that, and it sounds good, it looks good, but it promotes, it has an appearance in promoting self-made religion. Notice the qualifier there, it's self-made religion.

And asceticism, it looks good, it sounds good, and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

It's interesting to me that some of the most legalistic places, most legalistic churches and preachers often get caught up and found out being involved in some sort of immoral activity that's been hidden for years.

[14:03] And be careful, the idea that if I can be religious on the outside, and yet have something rotten going on on the inside.

And Jesus says, be careful with that. Be careful, guard your heart with these things. So here we are now in Luke chapter 14, and I want you to notice a few things as we're going along here.

One Sabbath, and so again, we're on a Sabbath day, and this was a day that the Pharisees loved to test Jesus, because they're trying to find a way to out Jesus as a false teacher, and therefore disregard him and punish him accordingly.

On one Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisee, or a leader of the Pharisees. Now, this is a guy who's not just your average run-of-the-mill Pharisee.

Oh, no. This is a guy who is in charge of other Pharisees, whether that makes him a member of the Sanhedrin. We don't know the location of this.

[15:12] Again, this is somewhere along the way to Jerusalem, as Jesus is heading to Jerusalem, to the cross. And here he is now.

He's been invited to come into the home of this leading Pharisee. And so there's other Pharisees there at this dinner, and all of these Pharisees there, as they invite Jesus in, and they invited Jesus to this dinner now, not because, oh, hey, wouldn't it be interesting to listen to Jesus?

Or wouldn't it be great? I mean, this might be the Messiah. Yeah, let's have him over for dinner and check it out for him. That's not the motive. The motive is to get him.

The motive is to catch him. And you see that in this last phrase. They were watching him carefully. They're inviting him basically into a trap. Okay?

This is the motive behind what's going on at this dinner party. And don't you know, behold, hey, take a look at this. That's basically what that means.

[16:19] There was a man there before him who had dropsy. Anybody know what dropsy is? It's an illness having to do with the retention of water.

And they didn't really have medication or a way to really deal with this. And so this is a man who would have been socially unacceptable, would have been unacceptable to invite someone with dropsy.

Their hands, their ankles, their feet would all be swollen because of this retention of water. And it became deadly for them over time as they retained water and had no way to really get rid of it medically.

And so it was an issue. And behold, there's this guy here. Now, again, the Pharisees would not invite someone who is ill or physically handicapped or lame or blind or deaf or someone who's poor. Those people wouldn't be welcome at a dinner like this. Because, again, in their eyes, in their culture, people who had illnesses or who were poor or were lame, these were people that were on the receiving end of God's judgment.

[17:34] And so why would you invite people to your home who were on the receiving end of God's judgment? You wouldn't want to invite that into your home. And so, again, this is just how this culture worked.

And it's not what Jesus obviously would approve of. We're going to see that very clearly in our text today. But it's kind of what they thought. So why would someone have invited this man who was very obviously visibly ill, why did they invite this man to come to this dinner party where normally he wouldn't be welcome?

On the Sabbath day? Would it be as a temptation to get Jesus to see if he would heal him in front of everybody on the Sabbath day and therefore break the law of God?

Oh, they wouldn't do that, would they? Oh, yes, they would. And, yes, they did. So this man is there with dropsy.

And, listen, dinner hasn't even started yet. They haven't even taken their seats yet. This is the part of the dinner party. Maybe there's some hors d'oeuvres going around. They're just talking and enjoying conversation.

[18:53] And Jesus just, right, forget the small talk with Jesus, right? Jesus responded to the lawyers and the Pharisees who were there at this dinner party saying, hmm, hey, guys, tell me, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or no?

What do you think? And then, as any good teacher or Bible study group leader would do, he stops talking.

He lets the silence fill the air. Instead of jumping in and the awkwardness, and he just lets it go for a bit.

You see how uncomfortable it would be. And they remained silent. How do I answer this question? I mean, we brought him here to trap him, and now he's trapped us.

