



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for April 25, 2010
Released on Wednesday, April 21, 2010**

"All Are Invited"

Lesson Text: Luke 14:15-24

Background Scripture: Luke 14:1-24

Devotional Reading: Psalm 65:1-8

Luke 14:15-24

15 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.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 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.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and showed 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.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 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.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

LESSON AIMS:

Facts: to show how Jesus emphasized that all who want to come into the kingdom community are welcome.

Principle: to explain that Jesus wants all people to partake of His kingdom community and has done everything needed for that to happen.

Application: to show how everyone who wants to come into the kingdom can walk in by receiving what Jesus has already done for them.

INTRODUCTION

Invitations

We all get invitations: weddings, showers, birthdays, cookouts - the list goes on. But most of these are rather routine and common. "Important" people get

“important” invitations: black-tie affairs, country-club banquets, dinners at the White House, etc. Some folks even measure their success and status by the quality of their invitations.

Invitations make us feel included. When we are asked to join a group, we are flattered. We feel good about ourselves when people think enough of us to want our company. Part of a person’s sense of well-being comes from being included.

In the eternal scheme of things, however, most of the connections that we value are rather insignificant. Long after we have finished our lives on earth, who will care if we belonged to a certain lodge, fraternity, or chamber of commerce? The only thing that will matter is whether or not we belong to the community of God. That is why the most important invitation of all is the invitation we have from God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A.D. 30

Place: Perea

During the final months of Jesus’ ministry, He stayed away from Jerusalem because the authorities were intent on arresting Him (John 10:39; 11:8). At one point even some of the Pharisees warned Him of the danger that awaited Him (Luke 13:22, 31). But as His appointed time drew near, Jesus began the circuitous journey that would end in Jerusalem and the cross.

One prominent Pharisee invited Jesus into his home on the Sabbath day. Some of the guests were skeptical of Jesus, so they watched Him very carefully (Luke 14:1-4). Others were more intent on getting places of honor at the table.

At a banquet supper in the first century, the guests would recline on couches or pallets surrounding a low table. Therefore, they were not just grabbing a chair, but were trying to be the first to lie down on the couch next to the host. Jesus watched them scramble for their spots, and then had a word of rebuke: “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (see Luke 14:7-11).

Then Jesus had a further word for the host. Instead of just inviting his family, friends, and/or rich neighbors, the man should have invited the poor, the blind, and the crippled. Such people would not be able to repay the favor by inviting him to a feast in return. And because of this, God himself would repay the man’s generosity at the final resurrection (Luke 14:12-14). It was at the prospect of sharing in God’s great banquet at the final resurrection that one guest exclaimed the words that begin our lesson.

THE INVITATION EXTENDED (Luke 14:15-17)

1. What was the setting and occasion that prompted Jesus to give the parable in this lesson? (Luke 14:15)

Jesus’ presence at a chief Pharisee’s Sabbath meal made the occasion especially interesting. First, He healed a man of dropsy, violating the Pharisees’ rules against work on the Sabbath (vs. 1-6). Next He taught humility to those who sought out the best positions (vs. 7-11). Then He urged them to invite the poor and afflicted, not just their social peers, to their banquets (vs. 12-14).

Jesus’ promise that those who honored the poor would be repaid at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14) prompted one guest to offer a comment.

The man probably assumes that he himself and the other pious Pharisees certainly will be in that number. Thus he exclaims how *blessed* is the person who will participate in the feast of Heaven.

The guest at this Pharisee’s table is correct to perceive that eating at God’s table will be a wonderful thing. He is wrong, however, if he assumes that he has an

automatic right to be there because of his Jewish ancestry or his pious good deeds as a Pharisee.

2. What did Jesus say about a great banquet? What purposes did the two invitations to a banquet serve? (vs. 16,17)

Jesus puts many of His teachings in the form of a parable. A parable often is called "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning."

In Jesus' parable, a certain man prepared a great banquet and invited a great number of guests. In the ancient Near East it was customary to issue two invitations (cf. Esther 5:8; 6:14). The first announced the place and time of the banquet and gave those invited the opportunity to accept or decline the offer. There is no hint in Jesus' story that any of those invited refused to come.

The second invitation was a reminder when the time of the banquet had actually arrived. A servant would be sent to all who had previously accepted the invitation to tell them everything was now ready. This should not have taken anyone by surprise, and to refuse to come at this point was considered a rude insult to the host.

In applying this illustration to the Jewish religious leaders, it is noteworthy that they had received earlier invitations to enter God's kingdom. They had studied the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures. They had heard the exhortations of John the Baptist. They had also repeatedly heard the invitations of Jesus to receive Him as their Messiah. The kingdom was at hand, and now was the time for their decision. What would they decide to do?

