

“The Parable of the Great Banquet,” Skip Ryan, June 28 2020.

Key texts | Luke 14:12-24 (main text); Ephesians 2:11-18; Isaiah 25:6-8

Sermon Outline & Questions

Opening thoughts—

What have we learned about parables so far?

- They are stories that reveal truths through our **hearts**
- There is a “hiddenness” to parables; they are revealed to those with “ears to hear”
- We must expect the unexpected; the surprises in parables bear important truths
- They are always about the Kingdom of God

We must understand the difference between a gift and a bribe. A gift is something we give expecting *nothing* in return. The degree to which we expect something is the degree to which it is a bribe.

The parable of the Great Banquet is all about grace—an unmerited gift from the Lord.

In what ways has this series caused you to pray about or read the parables differently? Have you paid closer attention to the surprises? Have you prayed for “hiddenness” to be revealed?

Have you ever given a gift and truly expected nothing in return? What compelled you to give in that way? How was it received? Or have you been on the receiving end?

Sermon Focus | Luke 14:12-24

Two key surprises—

- 1) Surprise 1: The invited guests declined the invitation.

One guest said, “I must leave to attend to my investments.” Another said, “I must leave to try out the things I’ve bought.” Still another said, “I must leave for my honeymoon with my wife.”

All of the invited guests excused themselves from the banquet.

- 2) Surprise 2: The host turned his anger into the “energy of grace.”

He invites the downtrodden. People of the “highways and hedges.”

These people were **Gentiles**, who were afraid to go into town. They were the *last* people the Jews would have expected to be invited to the banquet.

Recall Skip’s story about being invited to dinner by his girlfriend to meet her family.

The point: we are to invite those who cannot repay us; people who are different. We will be repaid at the resurrection.

Are there things in your life that pull you away from abiding in God’s grace and seeking the Lord first? What invitations of Jesus do you often excuse yourself from? Why?

Parables and Poetry: Summer 2020

Thoughts on the Great Banquet—

The banquet = unmerited grace into the Kingdom of God. We've been invited by grace itself, regardless of our status.

It points forward (to the return of Christ) and backward (to the prophecy of Isa. 25:6-8 "He will wipe away tears from all faces"). The Great Banquet will signify that death is no more.

Some historical context—

Jesus' listeners considered this parable a scandal, even blasphemy. Hebrew scribes often omitted the part about the Gentiles being invited to the banquet.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (discovered in 1947, written between 200 BC & 100 AD) largely omit passages that include Gentiles. Religious Jews thought Gentiles would *never* come into the Kingdom of God.

Pious Jews expected to be at the Great Banquet's head table.

The Gentiles would never have expected to be invited. Thus, the host's servants needed to "compel" the Gentiles to come. (Think "compelling grace.")

Meditate on the concept of being "compelled" to come to the banquet. Have you ever felt totally unworthy of God's grace but compelled to accept his invitation? What about the perspective of the pious Jew...have you ever thought, "Of course I'm to be with God, *that's how it is.*"

What it means for us—

What if we sought to invite/include those who are different from us? Someone who belongs only because Jesus says so.

None of us belongs at the Messianic Banquet. The invitation is **unmerited grace**.

In what ways is God's grace a great equalizer? How should this truth play out in our daily lives and social circles?

The greatest sin—

The greatest sin is the presumption to think that we are worthy of God's grace.

Grace is *not* a warm breeze but an overwhelming storm. It surprises us with its demand to "Come in!"

A problem: Those that have grown up in the church often believe they're entitled to the Great Banquet. They've lost the wonder and surprise of grace.

Consider the story of three fellows. One says to another, "Are you saved by grace?" The man replies, "Why, of course I am! I never miss a Sunday." The first fellow looks to the third and asks, "Are *you* saved by grace?" The third fellow answers, "Yes, I am...Can you believe it?"

Those who are presumptuous do not come to the table with the Lord.

Did you grow up in the church? If so, how might this presumption sneak into your heart or mind? What does it look like to repent from this presumption, and guard against it? How might we benefit from being in fellowship with brothers & sisters who did not grow up in the church?

Parables and Poetry: Summer 2020

The invitation—

Jesus is saying, “No matter who you are, the issue is *how you respond* to the invitation.”

We must ask for the humility to admit, “*I don’t deserve to be here, but Jesus wants me here!*”

Grace only exists where the outcome should have fairly and rightly been different. We belong to Jesus by virtue of his broken body.

Ephesians 2:11-18 | The issue is not Jew/Gentile, rich/poor, Black/White, Republican/Democrat...when faced with the grace of God, there is *no difference*. There are only two kinds of people: (1) Those who are in Christ and say “Yes” to his invitation, (2) Those who are not in Christ and reject his invitation.

Two truths—

Who will be present at the Great Banquet? Those who say, “I can’t believe I’m here.”

How will we all get there? By accepting the totally surprising and compelling grace of God.

Grace is the only way in, and it’s the only way to live once you are in. Keep coming to God’s grace through the communion, the Spirit, the Word, and Christian fellowship.

What does it look like to *live by* unmerited grace from God on a daily basis? How might this change our interactions with others? What barriers should it break down?

Final prayer—

Lord, work in our hearts. Not just our minds but our hearts, too. Surprise us again and again by the overflow of your grace. Make your grace more than just a word to us, but make it a powerful and loving force in our lives. Lord Jesus, teach us, again and again, how to say that we love you, and we accept your grace. Lord, please show us our place at the table. Amen

Additional Questions:

What might Christ be saying to you through this passage, sermon, discussion?

How might you live differently in light of this passage and sermon?

Take five minutes to write a prayer for this week based off truths you gleaned from these Scripture passages, as well as the sermon.