Sunday, July 29, 2018


Golden Text: “So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind” (Luke 14:21).

I. INTRODUCTION. Why do so many people refuse the invitation to trust in Jesus Christ? I Corinthians 1:18 says that “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” and verse 23 says “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness.” II Corinthians 4:4 says “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” These truths are illustrated to some extent in the parable of the great feast, the subject of this week’s lesson. God’s heart for the lost is seen in the desire of the host in the parable to invite as many people as possible to attend his lavish dinner. The evangelical efforts of believers are illustrated by the servant who does all he can to persuade people to accept the host’s invitation. The responses of the three invited guests mirror the disinterested reactions of many people to the
II. LESSON BACKGROUND. Jesus had gone into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath day. During this meal, there was a man placed before Jesus who had the dropsy which was an accumulation of serous fluid in body parts like the stomach causing swelling. The Pharisees who were present watched Jesus to see what He would do since it was the Sabbath (see Luke 14:1-2). Jesus healed the man and emphasized that it was appropriate to heal on the Sabbath day (see Luke 14:3-6). Jesus then noticed how the other guests who were invited to this meal were all trying to get the best seats (see Luke 14:7). This caused Jesus to stress the importance of taking the lowly place among one’s peers (see Luke 14:8-11). Then Jesus told the group how important it was to invite to dinner those whom society often rejected (see Luke 14:12-13). In verse 14, Jesus said that when His listeners, mostly Pharisees, invited the lowly of society to any meal, they would be repaid at the resurrection (see Luke 14:14). This is where our lesson begins.

III. THE INVITED GUESTS (Luke 14:15-17)

A. The occasion for the parable (Luke 14:15). Our first verse says “And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed
is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Jesus had just mentioned the resurrection in verse 14 which prompted one of the guests who heard what Jesus said to also say to Him “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” The word “Blessed” refers to someone who is supremely happy due to God’s favor resting on him or her. Many Jews believed the messianic kingdom would begin with a great festival to which all the King’s subjects would be invited (see Isaiah 2:2-4; 25:6). It appears that this parable was designed to show this man and the other invited guests just who would have the great opportunity to be “blessed” by eating bread in the kingdom of God. Those who were invited to this dinner and “sat at meat with” Jesus were probably both scribes and Pharisees. Note: The guest who made this comment to Jesus obviously believed that he and his fellow Pharisees would be welcomed into God’s kingdom. The Pharisees and scribes, or teachers of the Law, considered themselves to be experts in the law and were convinced by their positions that they were guaranteed a place in the kingdom of God. They stood out among their fellow Jews because of their strict rules and regulations and their attitude of superiority. Unfortunately, their actual behavior wasn’t consistent with what they claimed to be (see Matthew 15:7-8; 23:14). But because they taught strict adherence to the Law of Moses, the scribes and Pharisees were confident that they would be included in the number of people entering the kingdom of God.

B. The invitation to the Great supper (Luke 14:16-17).
1. (vs. 16). This verse says “Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many.” The comment the guest made to Jesus in the previous verse led to further teaching by the Lord. Jesus gave a parable of the great supper to warn that not everyone who expects to be included in the kingdom will get in. Jesus began His parable saying “A certain man made a great supper.” The word translated “supper” refers to the main meal of the day and this one would be a magnificent affair as noted by the description “a great supper.” This man was planning to host a large and festive banquet. Such a feast would have taken a lot of time to prepare and quite a bit of money to finance. Most people would consider it a great honor to attend such a banquet. The fact that the host “bade many” indicates that he wanted as many people as possible to come and enjoy the sumptuous meal he was preparing.

**Note:** It was customary in first century Palestine for a man who was planning a dinner to send out invitations in advance alerting those who were invited of the time and place of the feast. A second and personal invitation was issued by a messenger when the feast was ready. In the spiritual application of the parable, the great supper represents the kingdom of God, and the host or man who provided it represents God the Father. It’s quite possible that Jesus’ listeners may not have quickly understood this, since Jesus used parables to reveal and conceal truth (see Luke 8:10). The men who were invited represent the religious and political leaders of Israel.

2. (vs. 17). Jesus continued His parable in this
verse saying “And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.” The phrase “at supper time” means that the moment had arrived for the guest “that were bidden” or invited to attend the banquet. As previously noted (see note on verse 16), in typical fashion the first invitation went out well in advance of the event so that those who were invited could prepare and plan. Since no one declined the invitation, the host assumed that everyone would be there. When the time of the feast arrived or “at supper time,” the host “sent his servant” with a second invitation to the same people saying “Come; for all things are now ready.” Everything was now ready for the banquet. **Note:** In a similar way, God followed up His earlier announcement of the kingdom by the prophets by declaring its arrival. Both John the Baptist and Jesus had said the promised kingdom was “at hand” (see Matthew 3:2; 4:17). The King was present among them and the nation’s leaders were invited to recognize Him and enjoy His blessings. This would mean that the nation and its leaders would have to acknowledge Jesus as the King, which they refused to do.