Jesus' invitation to salvation was not limited to the religious leaders. He appealed to everyone with the words "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). This invitation continues to every generation during this present age (Mark 16:15,16). But who can tell when the final call will come? Those who are wise will not delay to answer. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

THE INVITATION DESPISED (Luke 14:18-20)

3. How were the excuses of the first two invited men similar? Why were their excuses invalid? (vs. 18,19)

With the banquet prepared, the host sent out his servant with the final invitations to those who had said they would come. Incredibly, "they all with one consent began to make excuse." Each made his own excuse, but all the excuses were similar. In each case some matter of self-interest usurped the place of their commitment to attend. The first two excuses related to business.

The first man's excuse was that he had just purchased a parcel of ground and needed to go check it out. This claim was plain ridiculous. What man would buy land without seeing it first to make certain it was worth the money he was paying for it? If he had already purchased the land, surely he had seen it. And if he wanted to go a second time to inspect it, he could do so at any time. He did not have to miss the banquet for this.

This was clearly a matter of priorities. This potential guest simply has decided that he has something he would rather do than honor the invitation of his host.

Jesus' second example also was related to business. As the master's servant continues to make the rounds in giving the follow-up invitation, he comes to another potential guest who offers an excuse as well. The fact that he has bought *five* pairs of *oxen* shows that he is wealthy and successful, since most farmers can afford only one or two. This man's excuse was that he was, even right then, even at that very moment, on his way to "*go to prove them*"—to put them to the test and find out if they can plow. But this excuse was as lame as that of the man who bought the land.

If he had any doubts about the worth of these animals (ten of them!), then he surely would not have paid good money for them. And if he still wanted to put them through a test to see how well they could work, that could have waited until after the banquet.

This was, again, a transparent attempt to escape a commitment he had previously made. The great supper simply was not his priority, and he despised his opportunity to attend.

4. How can economic priorities hinder a person from entering Christ's kingdom?

In using these two business illustrations, Jesus was stressing for His affluent audience that economic matters often stand in the way of entrance into His kingdom (cf. Matt. 19:23-24). It is still so today. The priority of possessions grips many so that their time, thoughts, and energies are consumed with business affairs. Even the poor can fall into this trap, as the desperate attempt to make a living crowds out the more important concern of their relationship with God.

5. What third excuse did Jesus relate in the parable? How might family obligations keep one from the kingdom? (v. 20)

Finally, a third guest declines the invitation because he has just gotten *married*. This man says *therefore* he *cannot come*, as if the logical connection is obvious.

This is also a ridiculous excuse. Did not the man know at the initial invitation that he was planning to get married? If the supper is for men only, could he not be apart from his wife for even a few hours?

This response was even more disrespectful than those of the other two. They, at least, had the courtesy to say, "I pray thee have me excused" (vs. 18,19). But this man simply declared that he could not come.

Family obligations, though important in God's sight, should not hinder one's entrance into God's kingdom any more than economic pressures. Jesus recognized that spiritual commitment to Him could strain family ties, but He never relaxed His claim to His followers' wholehearted allegiance on that account (cf. Matt. 10:34-37; Luke 14:26).

6. What are some excuses non-Christians give to avoid making a decision for Christ? What are some excuses Christians use to avoid Christian service? Are there common elements across these two? Explain.

"Maybe later. I am too busy to really think about it right now." "There will be time for that when I'm older, but now I just want to enjoy life." These are just two. Have you heard (or used) either of these? In both the delays in accepting Christ and the pushing away of opportunities to serve Him more fully as a Christian, a common element often is the assumption that we will have time later to change our response. What a dangerous assumption! Everything else fades in importance to the immediate acceptance of our host's gracious invitation. We must not insult Him by putting anything else ahead of His call.

THE INVITATION BROADENED (Luke 14:21-24)

7. In Jesus' parable, how did the host respond to the refusals of those originally invited? (v. 21)

The servant who had announced the banquet and delivered the invitations returned and reported to his lord. No doubt he would have touched on all that had happened, including the rude refusals of the invited guests. Since everything had been prepared, the *master of the house* is understandably *angry*. His gracious

invitation has been thrown back in his face, for reasons that are completely unworthy.

In his anger he comes up with a plan: We might think that the insulted host would cancel or postpone the banquet. Instead, he opened it to new guests. Since time was now of the essence, he told his servant to move quickly. He sends his servant out to the *streets and lanes of the city* where homeless beggars live. He will bring in poor people to replace his wealthy "friends." He will invite people who are crippled to take their places on his upholstered couches. He will bid people who are blind to replace those who just could not see their way clear to come to his feast. (It should not be forgotten that these are exactly the people whom Jesus had earlier said that His host should have invited to the supper currently in progress; see Luke 14:13.)

8. What types of people did those from the city streets represent? (v. 22)

The servant quickly obeys his master, summoning the underclass of the city to come to the feast. These people, desperate in their poverty, gladly respond to the invitation. As soon as they enter the banquet hall, they know that they are about to enjoy a feast beyond anything they have ever known. And still, there is such abundance that there is room for more!

