

Parable of the Great Dinner

July 29 • Bible Study Guide 9

Bible Background • LUKE 14:15–24

Printed Text • LUKE 14:15–24 | Devotional Reading • LUKE 14:25–33

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: **EVALUATE** the excuses people gave for not responding appropriately to the invitation to the banquet; **AVOID** being like one of the invitees who gave excuses; and **SHARE** with others Jesus' invitation to the great banquet.

In Focus

Faith and Nicholas invited their closest family and friends to attend their wedding. Faith and Nicholas' budget would only allow 200 guests, which meant they could not invite their entire church family. Two weeks before the ceremony, the church clerk read their wedding announcement, but did not extend an invitation to members. Faith overheard whispers among the congregation. Some congregants who received personal invitations bragged that they would attend. Some were not bothered because they did not know the couple well. Still others felt saddened that they were overlooked and uninvited. Faith knew their budget could not afford a larger party, but she did not want anyone to feel left out.

As the ceremony drew closer, many of the very special guests Faith originally invited failed to RSVP. Faith included in the next church announcement that all who desired to come could attend. She focused her attention on the company of those who wanted to share in the celebration of her and Nicholas' union. Once the invited wedding guests and those welcomed from the congregation were seated, there were still seats available for guests who just showed up to join the party.

There is enough room for all who desire to come and fellowship in the kingdom of God. In today's lesson, we will examine welcoming and embracing the least. Describe a time when you were invited to a very important party or event.

Keep in Mind

“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).

Words You Should Know

A. Longsuffering (Romans 2:4) *makrothumia* (Gk.)—A Christian virtue of patience; a fruit of the Spirit that manifests in Christian behavior and character.

B. Wrath (v. 5) *orge* (Gk.)—Strong anger or indignation.

Say It Correctly

Hither. hi-**THUR**.

Bidden. bi-**DEN**.

KJV

Luke 14:15 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 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.

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.

NLT

Luke 14:15 Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, "What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!"

16 Jesus replied with this story: "A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations.

17 When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.'

18 But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.'

19 Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

21 The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, 'Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.'

22 After the servant had done this, he reported, 'There is still room for more.'

23 So his master said, 'Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full.'

24 For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.'"

The People, Places, and Times

Parables. Jesus traveled from place to place preaching and teaching to all who would listen. He used parables as a primary tool to convey His messages. A parable is a short narrative aimed at teaching a spiritual principle or moral lesson. On numerous occasions, Jesus' followers would come to Him with questions or insight about a spiritual practice, and He often responded with parables to enhance the followers' understanding. The parable of the great dinner is told in both [Matthew 22:1-14](#) and [Luke 14:15-25](#). Whereas Matthew uses the parable to reveal good treatment toward new believers, Luke's writing emphasizes God's open invitation to all people. When the host opens the dinner to include all people in [Luke 14:21-25](#), the people least considered were the very ones willing to attend, and there was still more room for others.

Meal Fellowship. One sacred Christian ritual is fellowship around a meal. On the journey to Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples were often greeted by hosts who welcomed them into their home and prepared a meal for them. Much of Luke's Gospel features Jesus eating and drinking with unlikely people ([Luke 5:27-32](#), [7:36-50](#), [10:38-42](#), [19:1-10](#)). Meal fellowship in this passage is symbolic of the Great Banquet, a heavenly feast of believers upon the messianic return of the Lamb of God ([Revelation 19:9](#)). Everyone invited to the table of

fellowship of believers must accept the invitation in order to join the party. Believers accept this invitation through belief in Jesus Christ as Savior who will return to redeem the people of God. As the dinner guest announces in [Luke 14:15](#), “What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!”
What do you imagine will be on the menu at the banquet in the kingdom of God?

Background

The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as the Savior of the world. Luke’s Jesus shows a deep concern for the dispossessed. Jesus reverses the social power dynamics to reveal the order of God. In [Luke 14:1](#), Jesus is present at a dinner in the house of a Pharisee, a member of a Jewish sect who practiced strict observance of the Law. Those present at the dinner party were eager to hear and see Jesus’ actions. On two other occasions in Luke (6:6–11, 13:10–17), Jesus infuriates religious leaders by healing on the Sabbath, a holy day observed by the Jewish community to honor God. Jesus redefines the socio-religious order by performing a healing on the man suffering from swollen arms and legs on the Sabbath at the dinner in [Luke 14:1–6](#), thus exposing that the rule of God is to extend care and concern for those in need.