Because how do we answer this? Because if we say one thing, he's going to say, well, how dare you, you uncaring people? And if we say the other thing, then, oh, you're breaking the law. What do we do?

[20:00] What do we say? Nothing. I'm not going to say a word. And they don't. And then Jesus took him and healed him and sent him away. Or literally dismissed him.

He wasn't wanted at the party anyway. The guy probably didn't want to hang out with this group of people. And so after he was healed, he's like, hey, out of here. Don't want to hang out with this group of people.

And that was fine with them. But Jesus just, I mean, he's not messing around, right? There's not small talk conversation.

This is, I'm going to heal him and be done with this. And he said to them in response now. So he's healed him. I don't think it was dramatic other than if you saw the swelling, the inflammation just automatically go away.

And then he's gone. And then here's Jesus with the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, the lawyers. And, hey, guys, which of you having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on the Sabbath day will not immediately pull him out?

[21:15] Because every one of them would have, right? They had exceptions. They had, and there's nothing in the law, the Ten Commandments, that talked about you couldn't heal on the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath day, we have to remember, is created for man, not man for the Sabbath day. So here is this question that he poses.

If you had someone of value, whether son or an ox, that fell into the well, I don't know how that happens, but it did.

Are you going to pull him out on the Sabbath day or are you going to wait until the next day? No, you're not going to wait until the next day. And is that okay for you to, yeah. And so they're just dumbfounded.

They could not reply to these things. So he broke a religious taboo. He healed someone on the Sabbath day right in front of them all and put them to the test, made it awkward just in every way.

[22:29] Okay? First thing that he did. And then, like any undesirable dinner guest, he insulted the guests.

Well, you're kind of ugly, aren't you? That's not what he said. But my goodness, this is what he did. Now, he told a parable to those who were invited.

So the guests who were there at the dinner, he says, hey, guys, I got a story for you. When he noticed how they chose their places of honor, saying to them, okay, so now the dinner is getting to the point where people are choosing their seats.

And in this culture, the host, the one who's doing the inviting. And at this point, this is the ruler. This is the leader of the Pharisees who's the host of the dinner.

And so the most honored place at the table would be as close to the host as you possibly can. So if you could be seated in the chair to the right hand of the host of the dinner, oh, you would be considered.

[23:39] That would be a high honor to do that. To the left, again, a great honor. As close as you could get. And so Jesus notices that these guys are jockeying for position at the dinner table.

What seat would be appropriate for me to sit at in terms of how close can I get to the host of the dinner? Of course, Jesus takes note of this and tells them a parable.

When he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, now, listen, when you guys are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor.

Lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him. Don't assume that, oh, well, I'm close to the host. He obviously thinks highly of me.

I'm highly respected in the community. I think I should sit next to the host. Don't assume that. Don't think that you are more important than maybe you really are.

[24:49] Because what might happen is that he who invited you both will come and say to you, give your place to this person. How awkward would that be? If the host comes and says, hey, Rich, you're not supposed to sit here.

I've got someone else in mind to sit here at my right hand. So, Rich, if you don't mind, get up and go find another seat. And here, my buddy Fred, I'm going to have him come and be the guest of honor.

And then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place at the dinner table. How awkward would that be for you if you were asked to get up and move to a lower place because you decided ahead of time, oh, yeah, I'm all that.

And I, of course, I should be honored. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place to start with so that when your host comes, he may say to you, friend, move up higher.

Oh, and when that happens, oh, how honored you will be. You will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. Guys, this is how you need to view this subject here.

[26:11] For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. Here's the principle behind the parable. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

So, again, take that into consideration next time you go to a dinner party. Here is a proverb that speaks to this. Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, come up here, than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

But this can happen in a lot of different ways. I've got caught with this myself. Sometimes you might have heard the phrase before about a humble brag.

