

Luke 14:16-24 - The Great Banquet

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 October 2017

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0 : 00] Well, tonight please turn back to Luke chapter 14. We'll read again verses 16 to 24 which of course is the parable of the great banquet. Jesus said to him, a man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent a servant to those who had been invited, come for everything, to say to those who had been invited, come for everything is now ready. But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, I've bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. Another said, I've bought five yoke of auction and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.

And another said, I have married a wife and therefore I can't come. So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, go out quickly to the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the crippled and blind and lame. The servant said, sir, what you've come on has been done and still there is room. And the master said to the servant, go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in. That my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.

Well, as we said, this is known as the parable of the great banquet and like all parables and here Jesus is telling a simple story in order to give us teaching about the kingdom of God. And I want us to spend a wee bit of time looking at this parable tonight, but first of all, I want us just to spend a moment or two thinking about reading parables in general because although parables are very familiar to us and many of them are very well known, they're easy to misunderstand and it's important that we have the right tools in order to understand what parables are all about. And as we think about that, the whole question of how we are meant to understand parables, we are entering into the realm of what is known as hermeneutics. Now, don't worry if you've never heard of that word.

I had never heard of it before I went to study. Hermeneutics basically means the science of interpretation. In other words, it is all about how we interpret what the Bible says.

And this is a really, really important thing. Hermeneutics is very, very, very important because whenever you read a passage from the Bible, there's two vital questions you have to ask. First of all, you have to ask, what does it say? So you look at the passage and you try to make sure that you understand each word, each sentence, each paragraph. And that's what we call exegesis where you're basically saying, what does it say? But then you have to ask the follow up question, which is, how do we interpret what it says? For example, in John 10, Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. So Jesus says there, I am the door. That's very simple. But we have to ask ourselves, how do we interpret that? Because when Jesus says, I am the door, does he mean that he is made of wood and that he has got two hinges and a handle and a lock? Of course not. But of course, the fact that we know that that's not what he means is because we are interpreting that phrase in a certain way. We are interpreting that word door as a metaphor. And that's what we mean by hermeneutics. You look at what it says and then you think about, well, how am I going to interpret what is being said? And it's a very important thing because it's something that we can do well. And it's also something that we can do badly. And many mistakes have been made because people have used the wrong hermeneutic to understand a passage.

[4 : 24] And when it comes to looking at the parables of Jesus, there are two hermeneutical pitfalls that we have to be careful to avoid. So when you read a parable, two things, two mistakes that you can make, two mistakes that I have made in my life and we have to be careful to avoid them. The first is, we must not overanalyse the content of the parable. And the second is that we must not overlook the context of the parable. So don't overanalyse the content.

Don't overlook the context. Now, what do I mean by these? Well, when we say that we are not to overanalyse the content of the parable, we are saying that we should not read into the parables more than Jesus intended. Sometimes people will take every detail of a parable as normative and they will think that every single thing that is being said is setting out a rule and a norm or some kind of teaching for us. So for example, you could read this parable about the Great Banquet and you could say, this parable is teaching us that it is wrong to go and look at property or land or possessions if you have just bought them.

So if you're going to go buy a field or if you're going to go and buy some sheep, you could say it's wrong to go and examine them. Because here in this parable, it says that a person bought a field and used that as an excuse. So you could look at that and say, well, okay, Christians must buy houses without ever looking at them or they must buy sheep without ever examining them. Or for example, we could say, well, this parable is teaching us that getting married is a hurdle to being converted. Or we could say that this parable is teaching us that we should only ever evangelize on the streets, never in homes or schools or workplaces because the servant was sent to the streets and to the lanes. Other times, people will look at a parable and they'll look for a deeper spiritual meaning in every detail of a parable. So maybe you could look at the parable, it talks about the fact that the servant went to the streets and to the lanes and you could say, well, the streets, streets are busy. So that's representing people who are popular and lanes, they're quiet.

So that's representing people who are lonely. Or we might be getting to say, well, the house where this banquet is taking place, that's the church. And of course, the banquet must be representing the Lord's Supper. All of these things can be read into the parable.

And yet the parable is saying none of these. We have to be very careful that we don't overanalyze the content of the parable. Jesus is not talking about marriage in this parable. He's not talking about buying sheep or buying houses. And we should not read into every detail a deeper spiritual meaning that was not intended. And a good rule to remember is that usually, not always, but usually a parable is a story that is illustrating one main point. That's a really helpful rule to remember. Whenever you read a parable, most of the time, they are representing one main point. Some parables, I would say, have more than one main point.

