

The Feast of Grace

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[0 : 00] I'll be reading verses 1 through 24 this morning.

If you're looking in a pew Bible, it is page 820.

Luke chapter 14, let me read beginning at verse 1. One Sabbath, when he, that is Jesus, when Jesus went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and the Pharisees saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? But they remained silent.

Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?

[1 : 26] And they could not reply to these things. Now he told a parable to those who were invited when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, don't sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him.

And he who invited you both will come and say to you, Give your place to this person. And then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, Friend, move up higher.

Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted.

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

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you.

[2 : 49] For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.

But he said to him, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 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 they all alike. Began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.

So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry. And he said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

[3 : 57] And the servant said, Sir, what you've commanded has been done. And still there is room. And the master said to the servant, Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled.

For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. What's your vision of the Christian life?

Some Christians emphasize studying and learning, growing in knowledge of God. Other Christians emphasize praying and worshiping, growing in intimacy with God.

Other Christians emphasize serving, sharing Christ with the world, carrying out the mission of God. Now all of those visions are valid and important.

We've been looking at this middle section of the Gospel of Luke. And we've seen that Luke depicts the Christian life as a journey. A journey of learning and praying and serving with Jesus.

[5 : 03] But there's also another way that Luke depicts the life of a Christian. Luke wants us to envision the Christian life as a party.

Where we're eating and drinking together with Jesus, where we're feasting at His table, reveling in His grace and extending His welcome to others. Now let me ask, is that how most people see the church today in our world?

Do most people look at the church and say, man, those people really know how to celebrate in the most honoring and life-giving way, in a way that makes you feel better the next day and not worse?

Do people look at Jesus' followers and say, those are the people I could go to if my life completely falls apart? Even if I know they don't agree with me, they would still care about me and want the best for me and take me in.

Do people look at Christians and say, they are the most genuinely hospitable people on earth? Some of you have experienced that kind of joy and hospitality from other Christians.

[6 : 17] Some of you have told me that you've been drawn to this church because you found that. You've seen that in the lives of Christians. But many people do not see the church as offering anything remotely like that.

Many people see the church as self-promoting, self-righteous, self-enclosed, and selectively judgmental, and maybe boring too. If we're honest, some of us don't always envision the Christian life as a party either.

But notice the patterns of Jesus and his disciples in the Gospels. At least ten times in Luke's Gospel, we see Jesus going to a party or invited to a meal, spending extended time over food and drink at someone's house.

Chapter 5, Jesus is invited to Levi, the tax collector's house, for a party. Chapter 7, Jesus is invited to Simon, the Pharisee's house for a dinner. Chapter 9, Jesus hosts an outdoor picnic for 5,000 men in the desert.

Chapter 10, Jesus eats at Mary and Martha's house. Chapter 11, Jesus is invited to a Pharisee's house for lunch. Here again, he's invited to another Pharisee's house for lunch.

[7 : 39] Chapter 19, Jesus invites himself over to Zacchaeus' house for a meal. Chapter 22, Jesus presides at the Passover meal, what we call the Last Supper. And after his resurrection in chapter 24, he breaks bread with the two disciples that he's walked with all that way to Emmaus.

And then he goes back to Jerusalem, and when he meets the disciples in Jerusalem, he eats a piece of boiled fish. He shares food with them as well.

But Jesus carried out his mission on earth in the context of meals. And it's not just because he had to eat in order to physically survive, but because meals were an important context for teaching and embodying the values of his kingdom.

The Old Testament anticipated that when the Messiah came, he would throw a party. He would provide, and he would preside at a great banquet of grace, a wedding feast celebrating the reunion and reconciliation of God and his people.

We read one of those prophecies earlier in the service. On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

[9 : 07] You know, in the Gospel of John, Jesus did his first miracle at a wedding feast. He's saying, I've come to fulfill that vision that the prophets have foretold.

This morning's passage has four parts. Verses 1 to 6, Jesus is invited to a Pharisee's house. Verses 7 to 11, he gives a word to the guests. Verses 12 to 14, he gives a word to the host.