**IV. THE INVITED GUESTS’ EXCUSES (Luke 14:18-20)**

**A. The first excuse (Luke 14:18).** This verse says “And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee
have me excused.” It was a great insult for the guests to refuse the hospitality of the host, yet “they all with one consent began to make excuse.” In other words, all the guests the host had invited made excuses as to why they could not attend the festive event. The “first” invitee asked to be “excused” because he said “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it.” This first guest told the host’s servant that he had just purchased a parcel of “ground” or land and he had to go see what it looked like. One can easily see that this excuse was simply a sham. After all, only a fool would buy something, especially land without seeing it first. And even if he had not yet seen the land, he could have waited until after the banquet to do so. As shallow as his excuse was, it is typical of many excuses made today by people who are focused on material things. They use being busy with their possessions as enough reason for ignoring the spiritual riches that Jesus Christ offers.

B. The second excuse (Luke 14:19). This verse goes on to say “And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.” The second invited guest told the host’s servant that he had purchased “five yoke of oxen” and he had to go and “prove” or test them. A “yoke” is a shaped wooded bar placed across the necks of two oxen and connected by a beam to a plow or a cart. “Five yoke of oxen” would be ten oxen. This second intended guest believed that it was more important to “prove” or test his animals than to attend the host’s sumptuous banquet. Therefore, he said to the servant “I pray thee have me excused.” Like the first guest, he also wanted to be “excused” from his commitment to attend
the feast. But also like the excuse of the first guest, the second guest’s excuse was also a sham. No one would buy ten oxen without first seeing how well they could work. Besides, if he really had to test them out, he could have done that the next morning.

C. The third excuse (Luke 14:20). This verse says “And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” The third invited guest told the host’s servant that he had just gotten “married” so he couldn’t come to the banquet. He indicated that the demands of being newly married were so great that he couldn’t attend the host’s grand feast. This third man was probably referring to the Old Testament law that instructed a newly married man to remain at home with his wife for a year (see Deuteronomy 24:5). But that command was designed to exempt the man from business and military duties, not social engagements (see Deuteronomy 20:5-8). Surely, attending the banquet would not jeopardize this man’s marriage. Even people today use family obligations as an excuse for refusing God’s spiritual invitation. Some allow marriage partners to separate them from the Lord and as they grow older, the added pressure of family duties gives them more reason to refuse God’s invitation. **Note:** Not one of the stated excuses was the real reason for declining the invitation. The true reason was that these men did not consider the supper important or desirable enough to attend. They had no interest in going. Other activities had taken a more prominent place in their thinking. They allowed other desires to crowd attending the banquet. By belittling the invitation, they were
spurning the one who had sent it. When Jesus revealed to the Jewish religious leaders the nature of His kingdom, they lost interest in it. It was not desirable to them because it meant they had to make changes to their thoughts and lifestyle that they were not willing to make. They still professed to want to “eat bread in the kingdom” (see Luke 14:15), but only in the kind of kingdom that fit their specifications. God does not put restrictions on who may be invited to enter His kingdom. Still, many refuse His generous offer of salvation. They have a number of convenient excuses as to why they will not trust in Christ. In the end, however, all their alibis are flimsy and have no merit. Surely there should be a sense of urgency in the heart of every person to get saved. In II Corinthians 6:2 Paul wrote, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.” Unsaved people are taking tremendous risks when they put off trusting in Christ. All opportunities will be lost once a person dies. As Hebrews 9:27 says “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” As we tell the unsaved about Christ and their need to trust in Him, we will encounter a variety of reasons why they refuse to do so. We will hear excuses that are phony; for there is no valid justification for refusing an invitation to enter the kingdom of God.

A. The reaction of the host (Luke 14:21). This verse says “So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” The servant had disappointing news to report to his master. The phrase “shewed his lord these things” means that the servant shared with his master all the excuses he was given, and that all the guests that had been invited decided not to attend the grand banquet. As a result, “the master of the house” became “angry” that those who had accepted his first invitation now gave feeble excuses not to come. In Jesus’ day in some Eastern societies, to be rebuffed the way the host was could lead to war. But the host didn’t go to war. Instead, he was determined not to have an empty banquet hall, so he broadened the invitation to others. The master of the house told his servant to “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” The “streets” refer to the broad thoroughfares and “lanes” refer to the narrow ones. The servant was instructed to scour the city and bring to his banquet “the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” These were the people that Jesus had earlier urged the Pharisees to invite to their feasts (see Luke 14:1-13). Such persons as these would have been considered outcasts in Jewish society. The religious leaders viewed them as being accursed by God because of their afflictions, and were unworthy of the kingdom because they didn’t keep the law as carefully as they did. This parable supports what Jesus told another
group of self-righteous chief priests and elders: “The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you” (see Matthew 21:31). Wow! **Note:** This parable teaches that since self-righteous Jews were rejecting the Messiah’s invitation to salvation, He would close it to them and extend it to the very outcasts and sinners the Pharisees despised. While the self-righteous Jews rejected the Messiah’s offer of salvation, the poor flocked to it. It is not the pretentious and proud people of the world who usually welcome the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is those whom society ignores or considers insignificant. This was true of the believers at Corinth. Paul told the Corinthians, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called” (see I Corinthians 1:26). Instead, God has chosen people considered as foolish and weak by the world in order to shame the wise and the mighty (see I Corinthians 1:27).