[7 : 52] I think the prodigal son is an example of that. But on the whole, the majority of times, parables have got one main point. And the way that we discovered what that main point is, is by making sure we don't overlook the context of the parable. So rule number one, don't overanalyze the content of the parable. Rule number two, don't overlook the context.

That was why I asked you when we were reading the parable to think about where Jesus was and what was going on as this parable was being told. We'll take an example from the next chapter. In chapter 15, Jesus gives the parable of the lost sheep. What man have you having a hunted sheep? If he'd lost one of them does not leave the 99 in the open country and after the and go after the one that's lost until he finds it. When he's found, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. When he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors saying to them, rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost. Now, if we ask the question, what's the main point of that parable? You could look at that and you could say, well, that parable is about evangelism because here you have a farmer who has a lost sheep and this is teaching us to go and to find them. And so we are being taught in this parable that we are to go out and evangelize and search for people, look for people, go out and make sure that we reach out in every way that we can. Now, that's true. That's absolutely theologically true. And the parable of the great banquet in many ways emphasizes that point as well. But is that the main point of the parable of the lost sheep? Well, if we want the answer to that, we have to look at the context. Usually the best way to look at the context is to look at the verses before it and look at the verses afterwards. So we are saying parable of lost sheep is all about evangelism. Okay, let's see if that's right. Well, before it, it says tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to Jesus. And the Pharisees in the sky grumbled saying this man receives sinners and eats with them. So we told them this parable, which we have there. And then immediately afterwards, Jesus says, just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance. And so our theory that the lost sheep is all about evangelism is wrong. Because the context is telling us that the main message of this lost parable of lost sheep is not about the need for dedicated evangelism. It is about the fact that sinners matter to God. And God rejoices with all of heaven every time one of them repents. And so that's the main point of that parable.

Of course, it teaches us a lesson about evangelism. I'm not denying that at all, but it's about the main point that's been highlighted. Jesus told that parable because the Pharisees saw these sinners who were near Jesus and were basically thinking, why is Jesus dealing with these people? And Jesus told them that parable to say that in God's eyes, these are the very people that I have come to save. So we need to make sure that we don't overanalyse the content and we need to make sure we don't overlook the context of the parables that Jesus gives.

So that's a little bit of background. And I hope that that will help us all when we read parables in the future. Two good rules to remember when we look at parables. What about the parable of the great banquet? What is that all about? Well, if we want to find out what the great, the parable of the great banquet is all about, what do we do? We look at the context and verse one tells us about that. So verse one, what was Jesus doing when he told this parable? He was having dinner with a ruler of the Pharisees as verse one tells us there. And as we read, controversy quickly arose because a man with dropsy came before Jesus and dropsy is an accumulation of fluid, we might call it odema, usually in the limbs, arms and legs. And the point of tension is over whether or not it's right to heal this man on the Sabbath. And Jesus does indeed heal him, even though it is the Sabbath day. And he challenges the Pharisees who are around him by saying to them, if you had a son or an animal, an ox that had fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, would you not immediately pull him out? And as we read, they couldn't answer him. And Jesus follows up then by further challenging the attitudes and behavior of the Pharisees who are eating with him. So we can picture that in our minds. Jesus is there eating with people. And he begins to talk in a way that is challenging the mindset of those who are around the table with him. In verse seven to 11, he warns them about choosing places of honor for themselves, the parable of the wedding feast there, where he is obviously, I would, I think it's safe to assume that as they came to dine there, people were rushing in to get the best seats.

[13:52] Maybe they were pushing in front of one another, maybe they were being rude. Who knows? But certainly Jesus is warning them against that kind of attitude. And of course, that's a vital lesson for us to remember. We live in a society that loves to push and push yourself forward. This is one of the things that's just so brilliant about the gospel. We live in a world where you have to push yourself forward. You have to say how wonderful you are. I remember sometimes going, I remember I had to go away to work away when I was an engineer and we met with some other workers. And when you, when you would meet these people who were traveling from place to place, it very quickly kind of descended into a boasting session where people would talk about where they'd worked, what they'd done, what their experiences was, how difficult this was, how difficult that was. And we are constantly surrounded by that in our world. People trying to just exalt themselves, put themselves in the most important position. And the brilliant thing about the gospel is don't do anything for any of that. Do the opposite. If the world is going that way, you go that way. And Jesus is another wonderful example of how the gospel is such a wonderful counterculture. It is a new way, a far better way. So Jesus warns them against that kind of self focus that we have there. And we must guard against that in church, in life, in the community, in any way. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted.