And then verse 15 to 24, he ends with a climactic parable of the great banquet, but there's one main point to it all. Jesus came to host a banquet of grace.

This sermon has one main point, just one, and then we'll have two applications from it. So, yes, there will still be the three sections. But one main point, Jesus came to host a banquet of grace, and then we'll get to how it applies to us.

So, let's look at this passage. How do we see Jesus came to host a banquet of grace? Well, at the beginning of the chapter, Jesus is invited as a guest to the Pharisee's home. It was a Sabbath day, and synagogue leaders would normally invite visiting teachers to have lunch in their home following the Sabbath synagogue worship service.

[10 : 23] So, that's probably why they invited Jesus. So far, all is well and good. But there's a problem. The Pharisee's meal is marked by a complete lack of grace.

Notice in verse 1, they were watching Him carefully. From the very beginning, the Pharisees, who we've already seen having some conflicts with Jesus, they were hostile to Him.

They refused to rejoice in His healing power. They refused to even engage with His questions. And further, they are indifferent to a broken and hurting man.

A man with dropsy, today it's more commonly called edema, that is, swelling, bloating, caused by excess fluid buildup in the body, usually a sign of heart or kidney failure.

Ancient writers commented on the tragic irony of this condition. Ovid wrote, the more a man with dropsy drinks, the thirstier he grows.

[11 : 41] Having the condition of dropsy would make you feel bad and look bad. And yet the Pharisees were cold and indifferent. They planted this man in front of Jesus, not because they hoped he would be healed, but because they wanted to test Jesus in order to accuse Him of violating the Sabbath laws.

But it wasn't only the host who lacked grace. Jesus noticed in verse 7 how the guests were all about self-promotion, trying to put themselves in the places of honor.

How did Jesus respond to this graceless meal? Well, by demonstrating grace and by teaching about grace. First, we see Jesus demonstrating grace by healing the man with dropsy.

Now, several ancient writers saw an analogy between the physical condition of dropsy and the moral condition of insatiable greed.

Always wanting more and yet never being satisfied and becoming increasingly deformed as a result and unhealthy.

[13 : 01] dropsy. Now, many writers distinguished the medical condition from the moral condition, but not all. Some said the medical condition is a sign of the moral condition.

It's an outward sign of a disordered heart. And so, many people in practice kept their distance from people with dropsy. I mean, it doesn't make you look that great if you're always swollen and bloated.

Just as many people today keep their distance from people who are very overweight or who have obvious physical deformities, but not Jesus.

Verse 4 says, Jesus took him. The word means he took hold of him. He touched him. He did not stay far away.

He did not keep himself at a distance, and he healed him. Now, most translations of verse 4 say he healed him and sent him away, which is possible.

[14 : 11] Perhaps the Pharisees would have become even more hostile to him if the guy had stayed, but it's more likely that the word should be translated released or loosed. That's how the same word is translated in chapter 13, verse 16, when Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath.

she was loosed from her bond. So, it's probably better to say, translate verse 4, as Jesus took hold of him and healed him and released him.

He set him free from what was ailing him. And notice that Jesus was not concerned here with assigning blame. Jesus does not say one way or the other whether the man's dropsy was a result of his excessive greed or lust or whether it had nothing to do with that and it had no connection to that at all.

Jesus simply demonstrated grace to the lowliest and most despised man in the room. And then Jesus began teaching about grace, about the grace that would characterize his party in contrast to the Pharisees.

Verse 7 to 11, Jesus taught the guests, those who were invited, about grace. Now at first, when you read verses 8 to 10, they might seem like merely pragmatic advice.

[15 : 31] How to avoid being embarrassed at a dinner party. If you're not sure where to sit, don't assume you belong at the head table. Better to be boosted up than brought down.

But what Jesus said here goes much deeper. It's not just about dinner etiquette. verse 7 says this is the parable. In other words, there's a spiritual lesson to be learned.

And verse 11 makes that lesson very clear. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted. You see, Jesus is talking about how we relate to God.

Not simply how to avoid being embarrassed at a party. better to be humble and get lifted up by God than be proud and get taken down by God.

