

The great banquet

Opening

Announcements

Wednesday Prayer

- We've been gathering together on Wednesday evenings for prayer
- Powerful!
- Will continue this Wednesday
- **Note:** It is ash Wednesday, and we'll talk about that a little

Time change

- Next Sunday, Daylight Saving time begins
- Clocks go forward an hour (lose an hour of sleep)
- No Sunday school next Sunday

Call to worship

- Reading this week, and read this Psalm
- Let it call us to worship this morning
- **Psalm 95:1-7 (ESV)** *(1) Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! (2) Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! (3) For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. (4) In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. (5) The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. (6) Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! (7) For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand...

Message

Priorities in 2019

- Based on a prayer meeting recorded
- **Acts 13:1-3 (ESV)** *(1) Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (2) While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (3) Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

Together in prayer and worship

- We must spend time... together seeking the Lord
- They were together - and God moved
- We must come together to seek the Lord
- Currently meeting on Wednesday evenings for prayer

Ministry empowered by the Spirit

- From that gathering, the Spirit called Paul and Barnabas into the mission field
- In 2019 - every believer filled / refilled with the Holy Spirit
- In 2019 - every believer used for ministry in the gifts of the Spirit

Active in the great commission

- Outcome of that prayer meeting - Christianity spread among the entire region
- When the Spirit is using us, we will fulfill the great commission
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Introduction

Illustrate

- See



- How cool would it be to receive an invitation to a state dinner
- This is a copy of an invite to Trump's first state dinner. Notably not invited: democrats and members of the media
- Serves as a backdrop for my comments today re: a parable in Luke 14

Context

Dinner / healing

- **Luke 14:1 (ESV)** (1) *One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.*
- **Note:** He responded to the ruler's invitation - even though they were there waiting to trap him (see *watching him carefully*)
- He heals a man on the Sabbath - providing the opportunity to teach

Teaching about humbling

- He watched them as they chose their seats - but this became an opportunity to teach
- Don't elevate yourself - instead humble yourself
- **Point:** Don't seek honor/recognition for yourself? See **Luke 14:11 (ESV)** (11) *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Teaching about who to invite

- To the host he tells a parable about inviting those who cannot repay
- **Point:** Seek God's reward. **Luke 14:14 (ESV)** (14) *and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

This leads to a comment

- When Jesus mentions the resurrection some guy speaks up **Luke 14:15 (ESV)** (15) *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!"*
- His implication: how awesome to be one of those who shares in the resurrection!
- More specifically: his comment seems to indicate that the resurrection/kingdom of God is an exclusive club

Text

- Familiar parable, but looked at in context, I think we can make some observations and applications for us today
- **Luke 14:16-24 (ESV)** (16) *But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. (17) And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' (18) 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.' (19) And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' (20) And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' (21) So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and 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.' (22) And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' (23) 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. (24) For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

Observations

The invitation was inclusive not exclusive

The purpose of the parable

- Given the context of the parable here, this is its point
- The man remarked about those who eat in the kingdom of God are blessed
- Implication: only a few are invited to attend
- Unlike an invitation to the state dinner - God's heart is that all should be saved
- See v23 - *that my house may be full*
- Or consider **2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)** (9) *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Immediate application for the Jewish people

- Because of a covenant God made with Abraham, the Jews are God's chosen people
- Unfortunately they missed the one through whom the invitation came: Jesus Christ
- By the time he came, they were convinced of their standing and rejected his appeal
- Paul teaches quite a bit on this in the last few verses of Romans 10 and continues in Romans 11
- The invitation has come to everyone because His people did not respond.
- Consider **John 1:11-13 (ESV)** (11) *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (12) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he*

gave the right to become children of God, (13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- Is this a permanent condition? See **Rom 11:11-12 (ESV)** (11) *So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. (12) Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!*
- God has chosen to include EVERYONE in the invitation to the Kingdom through Jesus Christ.
- See again the context: His instruction to the one who invited him - to invite those who don't deserve to be there, can't repay for the invitation!

Their priorities excluded them from participation in the banquet

What's more important?

- It was not for a lack of an invitation
- Instead the invited found something more important to do
- See **Luke 14:17-20 (ESV)** (17) *And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' (18) 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.' (19) And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' (20) And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'*
- They'd been invited - but were not willing to attend
- **Point:** Given everyone is invited and welcome, what is more important than the kingdom of God in our lives?

The answer to "How can a loving God..."

- So many people struggle with the concept of hell, etc.
- "How can a loving God..."
- **Truth:** God has given us free will - he will not force us into heaven
- These had been invited, but used their free will to choose something else.
- **Note:** The cost of discipleship in the next section. See **Luke 14:25-33 (ESV)** (25) *Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, (26) "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. (27) Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be*

my disciple. (28) For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? (29) Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, (30) saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' (31) Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? (32) And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. (33) So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

- It's no wonder people choose an easier path.
- He's made the invitation - Christ has provided the access, and the Spirit will enable/empower those who choose to come!

See the responsibility of the servant

To the Jews

- The first task was to *"say to those who had been invited..."*
- Jesus came to offer salvation to the lost sheep of Israel - but they rejected
- See **Matt 15:24 (ESV)** (24) *He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*
- See him sending out the 12 **Matt 10:5-6 (ESV)** (5) *These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, (6) but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*
- He sent his disciples **Acts 1:8 (ESV)** (8) *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*
- See how Paul even though a minister to the Gentiles would start first with the Jews.

To the Gentiles

- The Gentiles are those who don't deserve to be there
- But the Father's heart is that his house may be full!
- The servants are told to **Luke 14:21 (ESV)** (21) *So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and 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.'*
- **Point:** The invitation is made to everyone
- See the job - "Go" and "bring them in"

- **Note:** That's our job church - and the 3rd characteristic I see for us in 2019
- There is no one who should be included
- See **Rom 10:9-15 (ESV)** (9) *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (11) For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." (12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. (13) For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (14) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (15) And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*

In the last day

- The servants report the master's instruction has been carried out, but there's still room
- **Thought** There's still room
- They are to go to "highways and hedges" - the places used by everyone and the places where the marginalized would be hiding
- They are to compel them to come in
- In this last day, time is short - and there is an urgency we must adopt

See the implication if rejected

- See **Luke 14:24 (ESV)** (24) *For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."*
- This wraps up the parable
- Again spoken to dispel the notion that participation in the kingdom of God is exclusive
- The invitation is to be given to all - but what we do with it can exclude us
- Reject him.... We will find ourselves rejected (i.e. excluded) from the kingdom

Applications

What have you done with your invitation?

- Most important consideration after studying this parable
- If you've never been invited before let this parable remind you: God loves you and wants you to share eternity with him
- Have you received his invitation and turned towards him for eternity?
- **Note:** You may be thinking - I've rejected him before, so I guess it's too late for me. As long as you're still breathing, it's not too late
- **To the believer** Is there something in my life that's more important than the kingdom? Am I choosing things that will exclude me from participation in His wedding banquet

How are we doing as servants?

- Final application - are we going to hear *Well done* for our work as servants
- We know His heart, His priority and His agenda. What are we doing about it?
- We are seeking the Lord. Part of our prayer should include **Matt 9:37-38 (ESV)**
(37) Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; (38) therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."
- Church - given the hour in which we live, we should be urgently about the master's business
- It doesn't matter who they are, we must find them, and invite them
- We must be persistent - and compel them
- We must make our appeal with a sense of two truths:
 - God wants everyone to hear
 - Time is short!