

The Gospel Banquet

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[0 : 00] You will find my text this evening in Luke chapter 14. Luke chapter 14 and let us read again at verse 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. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper and had many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.

And they all with one consent began to make them to the banquet, Come, for all things are now ready. That was a well-known custom amongst the Jews.

This servant then, this slave, was sent out by the wealthy man who had prepared this great banquet. He went to those who had previously been invited to the feast, and he told them, Everything is now ready.

Come, for all things are now ready. The banquet has been prepared. My master is prepared now and ready to welcome you. But those who had been invited, now that the crucial moment had arrived, they were not prepared to act upon their word, and attend the great banquet at this man's house.

[1 : 35] They had previously indicated, yes, a day or two before, that they were willing to attend, but now they are unwilling, unwilling to do as they had said they would do, and to come to the great man's house, and to sit down at his banquet and feast of the good things provided there.

My friends, there are many still, many people still, who have accepted the Christian religion in a general kind of a way.

The first invitation, the initial invitation, has been given out, as it were, and they have accepted that invitation. You perhaps know the type of people I am thinking of.

They are very privileged people. They, from their earliest days, from infancy indeed, have been familiar in a certain way with this great master.

They have been taught about him. They were taught the great truths of the gospel. They were familiar with those truths. They are not like the pagan people, the utterly godless people we see around us in increasing numbers today.

[2 : 49] They have a knowledge of the truths of the gospel. They know that the Bible is the word of God. They know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

They know that he died upon the cross to save sinners. They know that he rose again from the grave on the third day. Any suggestion that he did not rise horrifies them.

Any questioning of a truth like that horrifies them. They are very privileged people. Many of them would have been brought up in godly homes.

They had fathers and mothers who loved the Lord. They themselves have been church attenders all their days. They have sought to live in accordance with God's moral law.

They have had a respect for the Sabbath day. They think themselves as belonging to the Christian community. They have accepted this general invitation as it were.

[3 : 47] But what about the specific invitation? The gospel invitation. Come for all things are now ready. Oh they were willing.

They were willing to accept as it were that first general invitation. To accept the Christian religion in a general kind of a way. But they are unwilling to come to Christ.

To commit themselves to him. To be committed to him. To receive him personally as their own saviour. And to partake of the good things provided.

In the gospel banquet. What is it that is wrong with such people? Well it is this first of all. They have not repented of their sin.

They have been trying to live a decent and respectable and upright moral life. And as far as outward conformity to God's law is concerned.

[4 : 45] They may well have been fairly successful. But they have never realised the depravity and the wickedness and the vileness and the corruption of their own hearts.

Of the human heart. They have not seen their own nature in its depravity and in its corruption. They accept the Bible's teaching that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

But they have never seen its application to themselves. That that is applicable to them. They have not seen that their own sinful actions are utterly abhorrent to the holy God of heaven.

They have not trembled before the wrath of God. As they have realised that that wrath rests upon them. They have not turned from their sin.

They have not abandoned their sin. Turned away from it with great sorrow of it and detestation of it. They have not begun to live a life of new obedience.

[5 : 51] They have not resolved by God's grace and strength that they will live a life of obedience to his commandments. A life of holiness. They have not repented.

And then this too is wrong. They have not received God's forgiveness. They know that the forgiveness of God can only be theirs on the ground of Christ's finished work.

His blood shedding. They know that he died upon the cross to save sinners. That he died there to pay sin's penalty. That they need to be cleansed in the blood of Christ.

But they have not been to him for that cleansing. They have not been washed in the blood of the Lamb. They have not fled to Christ for shelter. And hidden in the crucified one.

They have not personally by an act of faith received him as their own saviour. They cannot say each of them tonight. A nothing in my hand I bring.

[6 : 54] Simply to thy cross I cling. And this is wrong. They do not know the power of God in their life. You see they are not in a personal relationship with God.

And with his son. They have a form of religion yes. But they cannot say with the apostle Paul. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

They do not have in their hearts the peace of God that passes all understanding. They do not know the satisfaction that he gives to those who trust in his son.

They are not drinking from the rivers of pleasures that he provides. They are not experiencing the abounding joy. The joy that he gives to his people.

They cannot say I live yet not I but Christ lives in me. They do not have this power.

[7 : 54] There is not within them this dynamic. This power that comes from God. The life of God is not in their souls.

The double invitation. Come for all things are now ready. First of all the slave was sent out and many were bidden.

And then there came the second invitation. Come for all things are now ready. But secondly let us notice the excuses.