He then gives them another challenge in verses 12 to 14. And he teaches the ruler of the Pharisees in particular, the one who had invited him to dinner. And he, he says to him, not to just invite the people who belong to the same social circle that he is in. Don't just invite your rich friends or neighbors. He says, invite people who could never pay you back. Invite people who are far lower than you in terms of society. And again, that's highlighted to us a vital principle of Christian hospitality. That's the brilliant thing about the church. It is a great leveler. There's no class in the church, or there shouldn't be. There's no hierarchy in the church, or there certainly shouldn't be. We are all equal. And we should never just mix with certain people. Never, we should never have cliques or anything like that. We should just have open homes and show hospitality to all, even people who could never, ever pay us back. And all that we do in that sense is to God's glory. So Jesus is challenging them. He's trying to address these attitudes that we have, that we can see were clearly prominent among the Pharisees thinking. And then one of the guests makes a great statement. He says, blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. And so as maybe, maybe things were getting a bit tense, and this guest here, I suppose, tries to help maybe, or tries to show his own knowledge maybe.

And he makes this great statement, which of course is true. There is no greater privilege than being welcomed into the kingdom of God. But it's vital that we note this statement because this is the statement that prompts Jesus to tell the parable. Because if you look at verse 16, ask the question, who did Jesus tell the parable of the great banquet to? It was to this man. One who reclined at him heard these things and he said to him, blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God, but he said to him, a man once gave a great banquet, and so on, and so on. And the main point that Jesus is making in this parable is that yes, blessed are those who eat bread in the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who get to sit at the great heavenly banquet. But the point Jesus is making is that the people who will be there are not necessarily the ones that this man is expecting. And here we have to remind ourselves that Jesus is telling this parable to a Jew and it seems highly likely that it was to a Jew who regards himself or those fellow guests who are with him as important. Maybe this man was one of the men who rushed in to get a good seat at place of prominence because he is important. He has the status to sit in the right place and somebody with dropsy who comes in to get healed, he should just keep back because we're having an important dinner. And we are the ones who should sit with this rabbi called Jesus. And we are the ones who will sit and enjoy a banquet in the kingdom of God because we are Jews, we are Pharisees, we are the ones who deserve this status. And Jesus is telling this parable to Jewish leaders who no doubt consider themselves to be the primary guests who belong at the banquet of God's kingdom. They, I am sure, consider themselves as first in line to sit and eat bread in the kingdom of God. And Jesus tells this parable in order to say, don't be so sure. That's the main message of the parable, that the people who were originally invited into God's kingdom, in other words the Jews, these are the ones who are actually making excuses not to come. And so instead the invitation is extended to all, even to people who are the last that you would expect to be there.

And the challenge to the listener both at that meal in that room and to us here today, the challenge is, are you going to make an excuse? Or are you going to accept the invitation?

Well, so that's the main message of the parable. But I want us just to spend a wee bit more time looking at it in a little bit more detail. And there's lots of things that we could do and it's an amazing parable this. I have to stop using the word amazing, I use it too often, but it is very amazing this parable. As I hope that we will see. I want us to focus on the characters who are in this parable. First, we'll look at the master. Second, we'll look at those who were invited but who refused to come. Third, we'll look at those who do come. And fourth, we'll look at the servant. And as we go through the parable, it's just the main characters that we're looking at. So it's quite straightforward. So first of all, the master. If we go back to verse 16, it says, a man once gave a great banquet and invited many. Now, the banquet here is representing the kingdom of God. And we can be sure of that because in Matthew 22, Jesus tells a similar parable and he says, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. So Jesus is using this image of a banquet to represent the kingdom of God. That means that the man in verse 16 or the master, as he is called in verse 21, is God. Therefore, when we look at what the master does in the parable, we are learning things about God. And there's three things that verse 16 tells us. First thing that verse 16 tells us about God is that the master wants a banquet. Now that, I'm sure, seems incredibly obvious, but it is reminding us of a glorious truth, the fact that God wants to include you in his kingdom.