Sometimes when I was younger, I would catch myself with this little humble brag. I like sports. I like to play sports.

And so sometimes people would talk about their sports accomplishments. And, oh, yeah, I did this in college or in high school. I played high school basketball or I played high school football or I did this or I did that.

[27:19] My humble brag was, well, I played on my college golf team. I played college golf. As if that was going to be impressive to other people because you played high school, I played college.

Never mind that my college golf team basically were desperate for players to come out because it was a really small-time college team. And we did get to do some cool stuff, but it wasn't because I was such a great golfer.

But I like to, you know, hey, I played on my college golf team. So be careful who you do your bragging to because you don't know who you might be talking to.

You know, I might be talking to somebody who won an NCAA championship or played on the tour or whatever it was. And I'd be over there. I played on my college golf team.

Ooh. Be careful with that. And then so he busts open a religious taboo.

[28:33] He insults the guests at the dinner. And then he's going to go ahead and insult the host. And this, he really does.

He insults the host at this dinner party. I don't know if that's a wise thing to do, but look at what he says. He said also to the man who had invited him.

So this is the host. This is the ruler of the Pharisees. This is a guy who's, you know, in charge of others. When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be then repaid.

You know, it's like, oh, you, you know, tit for tat, right? You, you, you invite me to your dinner party. I'll invite you to, to, to my dinner party. That, that kind of thinking.

And it's not, he's not saying don't invite them. He's saying include some others as well. But when you give a feast, verse 13, invite the poor, the crippled, the very people.

[29:37] These are the last people that they would want to invite to their party. Right? We saw this with the guy with, with drop seeds. Wait a minute. When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you.

Well, how are you going to be blessed if they can't repay you? Well, don't be so, so short sighted. You're, you're only thinking about the short term in this life for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

There's going to be eternal reward for you. If you do unto these, the least of these, my, my brothers. Right? If you treat people with respect and with honor, if you care for those who are less than you, if that's how you want to think of it, who are poor, who are crippled, who are lame, who are blind.

If you do well to those who are in need, there is going to be reward for that. You're not expecting anything in return here. And then finally, he's insulting the guest.

He's insulting the host. And then he's just telling everybody, y'all are going to hell anyway. How's that? Wow.

[30:56] Rich, are you, are you serious? He really said that? Well, he doesn't use these words outright, but when you read the text, you're going to see that. That's what he's saying.

Wow. So take a look at this. Verse 15. You can imagine at this point, okay, so they're seated around the table now and the right people are in the right place.

And we don't even know where Jesus is at, if he's in the lowest place or the highest place or wherever, you know, however that's all that's worked out. He's there. They're sitting around the table.

And I'm guessing conversation takes a lull. Because why wouldn't it? I mean, it's like, hey, y'all are messing up. You guests, you got to knock this humble brag stuff out.

You got to pick the lowest seat, not the highest. And you host. Man, what are you doing just inviting friends and people who can do for you? What is that about?

[32:03] Then someone says, hey, how about those lions? No, that's not what he says. But it kind of has that feel to it, right? You kind of want to change the subject.

So when one of those who reclined at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, so he says this to Jesus. Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.

And it's kind of a way of saying, well, yeah, isn't heaven going to be great? That's kind of what he's saying here. Isn't it going to be wonderful? Isn't heaven going to be just wonderful?

I mean, we're going to all be so blessed. Because, I mean, you're going to be, you know, in the kingdom. Of course, you're going to eat bread. Everybody, if you're in the kingdom, you're eating bread. You're part of the meal. It's part of the dinner.

You're invited. Isn't it going to be wonderful? And then Jesus really doesn't respond to him. He just goes into telling another parable, which, again, makes it a little bit awkward, especially when you reach the conclusion of the parable, which is what we just talked about here.