You see, pride is the opposite of grace. Pride says, I don't need grace. I can do it myself. I can rely on my own merit and achievement.

[16 : 42] Pride says, I deserve better than what God has given me. Now, in one sense, the best thing that can happen to a proud person is for him to be brought down in one way or another.

Because then he might possibly see how foolish his pride was. And so, God may even be showing mercy as well as justice in bringing down the proud because it may lead them to repent.

But Jesus says, the only people who will get good seats at God's table are those who willingly, humbly, take the lowest place of all.

Not in a fake display of modesty, not in a calculation of reverse psychology, but having rightly perceived their desperate need for God's mercy. You see, that's what humility is.

Humility is not thinking less of ourselves than we ought to. Humility is seeing ourselves rightly in light of our position before a holy God. Realizing that we don't have any entitlement when we come before God.

[18 : 08] So, Jesus speaks to the guests about grace in verses 7 to 11, and then He speaks to the host about grace in verses 12 to 14. And here, Jesus didn't start with seemingly familiar advice about how to avoid embarrassment at a dinner party.

In fact, that advice, you can find it in the book of Proverbs, you can find it in the ancient writer Plutarch. But in verses 12 to 14, Jesus didn't start with conventional wisdom and take it a step further, He attacked the conventional wisdom head on.

Verse 12, when you throw a party, don't invite your friends, siblings, relatives, or rich neighbors, or anyone else who might invite you back or repay you.

What? Really? That's what everybody did in the ancient world. You throw a party to connect with people who will benefit you in some way or at least who won't drag you down.

You run with the winners, not with the losers. I scratch your back, you scratch my back, and we all get along. It's not all that different today. Sometimes we call it networking.

[19 : 21] Jesus says, don't play that game. Jesus says, invite the poor and the disabled. Invite the people who can't repay you, the people who can't help you get ahead in this world.

Invite the elderly man with advanced Alzheimer's who won't remember what you did for him ten minutes later. Invite the disabled woman who can't get to your place on her own and you have to wheel her across town in a wheelchair.

Jesus said earlier on in Luke, if you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? Everybody does that. If you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you?

If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return and your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Be merciful even as your father is merciful. That's what it looks like to be a gracious host, to be merciful as God has shown us mercy.

[20 : 37] Now by this time somebody at the table seemed to think that Jesus had gone a little bit too far. So he tried to smooth things over in verse 15. Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Doesn't that sound nice? And can't we just end this conversation here before there's any more tension in the room? Sort of like somebody today who says, well isn't everyone in the world just following our own path and we're all walking up the same mountain and we'll all be together in the end?

That might sound nice but it's not reality. And Jesus is not thrown off by the comment. In verse 16 he launches into the climactic parable which again is all about grace.

The parable begins with a man like his Pharisee host, like any typical host of the day. Seems to be a well-off man.

He invited many to a great banquet. Of course he invited people like him, people with means, people with status, people with who could buy a field and buy a bunch of yoke of oxen.

[22 : 02] He got his initial RSVPs. The way that banquets worked back then is you invite your initial guest list, you get their initial RSVPs, you decide, similar to how wedding banquets work today, you decide how much food you have to cook, depending on how many people reply.

That depends whether you have to kill a sheep or a goat or two goats or whatever, whatever you're going to, whatever everyone's going to feast on. And then, when the food is about ready, you send a messenger out and tell everyone food's ready, time to come.

So he's got his initial RSVPs, he's got his guest list, they've all said yes, they're going to be coming, he's got the food cooking, got the table set, got the decorations out, all's going just as planned, and then verse 18, but they all alike began to make excuses.

Down to the very last man. Plan foiled, party ruined, host disgraced, he will sit alone that night in his banquet hall with all the platters of food, and all the tables set, and every chair empty, feeling the sting of rejection.

So he gets angry, verse 21, that's exactly what one would expect. But then, he does something unexpected in verses 21 to 23.

[23 : 46] In a parable, you always have to look for what is the surprise. There are two surprises in this parable. One is what the guests all make excuses and no show, but the second surprise is what he does.