[22 : 48] God wants to include you in his kingdom. Now, we refer to that as what theologians call divine initiative, the fact that in terms of the outworking of our salvation, God takes the initiative. God is the one who originates it. God is the one who wants it to happen first and foremost. And the gospel of the kingdom of God is not a result of us trying to persuade God to remember us or lobbying him to provide to us. It's not like we're saying, hey, God, we're here. Don't forget about us. The starting point for our inclusion in the kingdom of God is not that we are trying to get God's attention. It is the fact that God himself wants you in his kingdom. And that is a truth that I hope that you all, know and understand. God is never, ever, ever going to say to any of you here, no, no, no, I don't want you. No, no, no, this doesn't apply to you. God will never, ever say that.

God wants a banquet and he wants you there. And the whole outworking of redemptive history across the pages of scripture and across the ages of history are the proof that God wants you there. He has done such a glorious work. And do you know that is where true self-worth is found. So many people lack self-worth for so many reasons. So many people feel just a million miles from what they should be and what they want to be. But do you know God wants you in his kingdom? God wants

you. The master wants a banquet. We also learn that the master prepares a banquet. The master gets everything ready so that when he invites go out in verse 17, the messages come because everything is now ready. And that's a great reminder of the fact that God is the one who does everything that is required for us to come and share in his kingdom. And that means that everything is ready for you. So often we feel that we are not ready. We feel that we're not good enough, not knowledgeable enough, not strong enough. But the glorious truth is that all of the getting ready is done by

God. It's his banquet, his kingdom, and it's his prerogative to say everything is ready.

So that means that it is absolute, there is never a circumstance for somebody can say I'm not ready to become a Christian. Somebody might say that I'm not ready to become a Christian, but I'm ready to go through. Because by saying that you're saying well God's not ready. But God is. God most certainly is. He is the one who's prepared the banquet. And notice it's a great banquet. And it's so important to remember that, that the kingdom of God, sharing in the kingdom of God is likened to a great banquet because being a Christian and becoming a Christian is absolutely brilliant. Because you get a share in all the privileges of the kingdom of God, all the blessings of being God's precious, beloved child, all the promises of God's kingdom, all the protection of having Jesus as your Lord, as your King, all the fellowship and joy of being brothers and sisters in Christ, all the hope of heaven and the new creation, all the assurance of the fact that God says I will never ever leave you nor forsake you, all the hope that as we look in a dark world that is full of sin, [27:16] God tells us that I have defeated sin once and for all. And so being a Christian is absolutely brilliant. It is not just a banquet, it is a great, great banquet. And God's great desire is to be good to you. Now that's something that is so, so important to remember. People think to themselves, well, well, I should become a Christian out of guilt. I should become a Christian because I must, I should become a Christian because God will be so annoyed if I don't. But really the truth is that you should become a Christian because God wants to be good to you. God wants to bless you. And our ultimate destiny as Christians is a glorious heavenly banquet. That's why the gospel is good news because God just wants to be so good to us. He is the master who is preparing a great banquet. And the third thing that we learn about the master is that the master invites people. Now as we said, this parable emphasises divine initiative, the fact that God is sovereign, he wants a banquet, he plans it, he prepares it and he sends the message out to say that everything is ready, but he does not force people to come. He invites people to come. And it's our responsibility to accept that invitation. And the gospel is always a balance of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Yes, God does everything that is necessary, but we have a responsibility to come. I don't know if you noticed the quote of the week that we had on in the cycle before, the slides before the service from Francis Schaefer.

I hope I can remember it exactly, but it said something like, my faith is the empty hands with which I accept God's free gift. I think that's a brilliant quote because that is what our faith is. We are responding, but all we can respond with is just empty hands that say thank you to God for his wonderful generosity, divine responsibility, divine sovereignty and human responsibility. That's what we learn from the master. But of course that brings us to the next group because the second people that we see in this parable are those who were originally invited, but they refused to come. The banquet was prepared for many, but when the time came, what happened? The servants went to them saying, come, for everything is ready, but they all alike began to make excuses. First set up what a field they must go and see it. Please have me excused. Another set up what five Yoke of Oxen and

I go to examine them. Please have me excused. And another set up married a wife and therefore I cannot come. Now, as we said, when Jesus is seeing this parable, he is primarily rebuking the Jewish leaders who are with him at this dinner. And of course that is pointing us to the big storyline of the Bible, the big historical outworking of God's purposes across the pages of scripture, whereby in the Old Testament, the Jews were given all the promises of the coming Messiah. They were the ones who knew there was going to be a banquet. They were the ones who were being invited to come. Notice that they had been invited. So the servant wasn't actually going out with the invites. He was going out for the response to the invitations.