As an invited dinner guest, Jesus gives lessons on humility and hospitality (vv. 7–14). He teaches on shame and honor associated with banquets because of who is invited and where one sits as a guest. Jesus encourages guests to maintain humility at all times because the esteemed will be brought low and the humble exalted (v. 11) in God’s reign.

Appropriate dinner party etiquette in those times was to invite someone who could return the favor (vv. 12–14). By inviting people shunned by society, the host could not expect such a courtesy in return. Jesus offers a new paradigm of invitation in the kingdom of God whereby the nobodies of society are given place at the table. At the Lord’s table, no one can repay the host, but we can make room for others to come join in the glorious feast.
How does it feel to know that you have been invited to God’s kingdom banquet?

At-A-Glance

1. Dinner is Served ([Luke 14:15–17](#))
2. Excuses, Excuses, Excuses (vv. 18–21)
3. There is Still Room (vv. 22–24)

In Depth

1. Dinner is Served ([Luke 14:15–17](#))

The parable of the great dinner begins as a response from Jesus to a dinner party guest proclaiming the honor of feasting in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God pronounces His eternal rule or reign. Jesus uses this parable to illustrate that the Lord’s table is not restricted to a particular few, but rather open and inclusive for all who desire to come and partake.

Hosting a large group for a meal is no easy task. Such a task requires an extended period of preparation by the host to make the space ready and arrange the meal. Once all elements are put in place at a dinner party, the host will announce, “Dinner is served,” which is an invitation for all guests to join the party and participate in the lavish feast that is prepared. In this parable, the host sends a servant out as a messenger and invites guests to attend and alert invitees that the feast is ready.

How can you alert others to Jesus’ invitation to the kingdom feast?

2. Excuses, Excuses, Excuses (vv. 18–21)

Today we have a whole industry devoted to preparing invitations, from paper notes and e-vites, to websites and video messages. Can you imagine preparing a large dinner and on the day of, your invited guests one by one send notice that they cannot attend? Can you imagine the hurt feelings? In this parable, the invited guests turned down the invite and offered an array of excuses for why they could not attend the prepared dinner. Angered by the excuses, the host instructs the servant to find anyone who would accept the invitation to come.

Likewise, God calls humanity to join and experience His kingdom. He prepares and makes ready all that we need in advance. God sends messengers to us to share the good news of His call. All excuses to ignore God's invitations are trivial. It disturbs Him when we deny His welcome.

What are some excuses that people give for rejecting God's invitation?

3. There is Still Room (vv. 22–24)

The servant goes out into the hills and highways to invite those least likely to join the party. The lowly guests begin pouring in, but still there is room at the banquet. The host then instructs the servant to spread the news to everyone everywhere and bid them to come and fill the house. This parable's irony is that the esteemed few were unable to show, but the lowly were willing to come and attended in large numbers.

One of the major reasons a host invites certain guests to any party is the potential of scarcity. No host wants the food to run out or the space to become overpopulated and too crowded for guests. In the kingdom of God, the Lord's table has more than enough space. We serve a God who specializes in sufficiency and abundance. One's position or status in society does not matter; there is always room in the kingdom of God.

Why would someone think there is no room in the kingdom of God for them?

Search the Scriptures

1. Do you believe the excuses to reject the invitation were valid? Why or why not ([Luke 14:18–20](#))?
2. Who is welcome to the feast of the kingdom (v. 21)?

Discuss the Meaning

It is easy to honor and welcome people who we think are of high esteem. The real test of our Christian character is whether we can value and embrace those who are the least, the left out, the outcasts and the unwanted. This lesson teaches us that the ones who are cast down are often the ones who should be raised up. Who in your community are the people on the margins? Have you overlooked or uninvited these people to the table of the fellowship of believers?

Lesson in Our Society

The African American community can relate to the experience of marginalization historically and today. Blacks have fought for centuries to sit at the American table of democracy with equal representation and recognition. In a world where Black lives struggle to matter globally, there is hope in the table of fellowship in the kingdom of God which remains open to all, especially the ostracized. Just as we are welcomed and embraced by God, we are called to receive and accept others with open arms.

Make It Happen

- As Christians, we are called to serve as messengers of God by sharing with others the invitation to His kingdom.
- There is no excuse that can release us from the Christian duties of humility and hospitality. It is our responsibility to make room for others, particularly at the tables of power and privilege that we occupy. Consider in your church, your committees, your professional societies, and your civic organizations, how you can make room for others.
- Make a commitment to opening the doors of opportunity for the least likely: the young, the old, the poor, the sick, the disenfranchised, etc.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

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.

