Text: Luke 14:15-24
Title: The Great Supper
Truth: God wishes to fill His kingdom, but many people refuse His invite.
Date/Location: Sunday October 27, 2024 at FBC

Introduction

One of the people who sat at the Pharisee's house heard Jesus's teaching about mercy, humility, and selflessness. Those truths are recorded in the first 14 verses of chapter 14. The mention of the resurrection brought to the man's mind what would come next in the big picture timeline—the kingdom of God.

In the space of 9 verses, the Lord Jesus gives a short parable that refers God's ongoing invitation to humanity to join Him—despite their recalcitrance.[1] This invitation has been open for the entirety of history but will end when the great supper arrives.

I. The Blessing of the Coming Kingdom, v. 15

A. The final statement of Jesus in verse 14 concerned one's reward at the resurrection of the just. Selfless service to others who are unable to repay is one evidence that a host is holy in their character and had previously been justified by God. How does one get this way? By faith in Jesus, not by works (Gal. 2:16, Rom. 4:5).

B. The resurrection of the *just* is different than the resurrection of the *unjust*. There are multiple phases to the resurrection of humanity from the dead, but the two main ones are these: the resurrection to life, and the resurrection to condemnation (John 5:29). The first is the resurrection to everlasting life, and the second to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2). Of the resurrection of the dead, there will be some who are saved and others who are not (Acts 24:15). The outcome is binary.

C. The Jewish hope was to be raised from the dead and then to participate in the glorious kingdom of God (Acts 23:6) in which the nation of Israel would inherit the land permanently, would dwell in safety, and would rule over the other nations of the earth (Deut.

[1] Recalcitrance means stubborn disobedience, obstinate defiance of authority or restraint.

28:12-13). We can add more details to that storyline, but that is the same as the Christian hope today. Christ's people will participate in the kingdom as well. Israel's promises will come to fruition, and conditions will be greatly enhanced from the way things are today. An inaugural part of that kingdom will be a celebratory meal that we know as the wedding supper of the lamb. The Jewish people did not have the details provided by later Bible revelation, though they had an idea that there would be an extensive feast which marked the blessing of God upon the nation.

D. I do not think Jesus is trying to specifically portray the wedding meal, and quite possibly the man who exclaims about the blessedness of eating in the kingdom of God is not limiting his exclamation to that specific event either. The thought is more general: whoever gets to participate in the kingdom of God at all will be greatly blessed. So, the great supper is not necessarily a meal *per se*, but represents all the blessings of participating in the kingdom. Simply: the supper is like the kingdom of God.

E. One critical difference in how the man may have been thinking compared to what the Christian faith teaches: he thought that this blessedness would come to the Jews only and would especially be enjoyed by all "good" Jewish people (if not all Jews *in toto*). This created a superiority complex. "God has picked us over everyone else!" The ethnocentric theme was current at the time, so that when Jesus said things like in Luke 13:28-29, it would be very upsetting to the Rabbis and Pharisees and lawyers. Here is what Jesus taught: that people would come from far away to join the kingdom of God, and *yourselves* would be cast out. The so-called "sons of the kingdom" (the unbelieving Jews) would be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 8:12) while Gentiles enjoyed the kingdom with Abraham and the other patriarchs. This did not fit with a triumphal, nationalistic view held by many who had not experienced true heart circumcision (Jer. 4:4, 9:26).

F. Christians believe very differently. It is not the "Jews only" (Rom. 3:29, 9:24). Being part of God's kingdom is not based on ethnic considerations. It is based on faith in Christ and a transformed heart from Him. Moral and spiritual considerations are paramount (1 Cor. 6:9-10, Matt. 5:20, 7:21). Justification and conversion are

required (Matt. 18:3). Being born again is a pre-requisite to being in the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

G. What is the alternative? The resurrection of the unjust, and the corresponding reality of eternal punishment. I do not enjoy reporting that, but it is what it is—by which I mean that it is what God ordained it to be, and it is what it morally ought to be.

II. The Invitation, v. 16-17

A. What the Lord is about to say will pop the bubble of this Jewish fellow. Jesus warns the people that not just everyone is going to be "in" the kingdom. Those who reject the invitation, including by taking it for granted and ignoring the Host (God), will not be permitted to participate. They will show their attitude that they did not care for the King, nor belong in the kingdom citizenry in the first place.

B. The man sends out an invitation far in advance of the time of the meal. This is not a last-minute deal. Like a wedding today, invitations are sent out weeks in advance. But in contrast to our practice, what they did back then was to send out a servant to remind people that the time was at hand to go to the meal.

C. Jesus intends us to understand that the man who gave the great supper is a picture of God. The original invitees represent the Jewish nation. God invited many people to the kingdom and to salvation which is prerequisite of entering the kingdom. But many people refuse the invitation and will experience condemnation.

D. I believe the servant represents all of God's messengers who bring the message of repentance and faith throughout history. That message is what the supper invitation represents. The first round of invitations went out in the Old Testament era. As the time for the dinner draws nearer, continued invitations are given by God through His servants—us—and urgency increases because of the nearness of the Lord's return.