And so the Jews had been invited through all God's promises throughout the history and the prophecy of the Old Testament pages. And they were the ones who had that privilege.

They were the ones for whom everything was ready and all they had to do was come. And yet despite their history, despite their privileges, despite their status and despite the fact that it was to them that Jesus initially preached the message of his kingdom, they are rejecting him and they are rejecting the invitation into God's kingdom. And Paul summarises that for us in Romans 10 where it says, but of Israel he says, all day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people. The Jews had the invitation, but when everything was ready, they were saying no. But of course, the warning of that parable applies to us just as much because we too are getting this invitation into God's kingdom and we too must respond. But just like these people in the parable, it is so easy to make excuses.

[32 : 41] And it's so, if we could just stand back and look at it and think about it, we would see how tragic it is. God is offering us everything. God has prepared everything. God has promised us everything that we need. And yet we still make excuses. And if we look at these excuses here a little bit more closely, we see something that I think is really, really important because if you look at those three excuses, none of them are genuine hurdles preventing these people from going to the banquet. If you look at that, the person who bought a field could still have gone to the banquet and he could have gone to look at the field the next day.

The person who bought the oxen could easily have gone to the banquet and he could have looked at his oxen before or after. And the person who got married could have brought his wife with him and they could have gone and enjoyed the banquet together. All of these things are non-hurdles. They're not actually stopping them and yet they're being used as excuses. And the vital truth that that is teaching us and the point that we must learn is that all too often the excuses and reasons that people have for keeping out of the kingdom of God are nonexistent hurdles. For example, people will say, I'm not good enough to be a Christian and I can understand why people would think that and I can sympathise with it because I feel like that myself. But that is not a hurdle because nobody is good enough to be a Christian. It's not about being good enough. In fact, it's because we are sinners and failures. So that's not a hurdle. Some people might say, I don't know enough therefore I can't become a Christian. My Bible knowledge is poor, my understanding is limited and I don't get what Thomas is going on about half the time. And we can use that as an excuse but again that is another non-existent hurdle because there is only one thing that you need to know in order to become a Christian because as Paul said when the jailer asked him what must I do to be saved, he said believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved. That's all you need to know and we'll learn the rest together. Don't ever think that that not knowing enough is a hurdle. It's not a hurdle. Someone else might say I've made too many mistakes but that's not a hurdle either because even the chief of sinners was converted. Even the chief of sinners was converted. And the vital thing that you and I must recognise is that the thing that is stopping you from becoming a Christian or the thing that is stopping you from going to the prayer meeting or the thing that is stopping you from going forward is not actually stopping you. You just think that it's stopping you. But in reality it's not because it's not a hurdle. God is giving you the invitation and all you have to do is just say thank you. I accept. But yet as we see in this parable some who are invited refuse to come. What about the third group?

Time is marching on. Time is really marching on. The third group, those who do come, what do we learn from them? Well, following the refusal of those who were initially invited, the master sends his servant out again. The servant came, reported these things to his master. The master of the house became angry and said to his servant, go out quickly to the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame. The servant said, sir, what you have commanded has been done and still there is room. Here Jesus highlights the fact that despite the fact that the original invitees had said no, the banquet was not cancelled, it was simply offered to others. And the main point that's been highlighted is that it is not the people who you would have expected. And this was the reality that we see in the gospels. The Jewish leaders by and large reject Jesus, but the poor, the blind, the sick, the demon possessed, the outcasts, the adulterers, the lepers, the failures. They are the ones who respond to the good news of the gospel and follow Jesus. And here is where we see how wonderful the gospel is, because in the gospel you have this incredible provision of God, perfect salvation, total forgiveness of sins, the promise that God himself will come and dwell in our hearts by his spirit, the assurance that he will never leave us and the hope of eternity in his presence and the full enjoyment of the new creation for ever and ever and ever. God is promising all of that and who's it for? It's for the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

[38 : 42] Of course that's not saying that you can only become a Christian if you are physically disabled or living in poverty. Remember what we're saying about hermeneutics, about how we understand things. It is not saying that we need to have some sort of physical disability or some kind of economic hardship in order to become a Christian. What it is saying is that the gospel is for people who can't offer anything to God and who just come to him in total dependence. And that means that if you feel spiritually poor as though you are totally lacking the resources and qualities that you wish you had, you look at other people and you think, I am nothing compared to that person. If you feel spiritually crippled like the bruises and batterings of life have just left you injured and sore and disillusioned and confused. If you feel spiritually lame, so you could never stand on your own two feet as a Christian. You could never keep up the Christian walk, never maintain the level that you know you want to or wish you could. You feel like you just don't have the strength, the power, the ability to do it. If you feel spiritually blind, lacking in knowledge and desperately needing to someone to show you the way, if that is how you feel then God is talking to you right now and he is saying, it's you. It's you that I wanted my banquet.