[33:14] But he said to him, a man once gave a great banquet and invited many. So he's sitting at a dinner party where certain people had been invited. And Jesus has come in and he's just kind of, you know, laid havoc on the place and, you know, done the wrong stuff and said the wrong stuff and insulted people.

And let me tell you about another dinner party. This great banquet in the kingdom, right? And, of course, he's on his way to Jerusalem and he's announcing the kingdom of God is at hand.

The kingdom of God is going to be kicked off with this great meal. What we know is the marriage supper of the Lamb. It's going to be this great feast and celebration.

And those who are saved, we get to be a part of it. And it's, woo-hoo, let me tell you about this dinner party that he's going to throw, Jesus is saying.

A man who once gave a great banquet and invited many people. 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. So this is not like some haphazardly thrown together thing.

[34:24] This is something that's been planned out. Our SVPs, if you will, have gone out. People have responded, yes, I'll be there. And in this culture, basically the invitation was to, on this date, reserve this date because we're going to have this dinner party at my place on this date.

So just let me know if you can be there, right? So that we can, you know, make plans and have the place settings done and buy the proper amount of food.

And so you need to let us know that you're coming. And so here they are. They've been sent. So that's already been done. And now he's sending out his servant to say, now's the time.

The invitation wouldn't have said what time the meal was because it was just save the date kind of a thing. You ever see those before today? We have those today with weddings and such. People send out a save the date thing.

It's not necessarily a thing where they announce the times of the ceremony and the receptions and all of that kind of stuff. It's just put this date on your calendar so that you don't make other plans so that you can be there to celebrate with us.

[35:35] That's kind of what's in view here. And now he's saying, like the morning of the banquet, the servants are sent out to say, hey, it's time. So at 5 o'clock, at 6 o'clock, whatever the time was, come on in and we're going to have this banquet.

So come, everything is now ready for the banquet. You've saved the date. You've RSVP'd, if you will. You've responded that, yes, we're planning on coming.

And now the day has arrived and the servant goes out to say, hey, everybody, come on in. They all alike began to make excuses.

Now, as excuses go, you ever, you know, say, hey, I plan on going, but then you have to maybe call a couple of days out or whatever.

And I can't be there. I can't because my uncle is not well. And I've got to go. I've got to whatever.

[36:38] Sometimes, have you ever made up something? Because you don't want to necessarily be honest about why you don't want to go. Because the Lions are on Monday night football or whatever.

I don't. As far as lame excuses go, these are about as bad as they get.

Let me explain. They're not legit. The first said to him, hey, I bought a field and I must go out and see it.

Please have me excused. How dumb is this? How insulting is this? In their world and in our world. That we're not going to go out and look at the field first to determine if I want to buy it? To determine if the field is worth the asking price? I'm not going to. And in their culture, it was like, no, you need to go and you need to find out like the average rainfall.

[37:43] You need to find out what kind of, is it going to support livestock and pasture? What kind of a field am I getting? You're not going to buy a field sight unseen. They didn't have computers where you could see all the beautiful little pictures in advance.

So this just doesn't make any sense. It's just an insult to the master of the banquet. It's just, it's not even a real excuse.

This next one's even worse. Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen. So five yoke of oxen would be ten oxen. Ten. So a yoke is two oxen yoked together that would pull a plow in a field. So this is a rather wealthy person who's able to buy ten oxen or five yoke of oxen at one time. And again, you wouldn't do this sight unseen.

You don't know if these oxen are sickly looking or, you know, half on their deathbed or whatever it is. So you're going to go. And if you're selling oxen, you would set up a demonstration at a field where you could demonstrate the health and strength of your oxen so that you could get the best asking price for them.

[39:02] Or you would say, hey, come to my place and I'll demonstrate for you these oxen and show you how good they are. And again, this is, no, no, no. I bought five yoke of oxen.

Now I got to go test them. You don't do it that way. It doesn't work that way. And do you think the owner, the master of the banquet is not going to be able to figure that out?