Jesus was at the home of a Pharisee and had finished telling the host who should be invited to any of his luncheons or dinners. Jesus included the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. He added that since these impoverished people could in no way repay the host, at the resurrection of the godly, God would reward the host for inviting those who could not repay him (14:12–14). When a man sitting at the table with Jesus heard these things, he saw the glory of God’s kingdom and said, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”

The word “blessed” in Greek is *makarios* (**mah-KAH-ree-ooce**) and means “supremely favored, happy, well off.” The phrase “kingdom of God” refers to a time and place when God rules over all hearts and provides richly for His people. In essence, the man said that a person is supremely fortunate to sit at the Lord’s table and partake of what He offers, which is everlasting life.

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

Now the Lord tells a parable of a great supper that a certain man had. The word “supper” in Greek is *deipnon* (**DAYP-known**), referring to the last meal of the day, which was usually the main meal. This one being a “great” supper implies it was closer to a feast than an evening meal. In the illustration that Jesus gave, this man had a great banquet or dinner and invited different people to attend and share from his table. Of course, Jesus is that “certain man” inviting all to come to His supper or great feast and partake of what He is offering—eternal life in the kingdom of God, which can only be found at the Lord’s table.

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. The man’s servant obeyed and went and told the invited guests that the feast was ready and they should come. 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.

However, as though with one voice (“with one consent”), the invitees presented reasons not to attend the banquet (v. 18). They wanted to be excused. The excuses vary, but the basic reason is similar—either financial or familial concerns. Something else is ultimately more important than attending. The excuses went on and on as to why the invited guests could not and would not attend the feast.

One said that he had bought a yoke of oxen and had to prove them. The word “prove” in Greek is *dokimazo* (**do-kee-MOD-zo**) and means “to test, examine.” His excuse was that he had to find out if the oxen were any good. Apparently, he bought them without first examining them. Another invitee said that he had gotten married and could not come. Since Christ was speaking of the end-times banquet, He was making the point that other concerns get in the way of deciding for Jesus and sharing the hope of the *eschaton* (Gk. **es-ka-TAHN**), which is the Greek word for the end of the age. Such excuses are poor, even insulting, in light of the occasion and their previous willingness to come.

Today, people use many excuses to reject Christ’s offer of salvation. Some feel that they are too young to get saved now and will do so later. Others feel that they are too old or too bad to be forgiven. Still others feel that salvation is not for them, while some think that there are ways of salvation apart from Christ.

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.

The servant told his master what the invitees said. The master was angry about all the excuses and rejections, and he sent his servant into the streets to invite the outsiders to the banquet—those who had been overlooked by the elite, the marginalized of society. Translated from the Greek, “the poor” is *ptochos* (**pto-KHOS**) and means “beggars, paupers”; “the maimed” (Gk. *anaperos*, **ah-NA-pay-roce**) means “crippled”; the “halt” in Greek is *cholos* (**kho-LOS**), and it means “limping, crippled, lame.” The parable extends the invitation beyond expected boundaries. In essence, God sent His one and only Son to a whole world of spiritually needy people—to those who recognize it as well as those who are less aware.

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.

Since there was still room at what must have been a huge table, the master in the story sent his servant to the highway and hedges to invite more people—those outside of the church, the street people—to come so that God’s house would be filled. The idea that this master had enough room for everyone equals the belief that God turns no one away from joining His kingdom—all can be saved! God’s people must be sought and found in surprising places. Whosoever will may come.

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

Jesus now summarizes the parable for His audience. Those whom the man had invited to come to the supper in the first place were really missing out; they would never “taste” (Gk. *geuomai*, **GEW-oh-my**), which here has the double meaning of literal eating and figurative experiencing, his feast. In essence, those who reject Jesus Christ as their personal Savior will never experience His wonderful salvation—be a part of His kingdom that will reign forever and ever. In other words, the rejecting ones will experience death—eternal separation from a holy God.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher
Theme: God's Justice
Song: "We Shall Overcome"
Devotional Reading: Psalm 32

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Exemptions from Military Service
(Deuteronomy 20:5-8)

TUESDAY

The Wealthy and Kingdom Membership
(Luke 18:18-25)

WEDNESDAY

Take Up the Cross and Follow
(Matthew 16:24-28)

THURSDAY

My True Mother and Siblings
(Mark 3:31-35)

FRIDAY

The Gentiles Will Listen
(Acts 28:23-28)

SATURDAY

Count the Cost, Then Follow Me
(Luke 14:25-33)

SUNDAY

Everyone Invited to the Great Dinner
(Luke 14:15-24)