III. The Excuses, v. 18-24

A. Those invited and now reminded began one by one to ask to be excused, and they gave reasons—excuses, really—as to why they

could not participate. The excuses are ridiculous, insincere, and weak. Consider them:

1. *I need to see some land I bought*. It is highly unlikely that the person purchased the land sight-unseen. Everyone who makes a big purchase like this knows something about what they are buying. Even if there is a need to go and see it, that could be done after the supper or after the days-long wedding party.

2. *I need to evaluate some oxen that I bought*. Once again, who purchases oxen without knowing their abilities? And who could not wait a day or two to do this?

3. *I have married a wife*. OK, that is a great blessing but does not constitute an excuse. Do you get married and then skip church because God gave you a wife? How about going to give thanks to God, for he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord (Prov. 18:22)?! Did you just marry her yesterday, knowing that the invitation was for the next day, and you would not therefore go to the dinner? Or have you been married for a while? Why not take your wife to the dinner with you? I assume that the host would not prohibit spouses from coming! Nothing about being married prevents you from going to an important event like this.

B. What is obvious is that the people making the excuses simply have things that are more important to them than their connection with the man and the other guests. Their "things" have higher priority than their host and his things. Their things are more important than even their integrity, for presumably they earlier indicated that they would come, but are now going back on their word.

C. The man was angry about this. Was he justified in this anger? I think so: after all, he had graced them with an invitation to his *great* supper. Their relationship with the host was in serious question. They treated him with contempt. They went back on their word to him. They did not care about him or his things.

D. When it became clear to the man that his guest list was not going to be filled, he asked his servant to go out and find more people. He went out into the streets and lanes, and he tried to bring in

anyone he could: poor people, disabled folk, blind. Everyone who would be marginalized or considered “low lifes” by the higher-ups of society was an invitee of the gracious host. Just like Jesus came to offer salvation to tax collectors and sinners, the man invited those who were considered unfit. When there was still more room, he insisted that the servant go out wherever he could find people and urge them to come. He compelled them to come in with great urgency. Perhaps some of them considered themselves unworthy. Thus, they required compulsion to encourage them to come.

E. These, my friends, are exactly the kind of people for whom God is looking. He wants his house to be full of people made in His image, cleansed, forgiven, renewed. Since not many mighty or noble people will submit to the call of God (1 Cor. 1:26), more people of lower social class will end up in the heavenly kingdom.

F. I know that some people like to keep to themselves, and sometimes not out of loving motives (perhaps selfishness). But many people, when celebrating some important event, like to do so with a lot of other people. For that sort of person, to be alone is no fun. There is not much like an atmosphere with lots of people happy and rejoicing. But if there are just a few people, it might be depressing. Does no one care? Are their lives so important that there is no room for others?

G. The expanding circle of invitees represents that God has sheep which are not of this fold (John 10:16), namely Gentiles. Those initially invited will try to enter later, but it will be a no-go for them (Luke 13:25).

IV. Applying Jesus’s Teaching

A. God invites more sinners than will come to Him. God wants people more than people want God. God does not take pleasure in the death of sinners, dear friend. He does not *want* you to die in sin or suffer punishment, but that is the only path available to you if you refuse His grace. So, come when He invites you!

B. To avoid participating in the future on God’s terms, many of those invited offer lame excuses. Like the Pharisees, people today are “too much attached to worldly and visible things, and therefore

they reject Him."[2] They are "choked" by the cares of this life, by riches, by pleasure, by entertainment, by worldly desires, by intellectual pursuits, etc. When confronted with the good news about Jesus, what are some excuses people make?

"I cannot commit intellectual suicide."

"There is too much evil in the world; God cannot be real."

"I am enjoying life. I do not need God to cramp my style."

"I will think about it later." "I am very busy with school."

"I have too many things going on with work and family."

"My spouse is not religious." "Jesus? He did not even exist!"

"Christians are intolerant." "Jesus did not rise from the dead."

"Christians are hypocrites." "Church is boring."

"Frankly, I like my 'sin'" (John 3:19).

C. Some of us professing Christians also are too attached to worldly things. We have "this and that" which we prioritize above God. Consider the "this and that" in your own life. Are there things/events that eat up your time from serving Christ? Do your material things and worldly events occupy you so that you miss opportunities for communion with God, for fellowship with the saints, for instruction in the word, for time in prayer, for service to others, for working in the church? Do you prioritize sleep on Sunday over sleep on Monday-Friday? Work and play over church? YouTube and Netflix over Bible reading?

Let us ask ourselves, what weak or pathetic excuses are we using to do rude things to God? Is it because God is unseen that we assume we get away with a pattern of that kind of life?

D. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that at least part of God's kingdom is likened to a great banquet. It is not boring! It will be a time for rejoicing, celebration, and thanksgiving. It will be holy, enjoyable, blessed, safe. The invitation is broad (not intolerant!). There will be plenty of time there to live an abundant life! MAP

[2] Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, p. 393.