

## HOW THE GREAT SUPPER IS A PARABLE OF LOVE

This morning I want to wrap up our series on “The Importance of Love in the Life of the Believer” by considering one more aspect of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Two weeks ago we looked at the Parable of the Good Samaritan and I concluded that sermon with these four observations:

1. Love is more than labels. The priest and Levite had “religious” titles, but failed to love a fellow Jew
2. Love can be costly. The Samaritan gave up his own comfort, money, provisions he needed for the trip, and time to care for someone that culturally he was not expected to help because of the animosity between Jews and Samaritans
3. Love gives lavishly. He pre-paid the lodging for a man he didn’t know for one to two months, then gave the inn-keeper a “blank check” when he said, “Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee” (Lk 10:35).
4. Opportunities to demonstrate love often come unexpectedly. I’m quite certain the itinerary for the Good Samaritan that day did NOT say, “Find man beaten half-to-death on road to Jericho and spend the day and night taking care of him!”

This morning I want to look at another parable in Luke, the Parable of the Great Supper. Although the word “love” is not found in the parable itself or in the context of the parable, love as a concept is very much at the heart of the parable. Please take your Bibles and turn to Luke 14:15-24.

### **1. The familiarity—and surprise—of the parable** (vss 16-24)

#### A. Familiarity of the parable (vss 16-17)

--v 16 “A certain man made a great supper and bade many:”

--Feasts put on by rich man were not uncommon; in fact, they were at a feast when He told this parable

--Since many were invited, the man had to be quite wealthy

--Culture was quite different and things were not so calendar or time driven. The initial invitation was what we think of as “save the date.” ‘A feast will be held and you are invited; details are to follow.’

--v 17 “And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.” The second “invite” of “supper is now ready” was then sent out to the guests who initially said they would come. The expectation, of course, is that all who said they would come would start showing up. None of what Jesus just told them so far would have surprised them; it was something they were all familiar with.

#### B. Surprise of the parable (vss 18-24)

The parable takes an interesting twist, however, because Jesus paints a picture that would have surprised all those that were listening because He said some things that would never happen, at least in their opinion.

##### **i. The rejection of all** (vs 18a)

--v 18 “And they **all** with one consent began to make excuse.”

To suggest that *anyone* would reject the invitation was extremely unlikely; to state that **everyone** rejected the offer was borderline absurd! Why?

Because a cultural norm of that part of the world is that you *accept kindness* when it is shown to you. They stressed that a lot before the medical unit I was with deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of ODS. We were told that the Saudis get easily offended and that to “turn down” an act of kindness is, in essence, a “slap in the face.”

##### **ii. The reasons for the rejection** (vss 18b-20)

Not only was it mind-boggling to think everyone would have refused, it was also surprising that they would use such lame excuses. Who buys land *first*, then goes to see it afterwards (v 18)? Who buys oxen for work animals, but doesn’t try them out before paying for them (v 19)? And why not take your new wife out for a free feast instead of using her as an excuse (v 20)?!

The original hearers would have understood there was really only one reason they all said “no”—they didn’t like the host!

### iii. The response because of the rejection (vss 21-23)

Middle of verse 21 “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and maimed, and the halt and the blind.”

Why would this be so shocking? Because another commonly accepted practice was that if someone extended kindness to you, you were expected to show a similar act in return. You don’t invite the poor and maimed and halt and blind because they could never pay you back—and they knew it. That is why in verse 23 it says they would need to be compelled—urged—to come in, because they knew they didn’t belong at such feast.

So, how do we interpret what Jesus said? What is the lesson He was aiming to teach? How did it apply to those that heard it then—and how does it apply to us now?

The most important key in interpreting any passage of Scripture is *context*. What do the verses before and after the parable tell us? Another key to interpreting parables is to discover the *purpose* behind it. Do we have clues in the context as to **why** Jesus spoke the parable? If we can determine *why* Jesus gave a parable, we can often times see how it applies.

We have an example of this in verse 7: “And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms [best seats]; saying unto them,” and then he gives the parable.