That this is just an insult? I'm not coming to your party. Please have me excused. I got to go examine my oxen. This one, maybe this one takes the cake.

I don't know. Another one said, I have married a wife. You guys ever, you ever done that before? Oh, man. Let me tell you.

I married a wife, so I can't come. She won't let me. Oh, those wives.

[40:10] You ever do that to your husband? He gets an invitation to a banquet. You get married, so he can't come anymore. Can't come. So, the servant came and reported these things to his master.

And the master of the house became angry. Ooh. And said to his servant, go out quickly then to the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

All the people that you wouldn't normally think to invite to a dinner party like this because they're poor and lame and sickly.

And that's why you wouldn't do it because these are cursed of God people, right? Why would you invite cursed of God people? Why would you do that?

The servant said, sir, what you've commanded has been done. Master, we knew your heart. We already did that. And some have come.

[41:20] But there's still more room. There's still more room. The master is going to have his banquet filled. He's going to have all the places that he has set filled.

He's going to do that. So the master said to the servant, go out to the highways and hedges and compel the people to come in that my house may be filled.

Now, who is he talking about here? Remember, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. The kingdom of God is at hand.

The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. Who's been invited to this banquet? Who's who? Which group of people?

See, this is what we do as New Testament believers. We read this and we say, well, this is about us. You can you we can glean some principles from this, but it's not about us.

[42:26] It's about the people that Jesus is speaking to. Jesus came for the Jews. He was he was the Messiah of the Jewish nation.

He stayed almost exclusively one time that he go outside of Israel's territory. Only the one time. And he said explicitly that he that he came for the Jews.

He came for Israel. Israel is the one who has been given the RSVPs, if you will. They're the ones who were thinking, oh, yeah, we've been invited to the banquet.

But of course we have. We're of Israel. We're already getting in just based on our heritage. We're golden just because Abraham is our great, great, great, great granddaddy.

We're in because we have the right lineage, the right heritage. Jesus says, no, that's not what this is about.

[43:32] And so now because Israel is rejecting her Messiah. Where does the message go from there? Ah, here we are 2,000 years later, sitting in Mason County, Michigan.

Bunch of us Gentiles who are now believers in Jesus Christ, grafted into the tree of Abraham, part of the family of God, which is what God intended all along in the Old Testament.

Israel is meant to be a light to the Gentiles, not a foot to the neck, which is how they treated it. And so master of the banquets is go into the highways and the hedges.

Go to the Gentiles and invite them as well. Go to the Jews first.

And now you've rejected me. So now go, go, go. Compel people to come in that my house may be filled.

[44:52] And we absolutely can learn from that. It's our responsibility, Jesus told us, to go into all the world, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We're teaching them to observe all things that he's commanded. We're commanded to do this, and we do that. We're part of this compelling people to come. The invitation is open.

The invitation is given. Come. Come. Here's the part where Jesus basically tells the people at the dinner party, you're going to hell.

Because he says, I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. They're going to be left out.

They're going to be left out. Man, what a dinner party. To end it that way. When's the last time, oh, this is the last time, by the way, that Jesus is ever invited to a Pharisee's house for dinner or otherwise.

[46:09] He already knows that they're wanting to kill him. He knows that. And so from the viewpoint of the Pharisees who were invited to this dinner party, they're viewing Jesus as this undesirable guest.

But the reality is that Jesus is this dinner guest who loves them beyond anything that they deserve. And he's going to this dinner party, and in reality, he's not being rude or insulting just to get his kicks.

You know, hey, I'm going to joke with his disciples. Hey, you should have seen what I said when I said they were going to hell. He's demonstrating great compassion, great care, and great love for them, willing to tell them the truth, even though the truth would offend them.

Oh, could we learn this lesson in our day? Are we willing to tell people the truth, even though it will offend them?

Or would we, from a human perspective, demonstrate grace and love and sugarcoat it and not be so open about it?