In verses 21 to 23, he tells his servant, go out and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame. The same kinds of people that Jesus just told his host to invite, in verse 13.

And then he even goes one step further, says, go outside the city to the highways and the hedges, the people who are far off, and bring them in.

The host begins by acting exactly like the Pharisee, but he ends acting like Jesus by extending grace even to the last, the lost, and the least.

And in verse 24, Jesus concludes the parable. He looks around the room and says, I tell you. Now, you know, verse 24 is not just the master in the parable speaking to the servant, because you is plural.

[25 : 05] Jesus is looking around the room and says, I'm telling y'all, none of those men who were invited will taste my banquet.

Wait a minute. My banquet. Jesus is saying, I'm not just your guest. I'm the host of God's heavenly banquet, and you all are in grave danger of missing out on it, because you haven't grasped the most basic reality of what it means to know God, and that is grace.

Jesus came to host a great banquet of grace. That's the main point.

Now, two practical applications. What does this mean for us today? First, what does it look like to be a guest at Jesus' banquet of grace?

we see three aspects of this. First, Jesus says, come just as you are. Verses 1 to 6.

[26 : 33] Do you notice the man with dropsy is the only person in the Pharisee's house that Jesus does not rebuke, but simply blesses and heals?

And what's the man with dropsy doing? he's just standing there in front of Jesus, probably feeling helpless and maybe a little embarrassed. He has a problem.

He has a condition. He can't fix it on his own. He can't hide it. It's out there for everyone to see, but Jesus has mercy on him. come to Jesus just as you are with all your problems and all your junk hiding nothing, and he will have mercy on you, and he will receive you.

Second, come in humility. Verses 7 to 11. 11. The Pharisees and their pride pushed themselves forward, and the result was they pushed others out.

What did Jesus Christ do when he came into this world? He did not take the most honored place, even though he deserved it. He willingly took the lowest place.

[27 : 57] He took the lowest place in order to make space for us to join him in his father's house. He humbled himself and took on the form of the servant and became obedient even to death on a cross.

Jesus didn't merely teach about the importance of humility, he lived it. And God raised him from the dead and exalted him so that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

Come in humility before Jesus the humble king. If you have been a Christian and you've served in the church ever since the day you were born, you have the exact same status before God as someone who has lived their whole life for themselves and today for the very first time repents and believes in Jesus.

You're both undeserving but honored guests at Jesus' banquet of lavish grace. And just because you've been at the banquet for longer doesn't mean that you're entitled to special seats, special honors, special perks that aren't available to newcomers.

You see, we can be tempted to try to inch our way up to the honored seats the longer you've been at the banquet and then feel that we're entitled to be there.

[29 : 49] Christian, have you fallen into self-pity, envy, bitterness, or a sense of entitlement?

Those are all toxic manifestations of pride. And they will all steal your joy, peace, and love. Even more than that, they are an insult to Jesus, our host.

forsake these things today in Jesus' name and receive grace from Him anew. The only way that any of us can come before Jesus is simply by receiving and resting on His grace.

Whether you're coming to Him for the first time or whether you're coming today after being in the church for 90 years, we come to Him on the basis of His grace, not on the basis of any merit or achievements of our own.

Come just as you are. Come in humility. Come without making excuses. Verses 18 to 20.

[31 : 10] They all alike began to make excuses. excuses. Now, some of the excuses are worded more politely. The first two, please have me excused.

The first one, he sort of says it's necessary, I must go out and see it. He claims a competing obligation. Some are less so, I can't come.

Some of the excuses sound pretty lame. Honestly, the first one, wouldn't you check out a field before you buy it? Sort of like saying, I just bought a house and I need to go look at it. Well, didn't you look at it before you bought it?

I mean, I just bought a car and I need to test drive it. No, you test drive the car before you buy it. Others sound perhaps more reasonable.

I just got married can be a good reason for declining certain invitations. You got a legit excuse. But here's the question.