## 2. The purpose of the parable (vss 12-15)

What clues do we have regarding the purpose of the Parable of the Great Supper?

### A. Love gives without thought of reciprocation (vss 12-14)

Notice verse 12: “Then said He also to him that bade Him...” Who “bade” Jesus—who invited Him? The answer is in verse 1: “And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day...”

Jesus is invited to a dinner at the house of one of the chief Pharisees. “They watched Him” it says in verse 1, but we also saw in verse 7 that Jesus watched *them*. He saw how those that came chose the best seats, then told a little parable about them—and to them. We will look at that more this afternoon.

Verse 12 gets even more interesting because Jesus nicely tells the host who invited Him that he did it all wrong and invited people for the wrong reason! Pretty good way to **not** get invited back to dinner again, eh? Notice what Jesus says in verses 12 and 13. Although the words are different in English, in the Greek the four words for “poor, maimed, lame, and blind” in verse 13 are exactly the same as the four words in the last part of verse 21. There is a connection, then, between verses 12-14 with the Great Supper.

The lesson here is pretty straightforward: blessing comes from being generous and loving to those who can’t recompense—pay you back—in return. Was that the main reason Jesus spoke the Parable of the Great Supper, to reinforce the teaching that love gives without thought of reciprocation?

A reason this may not be the case is this: In verses 12-14, Jesus is teaching that we should invite those who cannot repay us—the poor, maimed, lame, and blind—**first** whereas in the parable of the Great Supper, they are invited **last**, after everyone else turned down their invitation.

Another reason is that Jesus did not say there would be **no** recompense for inviting the poor, maimed, lame, and blind; He just said there would be no recompense here on *earth*. There would be, however, in heaven.

“Resurrection of the just” (v 14) refers to eternal life with God.

**Daniel 12:2** “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

**Acts 24:15** “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

The context, then, is not just about what you do on earth—it is also about “the resurrection of the just”—heaven and salvation. And then we come to verse 15. When we study God’s Word, it is always good to determine where the **paragraph** breaks are because each paragraph is a unit of thought. Here they are for the first part of the chapter 14: 1-6/7-11/12-14/15-24. My initial reaction when I looked at this parable was, “Why is verse 15 in the same paragraph as the parable itself?”

As I studied it more, however, I realized that verse 15 is the key to understanding the whole parable! In fact, I would go so far as to say that if you ignore verse 15, you will probably miss the main point of the parable, that being...

#### B. Salvation comes by accepting God’s invitation

Here’s how verse 15 refers to salvation. In the middle of this verse we have someone in the group saying—almost randomly—to Jesus: “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Commentators disagree as to whether the man was sincere or if he was saying it out of sarcasm. They are in agreement with this, however: “Eating bread in the kingdom of God” refers to salvation and being with God.

**Isaiah 25:6, 8** “And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts **make unto all people a feast** of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. <sup>8</sup> He will **swallow up death in victory**; and the Lord God **will wipe away tears from off all faces**; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.”

God’s people—including these Pharisees—were looking forward to the day when the God would make a feast for them and “death would be swallowed up in victory” and God “will wipe away tears from off their faces”—the same things we are looking forward to that occur in heaven and refer to salvation!

Now look at verse 16: “Then said He [Jesus] unto **him** [the man who just said, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”] Because Jesus was answering what the man had just said, we have to interpret the parable with a salvation “angle;” a salvation “slant.”

### **3. The application/interpretation of the parable**

#### A. General application to all

- God’s kingdom—salvation in heaven with Him—is as a feast that God the Father has made ready
- He sends out the invitation to all; all our welcome
- It is free; those invited do not pay and do not have to reciprocate
- The only requirement to come to the feast is to *accept* the invitation that has been extended
- Regardless of who has been invited and who has already come, “yet there is room” we see in verse 22.