[47:45] Oh, we can't force our views. No, but we can speak the truth. And it is a demonstration of love to speak to someone truth that may make them feel condemned or offended, absolutely, but they still need to hear it.

And it would not be love to hide it from them. So I want to take a look at this now from the perspective of the eyes of Jesus, if you will.

Dinner party lessons from Jesus about life, about heaven, even about mundane things, about, like, success, how do you succeed in life, things like that. So verse 11, again, this principle of, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

And basically, here's this first lesson from Jesus that we can glean from this little dinner party escapade. If you want to be somebody, learn to be a servant.

And we've seen this before. Jesus speaks to this before. This is true. Listen, whether it's in your marriages, whether it's parenting, whether it's friendships, whether it's in the workplace, whether you're the boss or you're the low guy on the totem pole, wherever you find yourself, learning to be a servant will help you to be successful in this life.

[49:15] Jesus modeled this for us. He taught us this. Look what he says here in Matthew chapter 20. Jesus called them, his disciples, to himself.

This is right after now. James and John, they go to mommy. Mommy, can you talk to Jesus and see if he'll make us have the highest places in the kingdom?

And mommy does that. Wow. Talk about a twisted mindset. And so Jesus is having to dismiss this thinking and then teach them this lesson.

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. And their great ones exercise authority over them. You've probably had a boss like this. Not the best kind of boss, is it?

It's not a good way to be the boss either. It shall not be so among you. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, whether you're the boss or the lowest person on the totem pole, whether you're the husband or the wife, whether you're the father or the child, whether you're the friend, whatever relationship you have, being a servant is the way to go.

[50:30] He said, whoever would be great among you must be your servant. Whoever would be first among you must be your slave. Even as the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And so he teaches us and he models for us. And the apostle Paul later on will give us doctrinal perspective about being a servant. Pointing to Jesus as being a servant.

Willing to go to even to the point of death as a servant. Now, what is the test of a servant?

When someone, you know, how do you know you're a servant? What's the test that indicates that you are truly being a servant? The test is when someone starts to treat you like one.

A lot of people are like, well, I'll be a servant as long as I'm appreciated. Yeah. Are servants often appreciated? Or are servants often taken advantage of?

[51:35] Now, it'd be great if we all appreciated people in our lives, right? That's how we should be. But the true test of servanthood, let's say, for instance, in your marriage.

How often does the husband say, well, she really disrespected me. I'll show her. I'm not going to do the things that she wants me to. That's not how I say it, but it doesn't sound awfully angry to say it that way.

But how stupid is that? How good is that going to be? When a husband and wife, instead of in love, serving one another, which is what we're called to do.

The New Testament picture of marriage is that husband and wife serving each other in love. If instead, well, they disrespected me and she didn't do this for me and he did this to me.

And so let's see, you know. Yeah, that's going to work well for you in your marriage. No. And again, the test of a servant is when you're treated like one.

[52:38] So you serve with love and grace regardless. Same thing in parenting. Same thing in a workplace circumstance. To be that kind of a servant.

To give what the other person needs to do this. Let me ask you this question. Why do you shop where you shop?

Why do you shop where you shop? That's kind of an odd question. Is it because you want the owner of that shop to be rich?

Yeah, I shop there because I'm really interested in how well the owner or the company is doing. I want them to be filthy rich and so that's why I shop there.

Anybody saying that? No. No. The reason why you shop where you do is because you think you kind of put these things through a grid. Well, they give the best price.

[53:39] They get the best deal there, the best service, the best quality. So you put all that into your grid and so you're determining that's why you do it. And the company that serves you the best gets rich.

That's how it works. That's how it works in life. When you serve someone, you will be rewarded even in this life when you do it well.

That's how it works. But it's hard. It's hard. It's hard. Because in order to be a servant, you have to be humble. When I was early on in my ministry, I had some battles because I was somewhat pig-headed and stubborn and had to be right.