[32 : 11] Whether you're being polite or defiant about it, are you putting something else, whether it's owning a piece of property, starting a business, or entering into a significant relationship, are you putting that ahead of Jesus?

Are you saying yes to something else and not quite now, maybe later, to Jesus? Jesus warned in the parable of the soils that the cares and riches and pleasures of life choke out His Word and make it unfruitful.

There is nothing in this world that can compare to the banquet of grace that Jesus is offering. You know, there's another category of excuses that perhaps aren't quite so apparent here.

But if you notice in verses 21 and 23, when the Master sends out His servant, He gives him special instructions about how to bring in those who would naturally be reluctant because they would feel like they don't belong.

not long ago, somebody said to me, and different people have said a similar thing to me over the years, how could Jesus want me?

[33 : 32] I am such a mess. I'm far more broken than you know. If I become a Christian, I will almost certainly fail. But if that's you, would you dishonor the host by telling him that he is not strong enough, not wise enough, not kind enough to take in someone like you?

400 years ago, a man named George Herbert wrote a poem. I've included it in the bulletin. But it's representing the invitation of who he calls love, but he's clearly talking about Jesus.

It says, Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back, guilty of dust and sin. But a quick-eyed love observing me grow slack from my first entrance in drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning if I lacked anything.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here. Love said, you shall be he. I, the unkind, ungrateful, ah, my dear, I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand and smiling did reply, who made the eyes but I? Truth, Lord, but I have marred them. Let my shame go where it doth deserve.

[35 : 12] And know you not, says love, who bore the blame? My dear, then I will serve. You must sit down, says love, and taste my meat.

So I did sit and eat. Come to Jesus' banquet and be his guest. Come as you are, come with humility, come without excuses, come and be his guest.

You know, it doesn't stop there with being Jesus' guest, because once we become a guest at Jesus' party, he invites us to join him in extending that invitation to others.

That's the second major application I want us to consider, is what does it look like to extend Jesus' invitation to others? The Apostle Paul said in Romans 12, 13, practice hospitality.

Welcome other believers as Christ has welcomed you. Extend grace to others as you've received grace from Jesus. What is Christian hospitality?

[36 : 19] It's welcoming people because of Jesus. It's making space, sharing food, opening conversation, and inviting God's Holy Spirit to move.

Some Christians have a spiritual gift of hospitality, but all Christians are called to practice hospitality. You know, hospitality is not just something that comes naturally to some people. It's a skill that we all need to develop as followers of Christ.

It's a muscle that we all need to exercise in one way or another. Many of us have invested time learning to study the Bible, learning to pray, or reading Christian theology.

Have we invested time and energy learning to show hospitality? If you like to read books, I have two books that I recommend.

One is called A Meal with Jesus, and one is called The Gospel Comes with a House Key. I've got one copy of each, so if you want them at the end, I'll give them to you, if you will read them.

[37 : 32] But they will challenge you and encourage you in what it looks like to show hospitality as a Christian. Now, if you're not so much a book person, just find somebody who does it well.

You don't have to read a book. Just find somebody who is welcoming and who has people over their house or who's just kind, and see how you can help them.

Work with them. Learn from them. Hospitality can take many different forms. It can look like inviting someone to share a meal with you at your apartment, in the dining hall, at a restaurant.

It can look like opening your home to neighbors and their children after school or on holidays. It can look like inviting someone in who needs a place to stay for a short time or a longer time or indefinitely.

That's what adopting a child means, is you're being hospitable indefinitely. Or you might take in an elderly relative. That might mean indefinite.

[38 : 31] It might look like bringing food to someone else's house. Maybe your place doesn't work for hospitality for whatever reason, but you can go help somebody else.

You can bring food. You can help wash the dishes afterwards. You can welcome people and join with somebody else who's hosting. It can also look like intentionally greeting newcomers at church, being welcoming to the person who sits next to you, even if you haven't met each other before, trying to remember people's names and faces, praying for them during the week.

It can look like setting up coffee and tea and snacks downstairs, as some of you do every week, or staying after coffee hour to clean up. And doing that, praying that God's Spirit would be at work in the conversations that happen downstairs in the Fellowship Hall every Sunday in coffee hour.