#### B. Specific application to the Pharisees

- I won’t be overly dogmatic on this one, but I believe the excuse-makers—the invitation-rejectors—are the Jews, specifically the Pharisees. They knew ahead of time about the supper and were interested in going to the supper and said “yes”—at first—about coming to the supper, then **rejected** God’s offer.
- Another reason I believe the rejectors refer to the Pharisees is verse 24. Throughout the parable, Jesus is speaking using the third person. He speaks of a certain man (16) who sent his servant (17) and the lord (master) said to the servant (verse 23) and so on. In other words, He is talking about someone “over there.”

--Then Jesus abruptly says in verse 24, "I say unto **you**..." He is no longer talking about somebody over there— He is addressing them **personally**. "...none of those men which were bidden shall taste of **my** supper." **Not** "that" supper or "God's" supper—it was Christ's supper! And because they refused the invitation, they would be refused from tasting His supper!

### C. Specific application to us

--We are the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. God extended His offer to the Jews first, but they rejected it. We are now offered a seat at the same "great supper."

--An invitation to the supper is a gift, lovingly offered by a gracious God. We cannot reciprocate—we cannot earn our way to the table. We are undeserving, but God invites us anyway.

--There will be no seat at the table for us if we don't accept the invitation.

**John 1:12** is such a wonderful verse: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:"

## **4. How the Great Supper is a parable of love**

### A. Love of God the Father seen in the provisions of the supper

How expensive was *this* feast? We don't know, do we? But we do know what it cost **God** to put on this feast for us. It cost Him the death of His Son: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."

In verse 21 it says that "the master of the house being angry..." Why was the master of the house angry? Because he expended all these resources to put on a great supper, but those that were invited refused.

Does God get angry? He most certainly does! God has every right to be angry at those who turn up their nose at Jesus and say, "I'm coming to the feast without an invitation. You **owe me** the feast because..."

--I am good...I've been baptized...I tried my best...I went to church...and on and on the list goes" God does not **owe us** anything! It is purely out of His love and mercy that He offers us a seat at the supper!

### B. Love of Christ seen in pointing out sin

Why did Christ tell the parable in the first place?

Because He loved them and wanted them to know that not everyone will be at the feast.

Why did Christ show them that they were the rejectors?

Because He loved them and wanted them to accept the invitation—not reject it.

Why did Christ show them that their excuses were ridiculous?

Because He loved them and wanted them to reconsider.

Why did Christ warn them that they would not taste of the supper?

Because He loved them and wanted to show them they were **lost** and that they needed to **repent**.

Christ loves people too much to give them *false* assurances. He would rather sting their pride and make them angry then tell them they are okay when they are not! Reminds me of Paul's words to the Galatians:

**Galatians 1:10** "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

### C. Love of us seen in pointing people to the Savior

--Just as the man used a servant to invite people to the supper, God uses **us** to invite people to Christ

--They need to be compelled—urged—to come. In the parable they needed to be urged because it was not proper for them to go to such a feast—it was against social order and they could never reciprocate.

--There may be some who think they are too bad; they need to know they are welcome.

--There are some we might think are uninterested—like motorcycle gang members that Ron and Don were talking about on Wednesday—but they need to be invited.

--The most loving thing we can do for anyone is point them to the Savior. Can we really “love our neighbor as ourselves” but not care where they will spend eternity?

--There was an urgency with Christ; should there not be an urgency about us?

***CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:***

1. First, are you are saved? You have been invited—have you accepted the invitation?

Knowing there is a supper is not enough—you need to attend.

Thinking God owes you is arrogance—none of us is worthy.

Have you accepted God’s offer of salvation and received Christ for yourself? If not, you need to.

The words of verse 24 still apply: If you are bidden—but refuse to come—you will not taste of the supper and will be forever lost.

2. Child of God, are you willing to be a servant of God and be used of God to point others to Savior. The harvest is great; the laborers are few. Here are some practical ways to do that:

--Invite people to church. We have church invitations, pass them out. The message of the gospel is in them.

--Ask God to give you a burden and open up opportunities.

--Stay close to the Lord yourself. A full heart will spill out—an empty one won’t!