**B. The servant’s report (Luke 14:22).** This verse says “And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.” The servant was faithful in doing exactly what his master had directed him to do. After issuing invitations to the city’s masses, “the servant” returned to his master and reported to him saying “Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded.” We must not assume that everyone the servant invited accepted the invitation. Knowing humanity, we can be sure that some may have thought that the offer was too good to be true. Others, like the first people who were invited in this parable, may have belittled it in order to do other things. But even after
the servant went all over the city inviting people, he said to his master “**yet there is room.**” The banquet hall was so spacious that there was still room to admit many more guests. **Note:** Historically the gospel first went to the Jews. Some eagerly embraced it and became members of the newborn church (see Acts 2:41; 4:4). Others remained skeptical or indifferent, and some even opposed the gospel invitation. There is ample room for everyone in the kingdom of God. People are not prohibited from entering because the Lord hasn’t prepared to receive them. People are not denied access to the kingdom of God because of a lack of space. If anyone fails to enter the Kingdom of God and enjoy the great feast it will because they have not accepted the King’s gracious invitation to receive His Son Jesus as Lord and Savior. Yes, there is plenty good room.

**C. The host’s further instructions (Luke 14:23).**

This verse says “**And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.**” It was the host’s intention to fill his banquet hall with guests. So he ordered his servant to “**Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.**” The “highways” were the major roads leading out from the city and the “hedges” were the large shrubs and bushes along the highway that provided shelter for the homeless. Anyone the servant found he was to “compel them to come in.” The compulsion the lord was referring to was not physical coercion but moral persuasion. Nothing would be gained by bringing men to the banquet against their will. The host’s main concern was that “**my**
house may be filled.” At this point the parable teaches that God wants heaven to be filled. This second group that the servant was sent out to invite to the banquet represent those outside the nation of Israel, or the Gentiles. Other parts of Scripture teach that it is God’s intent to include Gentiles in His kingdom (see Luke 2:32; Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:23-28).

**Note:** By interpretation, this final invitation went out to people beyond the nation of Israel extending to the Gentiles. These people, who once were despised by the Jews, now could be God’s privileged guests. Some may have needed to be persuaded that this message was for them, but historically Gentiles often responded more enthusiastically to the gospel than did the Jews (see Acts 13:42-48; 17:4). Therefore, God’s kingdom was to be opened to persons of all nationalities, races, social statuses, and occupations. His offer to enter the kingdom is still being proclaimed to the ends of the earth. The Great Commission was the command of Jesus Christ to go first to the Jews, then to the surrounding areas of Judaea and Samaria, and finally to the Gentiles (see Acts 1:8). People are still responding to the gospel; God’s house is still not filled.

**D. The people barred from the feast (Luke 14:24).** Our final verse says “For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.” The final point in this parable is the fact that the host declared that none of those men who had been invited but made excuses would “taste of my supper.” While the host wanted his house filled, he wouldn’t admit any of those who had been invited first and then rejected the offer. There
would be no second opportunity for them. **Note:** The immediate intent of the host’s warning to those who refused to accept his invitation was to show the Pharisees the urgency of receiving Jesus. As students of the Scriptures, they had the first chance to acknowledge the King and “eat bread in His kingdom.” However, they were refusing to accept Him. Their continued rejection of God’s invitation would leave them out of the kingdom forever (see Luke 13:25-28; Revelation 20:11-15). As a result, many Gentiles or non-Jews would become citizens of His kingdom. Unfortunately, many Jews rejected God’s offer of salvation. My prayer is that we won’t do the same thing.

**VI. Conclusion.** God has prepared a great feast and sent out invitations for all to become believers, but many continue to refuse God’s invitation. There are many excuses for turning down His invitation, but none of the excuses have any validity. God’s invitation to salvation demands an immediate “yes.” However, the invitation to enter the Lord’s kingdom will end for all people one day. This life is short and Scripture nowhere teaches that rejecters will have an opportunity to change their minds after it ends. Instead it declares. “Now is the accepted time...now is the day of salvation” (see II Corinthians 6:2). The Lord’s love has not diminished, but He will not force anyone to accept Him against their will. May the warning to the Pharisees caution us to heed God’s call.
Sunday, July 29, 2018: “Parable of the Great Dinner” Commentary

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