The excuses. The servant went out. And what was the response that he received from all those people who had previously indicated that they were willing to attend.

That they were glad to receive the kind man's invitation. They all alike began to make excuse. And what excuses they made.

[8 : 57] What poor excuses they were. Pathetically poor excuses. We are given a sample of them here. Three of them are mentioned. The first man came and he said well I bought a piece of ground you see.

I acquired a field. I bought some land. And I must needs I have to go and see it. I have to go and examine it. What a poor excuse that was.

He would have examined the piece of ground before ever he bought it. Who would go and buy a field without first examining it and looking at it and seeing it.

And at any rate the piece of ground could wait. It would still be there an hour or two later when the banquet had ended. That was a poor excuse. The second man's excuse was really no better.

I bought ten oxen. Five yoke of oxen. And I must needs go and try them out. As though a man would buy five yoke of oxen without ever being satisfied beforehand that they were suitable for the job.

[10:02] They too could wait. They would still be there an hour or two later when the banquet had finished. A poor excuse. Then came the third man's excuse.

It's the prize excuse really. I've married a wife and therefore I cannot come. Perhaps the man was thinking of that law.

That regulation of the Mosaic law. A merciful regulation. That excused a man once he had married. Excused him for a year from military service. But marriage does not excuse from all social obligations.

And at any rate could he not have brought his wife with him to the banquet. So kind a host as this was would certainly have welcomed his bride as well.

The truth is that those men were just unwilling to receive the invitation. And to act upon their saying that they accepted it.

[11:00] And go to the banquet and enjoy the good things they're provided. For one reason or another they were unwilling. And they made their excuses. And what excuses people still make for not accepting the gospel invitation.

And the excuses people make today are every bit as lame as those excuses that those three men made were mentioned in our Lord's story.

What are some of those excuses that people make today? First of all this. I want to enjoy myself. I want to enjoy myself.

You see somebody says I know that if I receive this invitation and if I come to Christ. I'll need to part company with my sins. I'll need to abandon sinful pleasures.

And I do not want to abandon those pleasures. If I come to Christ. My life will be morose and dull and drab and joyless and uninteresting.

[12:08] And you know there's a certain element of truth in what they say. There's this element of truth in it. That if you do come to Christ. You will have to abandon your sin.

You will have to give up your sinful pleasures. Christ does require that we give up all that is sinful. But then.

What will those sins and those sinful pleasures do for you? Those sinful pleasures last but for a moment. They're transitory. And they even in this life.

Will leave you miserable and unhappy and dissatisfied. Oh the misery. The wretchedness that sin brings. And your sin if you still hold on to it.

And go through life and reach the end of the journey. Still clinging to it. It will bring you to an everlasting hell. But what about this allegation?

[13:08] That if we come to Christ and believe in him. And go his way. Our life will be drab and joyless.

And uninteresting. And we will have to be dull and morose people. Reject such an allegation completely and utterly. It is utterly and completely false.

With the utmost vigour. Turn away from it. To suggest that the great saviour himself. Will impoverish a life.

And rob a life of joy and pleasure and delight and happiness. Is to hurl at him the greatest insult imaginable.

He satisfies thy mouth with good things. So that thy youth is renewed like the eagles. There is no joy like the joy that Jesus Christ gives.

[14:07] It is a joy far superior to anything that this world bestows. He gives life and he gives life more abundant.

The happiest people in the world tonight are Christ's people. And those of them who are most devoted to him. Are those who know most of his joy and of his delight.

Fading is the worldling's pleasure. All is boasted pomp and show. Solid joys and lasting treasure. None but Zion's children know.

That excuse won't do. Then there's this excuse that people make. I'm afraid what people will think of me. I'm afraid they'll laugh at me.

And they'll snigger. And they'll sneer. And they'll ridicule me. They will say that I'm canning things far too far. Religion is all right in its place. But you mustn't become enthusiastic about it.

[15:05] They might oppose me and persecute me. And what of that excuse? Is it valid? Well it is true that they may well laugh and ridicule and sneer and oppose.

They certainly will do so if you are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. But is your life going to be governed by the opinions of others? Rather than by the will of God? Those people whose popularity you are concerned to court. Will they save you? Will they not rather encourage you to join with them on the broad road that leads to destruction? And when you're in trouble, what will they be able to do for you? Even if they do stand by you, will they be able to help you in your difficulties and in your troubles? Is such an excuse, I'm afraid what people will think of me, is such an excuse not a cowardly excuse? An unmanly excuse? Are you afraid to stand for Christ?

