

Text: Luke 14:15-24 (Pew Bible pg.1034)

Title: “Come to My Party”

INTRODUCTION

We are moving toward the most important week of the year for us as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. It all starts on Palm Sunday, March 24 with our children involved in both services. Wednesday is our Easter Week Lord's Supper. On Friday we have our Community Good Friday Service as well as our choir and orchestra's presentation of "Messiah ... the Message of Easter." There are Easter Egg hunts for children on the two Saturdays before Easter. All of this builds toward our glorious Easter Sunday Celebration. We'll have our regular worship schedule with the Traditional Worship at 8:30am and the Contemporary Worship at 11:00am. Now as you know, due to our construction parking, parking has been a challenge on a typical Sunday. On Easter Sunday our attendance grows by about 50%. So to insure that we have ample parking for our guests and members we will not have SMBS. This will insure that we have plenty of parking for both worship services. This is the greatest opportunity we have each year to invite guests to be with us in church. So we have provided special Easter invitation cards. Grab a handful and give them out wherever you go.

I want to share with you an amazing thing that God has been doing in our church over the last few weeks. Some time back the Lord put it on my heart to challenge our staff to pray specifically and urgently for people to be saved ... that at least one person every week would be saved through our personal witness or the ministries we lead. And to signify that, each week we would have a display of candles at the head table during staff meeting and we would light a candle for each person saved that week. So three Tuesdays ago we came into staff meeting. I was excited because just one hour before staff meeting I had the privilege of leading a man to Christ in my office. Then one of our secretaries shared how she was able to lead a child to Christ in SMBS the previous Sunday. Then one of our men shared how they had been able to lead three people to Christ during the preceding week. The next week we came wondering what would happen. Sure enough one of us got to lead three women to Christ in one home visit. So we came to last Tuesday. By then we already knew that we had 16 men make professions of faith at the men's Wild Game Dinner. But that wasn't all. One of our men shared how he and another man in our church led a young lady to Christ whom they had reached through a Bible study at their gym. A secretary shared how she got to lead a friend to Christ for whom she had been praying for years. We learned that one of our deacons led a man to Christ on the street as they were paying at the parking meter. So last Tuesday we had 20 candles lit there at the front of the room at staff meeting. In the three weeks since we started praying specifically for our hearts to be open and for people to be saved we have had 28 come to Christ.

So please pray, and as you have opportunity to help someone come to Christ, let us know so we can celebrate with you. This is not just a church program; it is a biblical mandate. And we see that in places like our text today, Luke 14:15-24. Let's open our Bibles to that passage. We're sitting at the feet of Jesus as He teaches here on the pages of the Gospels. Specifically we want to learn from the life stories of Jesus. Here Jesus has attended a dinner at the home of a prominent man. To get started ...

Luke 14:15 - When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

So here is a man who is attending the dinner where Jesus is present. Jesus had watched the way people behaved at this dinner and he used that as an opportunity to teach powerful truths that we find earlier in Luke 14. And the man at the table with Jesus exclaimed, “Speaking of feasts, won’t it be a great blessing for those of us who get to eat at the feast in the kingdom of God at the end of time?”

Now you need to know that this was on the mind of every Jewish person in Jesus’ time and going all the way back to the OT times. When someone talked about the “feast in the kingdom of God” they were describing their hope for the future when God’s Messiah would bring salvation to Israel ... when Israel, the people of God, would be on the top, and all their enemies would be on the bottom. The Jews imagined it as the banquet of the Messiah. It’s what David had in mind in ...

Psalm 23:5 - You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

And that’s what this man has in mind when he talks about the blessing of being able to sit at a table at this banquet with the Messiah. But he also presumed that this happiness at the tables was exclusively for the Jews, not sinners. And he assumes that it is something far out in the distant future. Now let’s read on in Luke 14:16-24.

The message Jesus drives home with this story is that the Kingdom of God is not some far off event, and it’s not just for a few of God’s religious favorites. Through Christ the Kingdom of God is here right now, and it’s open for business. The feast is ready and God is calling all people to come *now*. God is saying, “Come to My party; and bring someone with you.”