Throughout His ministry Jesus shows a special love for such people. Wherever there are people whom society had cast aside, Jesus reaches out in love.

In Jesus' parable they had been held in contempt by the leadership, but now they were entering the kingdom while the leaders had shut themselves out. As Jesus will soon tell the chief priests and elders at the temple in Jerusalem, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matthew 21:31).

9. What types did those from the highways and hedges represent? (v. 23)

There are still empty places at the tables, even as the great hall fills with people who are poor, lame, and blind. Determined that his hospitality will not be wasted, *the lord* of the house sends his *servant* out to find even more replacements for those who were invited originally. The servant is sent beyond the boundaries of the town, to find even travelers. He is sent into the rough areas fenced by brush, where vagrants may be found.

Just so, God wishes to share the kingdom blessings of salvation with all who will come to Him in faith. He has extended the invitation beyond Israel to the highways and hedges of humanity (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). He welcomes persons of every nationality, tribe, ethnic group, social class, and economic status.

When the servant finds such people, he is to *compel them to come in* to the feast. *Compel* does not mean to force them against their will, but to urge them strongly and show them convincingly the necessity. He desires that His house be filled, and His love is limited only by men's failure to receive it for themselves (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

10. On what somber note does the parable end? (v. 24)

The parable ends on a somber note: "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:24). Those first invited despised and missed their opportunity. The host was gracious, but his grace could do no good for those who spurned it. It was now bestowed on others, and there was neither postponement nor a second chance for those initially favored. The supper would simply go on without them.

In this parable Jesus can be seen to prophesy a future time when God will replace the "expected" guests with outsiders. God previously had established a covenant with the people of Israel, preparing them for the coming of the messianic age. When

that time arrives with the advent of Jesus, however, many reject Him. Therefore God will find replacements!

It is even more tragic for those today who reject the gospel invitation to enter Christ's kingdom. This solemn warning extends to those who are privileged to hear Christ's gospel. Never should they set their priorities on other matters. If they do, they will discover the door of the banquet hall suddenly closed, never to open to them again. According to John 3:18, anyone who rejects God's Son and the forgiveness of the cross is "condemned already."

PRACTICAL POINTS

- 1.** Just asserting spiritual truth does not necessarily make it true of you (Luke 14:15).
- 2.** God invites all to come to Him for salvation (Luke 14:16,17; cf. John 3:16; Matt. 11:28).
- 3.** Any excuse for ignoring God's invitation to salvation is unacceptable (Luke 14:18-20).
- 4.** A person ignores God's invitation at his own peril (Luke 14:21; cf. Psalm 7:11; John 3:16-18).
- 5.** There is always room for one more person to accept God's invitation (Luke 14:22).
- 6.** To those who reject God's call there is no guarantee of a second chance (vs. 23,24).

CONCLUSION

God's R.S.V.P.

The letters *R.S.V.P.* often are included at the bottom of written invitations. These four letters abbreviate a French phrase that is translated "please respond." To ignore the request to respond is a social blunder. The more important the invitation, the greater the blunder if it is ignored.

God's invitation to come to Him is the greatest invitation any person can ever receive. (See Isaiah 1:18; 55:1; Matthew 11:28.) Therefore nothing in all of life should be allowed to displace it. It is God's greatest gift that "whosoever will" can come (see Revelation 22:17). Older Christians will perhaps remember a hymn written by Charles H. Gabriel (1856–1932) that reflects that idea:

*"All things are ready," come to the feast!
Come, for the table now is spread;
Ye famishing, ye weary, come,
And thou shalt be richly fed.
Hear the invitation,
Come, "whosoever will";
Praise God for full salvation
For "whosoever will."*

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

The invitation to join God's community is not without cost. God's invitation demands the right to override all other claims on our time and resources. While it certainly does not demand that we abandon our families, quit our jobs, or throw away our financial assets, it does demand to come ahead of them in priority. At times we may experience conflicts that are far more pressing than the foolish excuses of Jesus' parable, but God's call must always come first. In a verse that follows the parable, Jesus even says, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

But the wonderful truth is that giving up everything to accept God's invitation will be worth it! Jesus assured His disciples that even if they had to give up houses, lands, or family ties for His sake, they would be repaid many times over, and they would inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:29).

The invitation to become part of the community of God is also an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7). When God's people take their place at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven, there will be great rejoicing. But for those who are not included, there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" at the lost opportunity (see Matthew 8:11,12).

Any sacrifices made to attend this feast will be soon forgotten. All who are included on that day will understand the words of the angel recorded by John: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9).

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for preparing the heavenly feast and inviting us to share Your bounty. Help us never to assume that we have somehow earned the right to be there. Help us also to be passionate about carrying the invitation to others, to compel them to come in. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

"All things are ready." Come to the feast!

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON:

Next week's lesson is "**Understand and Live Truth**" and begins a series of lessons that help us look at the teachings of the church that relate to living in Christian community. Study Colossians 1:1-14.

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