[16:08] Are you ashamed of him? Listen to what he says. He says, whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of the Father and with the holy angels.

So that excuse will not do either. Then there's this excuse that people make, I'm too good. I'm too good. I don't need to repent and come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't need that. All this talk of conversion and of being changed and of being born again and of being cleansed from my sin and being washed in the blood of the Lamb.

That's not for me. Go and tell all that to those notorious sinners out there on the street. To the profligate people, the violent people, the immoral people out there.

I'm in a different category. I've been a good churchman all of my days. I've led a decent, respectable, upright life. I don't need to repent and go to Christ for cleansing.

[17:20] But my friend, the righteousness that God demands from you and that God requires of you is a perfect righteousness. And can you lay claim to that?

Have you no flaw at all? Have you always loved the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and your neighbour as yourself?

You know, whosoever shall offend, shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

If you've committed one sin, you're under condemnation. One sin will keep you out of heaven. My friend, you need a saviour.

You need Christ. However respectable you may be here tonight, you need the saviour, this Lord Jesus Christ. You need to repent and to believe upon him, to receive him as your own saviour.

[18:26] Then there are those who make the excuse, I'm too bad. They look back over the past. They see the kind of life they've led. They see his vileness and his wickedness, his impurity, his blasphemy, all its sin and corruption.

And they say, we are past redemption. Another man says, I'm just too great a sinner to come to Christ.

Oh, how wrong. How wrong. How wrong. How utterly wrong. Do you really believe that the blood of Christ is limited in its cleansing power?

That it can cleanse only those who have committed certain sins, but not those who have committed the most heinous of sins? Do you think that the gospel invitation is issued only to those who have gone so far in ungodliness and sin, but who have not gone further?

Oh, away, away with such thoughts. The gospel invitation is to all men everywhere. Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely.

[19:40] God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Whosoever.

Every sinner is included in that whosoever. You are included in it. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. The history of the preaching of the gospel bears eloquent testimony to this.

That when the most wicked and notorious of sinners look in faith to Christ, they are saved.

Gloriously saved. I would gladly stand tonight by the deathbed of the most notorious sinner on the face of this earth tonight and say to him, I could say it with my master's authority, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

This is what the Lord says. Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Then there's another excuse, a fifth excuse I would mention. Some say I wouldn't keep it up. I know my weakness. And if I were to come to Christ, in a short time I would just fall away and I would be as bad as ever.

[21 : 05] But that excuse won't stand either. Christ says that if we come to him, he will save us. He will save us from our sins.

He will save us out of our sins. And if you're making this excuse, what you're really saying is that Christ will not save me out of my sins if I trust in him.

He says he will do so. And you'll understand, won't you? If I prefer to believe what my master says and what you say in this matter.

He puts his Holy Spirit into all those who come to him. And that spirit empowers his people to begin to lead a life of holiness.

I've mentioned five excuses that people make. There are many more we could say. But there is no excuse.

[22 : 03] No excuse at all that will stand. That is valid. If you are willing to come to Christ, he will save.

And you know the spirit of God can make you willing. Have you asked him to do so? Have you cried to him to do so? God can make a willing people in a day of his power.

If you sincerely seek him and come to him, he will receive. If you have sincerely been seeking him and come to him and he has cast you out. Then, yes, you're excused.

But there is no one in all the ages who has ever been in that category. And there never will be.

Christ says, him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

The excuses. But thirdly, let us notice for a moment or two the banquet itself. The banquet. And there are just two points I want to make about this banquet.

[23 : 13] First of all, the provision that was made. The provision that was made. It was a bountiful provision. There were many who were bidden to this feast. Clearly there was a great spread there on the banqueting table in the great hall in this man's house.

And when those many did not come, the servant was sent out to the streets and to the lanes of the city to bring in the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind.

And even after they were brought in, there would have been so many of them, he was told to go out and get more. Go into the highways and into the hedgerows and compel them to come in.

Clearly there was a very great, a very bountiful provision made at this banquet. And oh, how great a provision is made for sinners in the gospel banquet.

Christ has died for sinners. He died as the sinner's substitute. He died the just in the place of the unjust. He paid sin's penalty.

[24 : 20] He took the sins of his people upon himself. He bore the wrath of God against them. And as a result, there is available for sinners salvation.

Full, free salvation. And it is free. It is without money. And without price. There is forgiveness in the gospel banquet.