Now in vv.16-17 we have the three main people or groups of people who are the point of Jesus’ life story: There is the “certain man” who is the host. There are the guests who are invited to the banquet. And there is the servant who is the connection between host and the guests.

1. THE GRACIOUS HOST

Luke 14:16 - Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.

Now when it came to banquets like this in ancient times it was customary for two invitations to be sent out. The first one was the official invitation brought by a servant. At that time the invited guest would be told the day of the banquet, but not the hour. And the guest was to indicate whether or not he would attend so the host would know how many people to cook for. So if one accepts the first invitation, later the second invitation would arrive from the servant that the banquet was ready.

Luke 14:17 - At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

This gracious host had opened his home for the grand occasion. He had spared no expense, purchasing and preparing enough meat for everyone who attended. And everything was ready.

And all of Jesus' listeners would have known that the great man who put on the great feast represented God. God wants a relationship with us and He has invited us into that relationship, and made it possible for everything to be taken care of so we can come. And we can't help but be reminded that it cost God sending his Son to this earth to suffer and die for our sin. And He did it so that the banquet could be made ready and so we could be called to enjoy the feast. Our gracious God wants His kingdom, His heaven, filled with people enjoying Him and His glories.

So the main character in the story is the gracious Host. But then we see another group of characters:

2. THE INVITED GUESTS

Now there were two sets of guests who were invited.

- **THOSE WHO CARELESSLY REFUSE TO ATTEND (Luke 14:18-20)**

Now that everything is ready, the expectation is that those who had initially accepted the invitation would drop whatever they were doing at the time and come to the party. But no!

Luke 14:18a - "But they all alike began to make excuses.

Something unthinkable happens. When the servant goes to call these guests to the banquet, they came up with all kinds of excuses. In fact, they *all* had excuses for not attending the banquet. Remember, they had already told the host that they would attend, but now they have reasons why they can't come.

ILLUSTRATION – Back in January on our way home from India our team had an overnight layover in London. So we had time for a quick trip into the city that evening, and we went to Westminster Abbey. It's one of the great church buildings of the world. While we were taking the tour we noticed that there were still some structures in place from the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate a couple of years ago. Typically the Abbey doesn't seat that many people, but for that grand occasion they had added additional seating to hold the 1900 privileged people who had been invited to the royal wedding. And people came from around the world to attend. But there was one who was notably absent. On the guest list was the king of Cambodia. When he received the invitation to the royal wedding he replied that he was too busy and could not attend. Interestingly, the last time an invitation to a royal wedding was snubbed by a head of state was the wedding of Charles and Diana, (Prince William's parents) and the person that snubbed the invitation was the King of Cambodia ... the father of the current king. So while the king of Cambodia made excuses for not accepting the invitation, over 70 million people around the world watched the wedding on TV or the internet, wishing they were invited.

Well the people in Jesus's story make excuses for not attending the great banquet ... and they are all flimsy excuses.

Luke 14:18b - The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

This is ridiculous. No Middle Eastern person would buy a field without first going over every square inch of it to see what he was getting for his money. That’s a flimsy excuse.

Luke 14:19 - “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

This is also ridiculous. Again, the Middle Eastern custom was that when you bought a pair of oxen you would go somewhere to watch them work. You would never buy them sight unseen. So this is another flimsy excuse. Now the last excuse seems a little more understandable, at least to us as 21st century readers.

Luke 14:20 - “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

The impression is that this guy is on his honeymoon with his new wife, so he can’t come. But that’s not the way it was. It appears that the man was already married, had accepted the invitation, but then he decides that it’s more important for him to stay home with his wife. So it’s just another flimsy excuse.

The point is that when it comes to the eternal destiny of your soul, there is no good excuse. Don’t let anything keep you from coming to God for the salvation of your soul. You see, the Gospel invites each of us to come to God through Jesus Christ, and it requires an answer. Sometimes people grow up thinking, “I was born in a Christian family, and I am a good person and therefore I pretty confident that I will go to heaven.” No. There is an invitation, and it must be accepted. No one gets in automatically.

So these people carelessly refuse to attend. But amazingly there are others who get invited in their place.