Anybody relate to that? I'm just the kind of person. I love to argue and I love to be right. Because I'm right.

I'm like, even to this day, when you look at me as your pastor, you're looking at somebody who thinks, yeah, I'm smarter than you. And if we got into an argument or a debate on a particular subject, I'd win.

[54:56] That's terrible that I feel that way. I'm a pig. It's terrible. And I've had to learn some hard lessons in my life as a result of this stubborn feeling that I have.

And so this is me in my flesh thinking this way. Well, we don't have this issue here at our church. We had this issue at one of my previous ministries, King James Only. I don't know if some of you have any kind of history with the King James Only stuff where, oh, the only viable version of the Bible is the King James.

It's the only thing that works and blah, blah, blah. And so I went to the home. I was still, I was probably in my late 20s and went to the home of this older couple.

Apparently there's a theme to this particular sermon that I have issues with older couples. Now that I'm an older man, I've learned some things now that I'm older.

So I went to their home. And this guy was an outspoken King James Only kind of a guy. And he was real critical of me because I wasn't using the King James Version. And so I sat there at his living room across the table from him and across the living room from him.

[56:15] And I said, I said to him, King James Version, Romans 5.8. Are you familiar with Romans 5.8? And I was, I was like, you know, quoting scripture to him just to impress him, you know, just to make him feel bad because he didn't have it memorized and I did.

Romans 5.8. It's a verse that we use oftentimes in speaking to unsaved people, right? To help them to understand God's love for us. Okay.

So Romans 5.8 from the King James Version says, But God commendeth his love toward us. And that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And then I looked at him and I said, What does commendeth mean? And he hemmed and he hawed and he said, I don't know.

And me, I said, how dare you? How dare you claim the King James Version And not be able to define what is in a text of scripture that's spoken to unsaved people And be able to explain to them what that means.

[57:33] Now, again, I could, I could say I was justified because I was right. Or I could recognize, no, I was being a jerk.

And dishonoring someone who was my elder. Who just loved the Lord and the King James Version was the only Bible that he knew.

And he used it. Honored God with how he lived his life. And that was fine. I didn't have to do that to him. I didn't have to win that argument.

That was not appropriate for me. To do that in that moment. I've learned some things since then.

And sometimes there's just, it's just not appropriate to have the argument.

Sometimes it's just okay to let it go. To not push the point. So the question for us is this.

[58:36] And part of it was youth and like, okay, I need to have people be confident in me. And am I secure enough to take on the role of a servant? Ask yourself that question.

Am I secure enough in my relationship with the Lord to be a servant? I'll move through these next two more quickly.

You can choose to be rewarded now or later, but not both. We saw this with the principle with the host. You can be repaid now or you can be repaid later.

Repaid in kind with mutual invitations or you can later receive reward in heaven. Again, Matthew chapter 6. Jesus taught about this in the Sermon on the Mount.

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them. For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. The reward that you get for being seen in public doing your religious things, that's the reward.

[59:43] Is that you're seen in public and people think, ooh, isn't this guy special? And so Jesus talked about that with giving, right? You don't need trumpet blasts and no, don't let your left hand know what you...

You don't do this in public. You don't need people to know what you give or how you give. You don't need people to see you praying in public and, oh, I use such eloquent language and people are impressed with the way that I pray.

No, God's not impressed by that. Or fasting. You know, I make myself look disheveled and, oh, I'm fasting today. Oh, woe is me.

Oh, such a religious person. No, that's your reward right there. And so the question for you here is, what do I do that only God knows?

What do I do that only God can reward because he's the only one who knows? Is there a part of your life where that describes your activity, your attitude, the way that you carry yourself?

[60:55] And then here's a potential problem that it points out is, what upsets me often reveals what motivates me. Like if I didn't get recognized by the guy saying, oh, thank you for helping us, is that your motivation to be recognized?