The sinner who believes upon Christ is fully and freely forgiven. Forgiven forever. His sins are removed from him as far as the east is from the west.

As far as can be. He is declared righteous. He is given a righteous standing before God. I said it is a perfect righteousness God requires. That when a sinner believes upon the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ's flawless righteousness is given to him.

It is imputed to him. And in his standing before God, he stands there with a perfect righteousness, clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He is saved from sin's penalty.

[25 : 28] Previously, he was on the road that leads to hell. Now, as a believer, he is heaven bound. There is provision for fellowship with God in the gospel banquet.

This is what life eternal is. Knowing God, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. Sinners who believe are adopted into the family of God.

All the rights and privileges of the family are theirs. They are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. They have deliverance from sin's enslaving power.

The work of progressively dealing with the pollution within, of steadily making them holy in character has begun within them. And it will go on throughout the days of their Christian life.

They are on the road to sinless perfection. That will be their destiny. That will be their end. And the work will have begun within them if they are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 30] All the riches. God, according to his divine power, has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Through the knowledge of him who hath called us, who hath called us to virtue and glory. The provision that is made.

Oh, the provision that is made. The riches that he provides in the gospel. The bountiful provision, the riches of his grace that are lavished upon sinners.

And then to this, the people who were there. The people who were there. What of those privileged people who originally were invited to the banquet? Well, they were not there.

They were excluded. They excluded themselves. They refused the invitation. The Jewish leaders. Those religious leaders of the Jews who have been so tremendously privileged were the very oracles of God given to them.

[27 : 46] They refused the gospel. They rejected Christ's gospel. They can therefore have no place at the heavenly banquet. For those people in the poor quarter of the city, in the streets and the lanes there, the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, they were invited.

They were brought in. They never thought that they would be invited to the banquet. But they were gathered in. The tax collectors, the publicans, the notorious sinners, those who were outcasts amongst the Jews.

They heard the gospel. There were those of them who responded and came to the gospel banquet. There was Levi, the tax collector. There was Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector of Jericho.

That man who had been so dishonest. There was Mary Magdalene, who had been possessed of seven devils. They accepted the invitation. They enjoyed the good things in the gospel banquet.

And they enjoyed forever the good things in the heavenly banquet too. Then there were the down and outs. They, those untouchables, who had to spend the night in the byways and in the hedgerows, who had to spend the night in some rudely constructed shelter that they would make or perhaps just lie down under the hedge itself.

[29 : 23] They were there. They were brought in to this great banquet. Not only the Jewish outcasts were brought in, the Gentiles, the despised Gentiles, the people the Jews thought of as dogs.

They were brought in too. They enjoy the good things provided. So many of the Gentiles have heard the gospel. They've responded and will be in heaven at last.

They'll come from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom. There are those who have been so very privileged.

Those who have known the gospel truths from their earliest days. Those who have had the privilege of being in touch with God's choicest saints from youth and from childhood.

Who have been in the church and who have known the truths of the gospel all their days. regular attenders in the church of Christ. But who have never themselves personally received Jesus Christ as their own saviour.

[30 : 33] They've lived and died without ever receiving this saviour. And so they've been lost. They have perished. But there are those too who had no such privileges.

Who have been brought up in a thoroughly godless environment. who have known knew nothing in youth and in childhood of the gospel, of the bible, of the church.

Who went astray into gross sin. Then they heard the gospel. They heard of Christ who shed his blood for sinners.

They repented. They believed upon him. They trusted him as their own saviour. And they've been saved. They are saved forever and forever.

Oh, how tragic. How tragic, my friend, if you, you, my unconverted friend, you who have had all those privileges, how tragic if you should be excluded from the heavenly banquet while others, others who have had none of those privileges, enjoy the glories of heaven forever.

[31 : 46] We rejoice, of course, that they should. That we would mourn exceedingly to think that you would be excluded. And if you are excluded, it will not be because you have not been invited.

You have been invited time and time and time again. It will be because you have refused the loving invitation. Oh, my friend, have you been to Christ for cleansing?

Is your religion merely something that is outward? Merely an outward form? Or have you come to Christ? Have you repented of your sin?

Have you abandoned your sin? Have you trusted in the saviour? Have you been cleansed in his precious blood? Has his power entered into your life? This new dynamic I was talking about.

Have you been changed? Have you been born again? Yet there is time. Again the gospel invitation goes out to you.

[32 : 51] Come to me, says Christ. Will you come? Come. Come. For all things are now ready. Rise up.

And come.