Hospitality can take many different forms, but Christians ought to be the most genuinely hospitable people on earth. We can make time and space for people because Jesus has made time and space for us.

We can share food, physical food and spiritual food of God's Word with people because Jesus has welcomed us to His table. We can celebrate in a way that's honoring and life-giving and full of joy because Jesus is our host.

[40 : 02] So there's a lot the New Testament in general has to say about hospitality, but back to this chapter in particular, there's one particular emphasis that Luke 14 has, tells us, about how to show hospitality and it's this, make sure to include the people who most often get left behind, the poor, the disabled, and the outsiders.

Now, is Jesus saying in verse 12 that it is a sin to invite friends, family members, and well-off neighbors to dinner? No. He's using a figure of speech called hyperbole.

Jesus also said if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. He did not intend us to carry out that command literally. He did intend to get our attention, and He did intend to get our attention by what He says in verses 12 to 14.

Jesus spoke this way because if He made the point more politely, we would more easily disregard it or explain it away. In verses 12 to 14, Jesus calls us to extend intentional, costly, gracious hospitality, to do people earthly good and spiritual good without calculating whether people will or can pay us back.

Can you trust that God will not fail to repay whatever you might lose in the process? You see, spiritually speaking, before God, we all fit in this category.

[41 : 40] Spiritually speaking, we are all poor, disabled outsiders compared to God. And how did Jesus love on us? Jesus did not just leave His house, go do some good to us, and then, okay, it's five o'clock, I can leave you and go home, and I'm going to celebrate with the Father and the Holy Spirit because I've done my duty to help those poor, disabled outsiders.

No. Jesus welcomes us into His household. He has delighted to call us into His kingdom.

He has included us on the guest list for His own party. He says, I want you, I want to celebrate with you. I love you and delight in you.

And because Jesus has done that for us, He calls us to extend His grace and joy to people in the world who are physically and spiritually poor, disabled, and outsiders.

People who are costly to love. People who might never pay you back, might never be able to pay you back. People who are far off from God and His kingdom.

[43 : 03] But He has sent you to bring them an invitation. Jesus wants us to make sure that everyone in the world gets an invitation to His banquet.

that's why Christians go to the ends of the earth and translate the Bible into previously unknown languages so that every tribe and tongue and people and nation can be invited to the heavenly banquet.

At times, this requires extra effort. Notice how the Master instructs the servant in verse 21 and 23. He doesn't just say, go tell the poor and crippled and blind and lame it's time to come.

No. He says, go bring them in. Bring in or lead in. Why? Because they'll need someone to guide them if they're blind.

And they'll need someone to help them up the steps if they're crippled. They'll need reassurance that you really want them there if they're poor. And then in verse 23 he goes even further.

[44 : 17] He says, go out of town to the highways and hedges. The people who are furthest away from the kingdom of God. The people who are most unlikely to ever become Christians.

And he says, compel people to come in. Now, that does not mean use physical force to bring people into the church against their will. No, the picture is of a host who takes the hand of a hesitant guest and ushers him or her personally into the house.

That's what it means. Compel them to come in. It's to meet someone who is naturally going to be resistant. Why are they living out in the highways and hedges? Because they feel like they don't belong in the city back in the ancient world.

Maybe they had been banished from the city. Maybe they had a bad background. All kinds of reasons. Why are they living way out there on their own? You just go to them and say, hey, come.

No way. No, Jesus says it's going to take a little extra effort. You might have to walk them in and say, come with me and let's go to the banquet together.

[45 : 34] Jesus came to host a banquet of grace. Come to the table. Come to the feast. All are invited, greatest to least.

Sins have been pardoned. Divisions have ceased. Come to the table. Come to the feast. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we thank You for Your great mercy and grace that You have invited us in to feast at Your table.

We pray that we would delight in You as our host and that we would honor You as our host and that we would be sent out from here to delight in being Your guests and to delight in welcoming others in to experience the joy of fellowship with You.

In Your name we pray. Amen. Amen.