It's you that all this is for. Your name is on that list. And imagine that. Imagine that. I'm sure we've all been to weddings where you can go and when you go to get your dinner and they have these big lists with the names you have to go and you have to find yourself and see where you're sitting and you see that your name is on the list and it's great to see that. Well, think of the list, the guest list for the heavenly banquet. And I want you to picture your name on that list because I tell you in the name of God, your name is on that list. Your name is there. And please just say, Lord, yes, I accept this amazing invitation. And if you're thinking, oh no, I'm not on that list, you're wrong, you are on it. You are on that list. But you must accept that invitation. We see the people who accept the invitation. Last of all, very briefly, I want us to look at the fourth key character in this parable, the servant. Verse 22 to 24, the servant said, sir, what you've commanded has been done and still there is room. And the master said to the servant, go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled. But

I tell you, none of these men who were invited shall taste my banquet. So in this parable, we've got God as the master, preparing a banquet and inviting people into his kingdom. We have the people, primarily the Jewish leaders, but still people today who are invited but refuse to come. We have others who do accept it, even though they are not at that level of society, that they are not the people we would expect. But we also have a servant who goes out with the message. And that's us as a church. That's us as Christians. Because we are here to be like that servant. We are here to go out and tell people that there is still room. And we as a church want to go to the highways and the hedges and compel people to come in. And here is where we see what our priority should be as a church. Our goal is to reach out and to welcome in. We want to reach out to people because we are surrounded by the spiritually poor, lame, crippled and blind. And we want to invite them in. And there's lots of ways we can do that. We can invite someone to church on Sunday. We can offer to give somebody a lift. We can bring someone to WFM or to the Ladies Bible Study.

We could bring someone to the breakfast that we hope to have in a couple of weeks time. We could ask someone if they want to come to the prayer meeting with us. We can have people for a meal. We can go for a walk with someone. We can go and visit somebody. We can chat through texting or through another message or Facebook or whatever. And in all of these circumstances we can say to these people that knowing Jesus is just the best thing that has ever happened to us. We want to reach out. But as we reach out we must also be ready to welcome people in. So that if the spiritually poor or lame or crippled or blind come into our congregation we want them to be assured from the very moment that they come here that this is where they belong. And I think that's maybe one of the most important things that this parable teaches us. It teaches us that this is where he belong. You belong in God's kingdom. You belong in Christ's church. You belong among the people of God. And we are to be together as a family that welcomes people in by loving one another at all times, reaching out, welcoming in. Because the doors are wide open. Never ever ever ever think that your invitation has gone out of date or that your opportunity has passed. The doors for you are wide open. Whenever I read this parable I think of Dr George and the sermon I heard him preach where he kept on saying, yet there is room and there is room for us all. And this servant would not rest until he had given an invitation to everyone that he possibly could. And God grant that we would all be like that. Wouldn't it be brilliant to see many new people in our midst in the weeks to come? May God grant that it be so. Amen.

[45 : 40] Let's pray. God our Father, we thank you that you have given us such a wonderful invitation in the Gospel. Where by just as this parable teaches us, you've prepared such a perfect great banquet and you've extended that invitation to us all and your great desire is not simply just to inform people but to compel people to come in. And so we pray Lord that your Gospel would just be irresistible to us all. And that we Lord, whether for the first time or whether after many years of following you, we pray that even tonight we would just renew our commitment to you. And that we would follow you and live for you.

And give us eyes to see Lord just how much you are promising us all in this Gospel message. And help us Lord as a church to be like this servant. That you would give us the courage, the wisdom and the boldness to go out and to compel people to come in. Help us to do that with wisdom and with gentleness, with Godliness. But we pray that as a church we would be reaching out and welcoming in. And that it would be all to the glory of your name. And so Lord we look to you and pray that your word would bear fruit to your glory. Amen.