Be careful. Well, I gave so much money for this thing and, oh, nobody noticed. Just, what's your motive, motivation for doing such a thing?

And then finally, last one, an invitation to heaven doesn't come with a rain check. We saw this again with the master of the banquet and these lame excuses that were given for missing the banquet.

And here's what I would encourage you. Don't presume upon his invitation for three reasons. Don't presume on his invitation.

You might say, well, okay, I'm not ready. I'm not interested in that today, but, you know, maybe as I get older, as I get past this point of my life. Listen, you cannot presume on tomorrow.

[62:10] You may not have tomorrow. Tomorrow may never come. That's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians, now is the day of salvation. You may not have another day.

Why would we think that life is better before I get saved, before I trust Christ as Savior? Because that's kind of what we're saying. I want to wait until after I've sowed some wild oats or until after I've lived this stage of my life or maybe when I get settled down.

And we think falsely that being a Christian, that following Christ is somehow less than whatever choices I'm going to make before that day.

What a way to think. The principle of the dimmer switch. God operates a dimmer switch. We see this in Romans chapter 1.

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. That when we receive revelation from God, when God speaks to us, we hear an invitation and we say no.

[63:16] God begins to turn the light down. To adjust the light down. And then eventually over time may get to the point where we don't see any light.

Or when we do respond, or when we do begin to, there's interest and God turns the light up. We see this in terms of turning the light down.

God gave them up because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator. Verse 28, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind.

The idea that God is turning this dimmer switch down and down and down to the point where right side up is upside down and everything is kind of the way that we see it in our world today.

What is wrong is right and what is right is wrong. So be careful with that. And then here's the last one that I'll point out, and this we saw today. The master, I don't know if you noticed this, the master of the banquet became angry.

[64:30] We don't often talk about God being angry with us. But don't you know that a big part of a huge revival in the history of this country was a famous preacher, John Whitfield.

And his famous sermon was what? Sinners in the hands of an angry God. That when you hear an invitation of his love and his grace and his goodness in your life, and you say, nah, I'm not interested.

It makes him angry. We don't often think of God in that way because our culture thinks of God as some, you know, like gentle grandfather kind of type, sitting on a chair, kind of powerless.

No, no. No, no. Now, beloved, not the reason for you to be saved because you don't want to make God angry, but just understand that that's a reality.

You want to put your faith and your trust in Christ because he loves you. That's what ought to motivate our response to him. What he has done to bring you into his family, that ought to motivate you to say, yes, Lord, I trust you as my savior.

[65:55] I pray if you've never done that, if you've never accepted Christ as your savior, I would pray that today would be the day that you would say, yes, Lord, I trust you.

I trust you as my savior. I trust you as my Lord. Save me. Make me a part of your family. Take me to heaven, Lord. I want to be a part of that banquet. I want in.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you today for your goodness and your grace to us. You are so good.

Even when we are disobedient and we need to be warned, you do that because you love us, not because you want to see us punished, not because you want to see us rejecting your grace in our lives, but, Lord, because you want us to respond.

So I pray, Lord, for those here today who perhaps have not yet trusted you as savior, that even today would be that day of salvation for them, that they would simply say, yes, Lord, I trust you with my life.

It's as simple as that. A child can do it. Yes, Lord, I trust you with my life. It's yours. It's my, the rest of my earthly existence.

[67:21] My eternal destination, Lord, I trust you with my life. It's in your hands. You are my only hope, and I trust you. Lord, I pray that we would be willing to speak truth, even when it offends, not for the sake of the offense, but, Lord, to speak truth because we care about the person who needs to hear that truth, that we, like Jesus, want to demonstrate love and compassion, and in doing that, we're willing to speak words that might cut and might hurt, but, Lord, those are wounds from someone that loves, from someone who wants to see their best.

So, Lord, help us to be faithful as we live this life as a servant for you and a servant of others. We love you today, and we praise you in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.