- **THOSE WHO ARE GENUINELY UNWORTHY TO ATTEND (Luke 14:21-23)**

Luke 14:21a - “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry...

Everyone who heard this story knew that to refuse the second invitation from the host was an outright insult to him. So the man says...

Luke 14:21b - ““Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

The poor, crippled, blind and lame were the outcasts who would typically sit outside the door hoping they would get any leftover scraps, but they never thought they would be worthy enough to actually get a seat at the table insides with the other guests. The listeners would have thought about the tax collectors and sinners who were despised by the religiously proud people of the day.

And salvation is not for those who presume they are worthy because of their good works. It is for those who are certain that they are unworthy to come into God's presence. Because we are all sinners, we're all unworthy, whether we know it or not.

Now this is unbelievable grace ... that the outcasts of society would be invited.

ILLUSTRATION – It would be unimaginable that a father would put on a wedding reception for his daughter and invite hundreds of family and friends to be guest ... for every one of those guests to decline the invitation, each with lame excuses. And it would be even more unimaginable with that having happened for the father to then go out into the community and find homeless people on the streets, and handicapped people in shelters and say, "Come to my party."

Luke 14:22 - "“Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’"

And when outcasts were invited in, there was still room, so the servant was sent farther out to the roads and country lanes, to invite people who were really far away.

Luke 14:23 - "“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.’"

There again, you see the heart of the gracious host. He wants His house full. Even people who are really far from God are invited.

Why "make them come in"? It was to overcome their feelings of unworthiness. They knew they didn't deserve to come in. And maybe you don't think you're good enough to be part of God's eternal family. You don't feel worthy. But today I urge you and compel you to come. You *aren't* worthy; neither am I. But Christ is worthy. God's heart is that none should perish but that all should come to repentance. God's heart is for heaven to be full ... and it will be.

Now there's one other character in this story that we cannot ignore.

3. THE OBEDIENT SERVANT

Don't overlook the role of the servant in this story. He was the connection between the host who extended the invitation, and the people who needed to accept the invitation. Notice that...

- **THE SERVANT HAS A DUTY (Luke 14:17,21,23).**

Luke 14:17 – (The host) sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come...

Servant, you go and tell them to come.

Luke 14:21 - "“Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’"

Again, servant, you go and tell them to come. When there's still room...

Luke 14:23 - "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in..."

And you and I as Christ-followers are the connection between our gracious God and the people He came to save. Our duty is to go and tell them to come.

- **THE SERVANT HAS AUTHORITY.**

The servant when he goes out speaks with the authority of his master. When those invited, whether worthy or unworthy, heard the servant speak, they were hearing his master speak. And when the guests respond to the servant they are actually responding to the master.

ILLUSTRATION – On our recent mission trip to India, late one night I was standing on the platform of a train station getting ready to take train ride to an area where the Gospel has not been proclaimed extensively to the Rama Shatriya people group. I was tired. We had been on a plane or in airports for nearly two days. I hadn't slept in a real bed for days. And I found myself asking, "What I am doing here? Why am I about to get on a train to go to this city?" Then it occurred to me "I'm going because God is going. These are God's plans. I'm going because God has a heart for these people. He wants them in His house for His banquet of eternal life."

- **THE SERVANT HAS URGENCY.**

Luke 14:21b - 'Go out quickly...

Luke 14:23 - 'Go out to the roads ... and make them come in, so that my house will be full.

To "make them come in" doesn't mean to force them. It means to plead with them. It was like the servant would say, "No, I'm serious. You're invited. Please come. You can't miss this." And this urgency is the product of Christ's love in us.

2 Corinthians 5:14 - For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

The heart of the master is for his house to be full. And the heart of God is for heaven to be full. And it's not for any selfish reasons. It is because of His great love for humanity that He knows that the highest joy and fulfillment in life is to be found in a relationship with Him in this life, and for eternity in heaven. Eternal life is so amazing, so overwhelming, so unimaginably fulfilling because God is amazing, overwhelming and fulfilling. And God in His great love for us wants us to know and experience that. That's why He wants His house to be full. And He *will* have a full house.