

The Parables

Resurrection Sunday!

Luke 14:15-24

Happy Resurrection Day!

We have new life!! (Boaz James Trask)

Pray...

Set it up:

- This dinner has been going on for weeks! ☺
- A man at this dinner hears Jesus finish his last parable with: **"...For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:14)**
 - Resurrection of the Just = The great feast Messiah will celebrate in the Kingdom of God post-conquering the physical world (as the Jews had been falsely taught by poor shepherds now called Pharisees, lawyers, and scribes)
- So, v15 says, **"When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, 'Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!'"**
 - Remember a while back when I pointed out that Jesus was the KING of socially awkward situations? Well, here's another!
 - What this man means:
 - Jesus had just finished the parable we studied last week regarding humility – thinking of yourself lower – as a servant – to those you are with.
 - The Jews had long awaited Messiah
 - These guys – we already know – were not befriending Jesus to agree with Him and follow him. They were “watching him closely”
 - So they didn’t like that previous parable.
 - This guy doesn’t even HEAR it – or at least doesn’t apply it to himself.
 - And he tries to both change the subject AND get Jesus to confirm that he and all the other Pharisees in the room have EARNED a place at the table of the Resurrection of the Just (having made themselves just).
 - Jesus could have just raised a glass (and maybe an eyebrow), and said, “here here?” like most of us might do... He’s done enough teaching for one night anyway... but no. Instead...

Luk 14:16 But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

Luk 14:17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

Luk 14:18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'

Luk 14:19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.'

Luk 14:20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

Luk 14:21 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 lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

Luk 14:22 And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'

Luk 14:23 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.

Luk 14:24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

Brief Clarifications:

The terms/characters:

- Master = God
- Banquet = Heaven
- Servant = Messiah
- Initial Invited Guests = the Jews
- Streets and lanes (poor, crippled...) = Jews, but "sinners"
- Highways and hedges = Gentiles

Before we go any further:

- The proper picture of what's happening in this parable:
 - **God truly loves you.**
 - That's what I hope you'll take away today.
 - **God really digs on you.**
 - He really loves your presence, spending time with you, preparing feasts for you, reclining with you at the table...

Now, 3 other things of note:

The invite...

- The master already had RSVP's from those invited
- The invited had already indicated they'd attend
- This was common – like it is now with weddings, so the host could prepare the proper amount of food

"It's ready" ... – send for the invited guests

- The guests knew the day, but unlike western culture in 2016, it wasn't about the "time" so much as the general evening – much looser
- So the invited guests knew the day, but waited for the servants to call before giving excuses.

"I cannot" ... = Excuses

- I have bought a field (house)
- I have bought 5 yoke of oxen (car)
- I have married a wife
 - IOW, LIFE.
 - There is no hidden meaning in these excuses
 - Digging deep into the specific excuses are not the purpose of the parable.
 - Don't waste time there – they're simply excuses – could be anything
 - The point: **ANY excuse not to attend this ultimate banquet reveals the invited guest's priority list.**

(next) Get a feel for the room:

- **This was a hostile environment.**

- A ruler of the Pharisees and many of his friends, including many lawyers (v1,3).
 - Not lawyers like today.
 - **(next)** Pharisaical lawyers were experts on the Oral and Written Torah
 - Jews were often taught to memorize the written Torah
 - Lawyers were the experts who knew the deeper meanings, studied the purpose behind the laws, possessed a great knowledge of history, etc.
 - Pharisees taught and modeled their brand of religion
 - Lawyers were the bookworms who kept the Pharisees in line
- The reason why they were hostile:
 - **If Jesus was indeed Messiah, the implications it had on these men were life-threatening:**
 - They misread God's love in Jesus.
 - Instead, they saw a threat to life as they knew it.
 - If Jesus was indeed Messiah...
 - It meant they were indeed false teachers – leading God's people astray
 - It meant their entire life's work and purpose was at best meaningless, at worst a negative spiritual influence on the people of God
 - It meant everything about them – personally and what they taught – would dramatically change
 - It meant recognizing sin in themselves
 - It meant repentance
 - It meant regaining the people's trust as a man worth listening to
 - It meant no more hierarchy – they were servants just like all other followers of Messiah doing the King's work.
 - So this was indeed a hostile group of men
 - Because they didn't believe anything I just read
 - They felt personally attacked by Jesus.
 - They WERE personally attacked by Jesus.
 - Most people who are personally attacked get quite defensive, even if they're wrong
 - We know by reading ahead in the Bible – these Pharisees remained on the defensive.
 - And killed the Son of God, rather than have their lives changed.
 - So that's the feel for the room.
- You also get a feel for how these pious men viewed society around them.
 - If a Jew was not a Pharisee (remember, a Pharisee is not an official – it was like a political party within the Jewish way of life), he was "lower" on the totem pole.
 - Pharisaical thought was held by most Jews at the time of Christ, but as I outlined several weeks ago, there were other schools of thought (Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots...)
 - Pharisees truly believed THEY would not only be FIRST in Messiah's house, they might well be the ONLY in Messiah's house.
 - In the eyes of a Pharisee, if a Jew was NOT a Pharisee, he was second class.
 - Didn't have a seat near him, that's for sure.
 - If one was poor, crippled, blind, lame – he was not a Pharisee, nor could he be, because he'd obviously sinned so much to get him into such a state.
 - And certainly no worthy Jew would be found on the highways and hedges – a clear reference to non-Jews (Gentiles like you and me).
- So when reading this parable, we need to see how Jesus is approaching the subject of Heaven with them:
 - He needs them to see that indeed the Jews – all of them – are invited.

- He needs them to see that the Jews – with their excuses – ultimately reject the invite.
- AND He needs them to get a glimpse of the prophecy He is now telling them – that because many, many Jews will reject His invitation, the Gentiles will be included in the resurrection of the “just”.
- Luke doesn’t elaborate on how the rest of the dinner went.
 - Luke didn’t have to.
 - I promise, it was awkward and didn’t end well.
 - Because this man sitting with them who claimed to be the Son of God just told them that their seats in eternal paradise with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been instead given to the poor, crippled, and yes, even non-Jews.

Most people in the world today can relate well to these Pharisees.

- IOW: **Still today: If Jesus is indeed Messiah, the implications are life-threatening.**
- Like the Pharisees at this dinner:
 - **They misread God’s love in Jesus**
 - And instead see only a threat.
- Those yet to decide upon the ultimate “Who is Jesus?” question, have their way of life.
- Many are “good people” just trying to get through life.
- And every now and then, these individuals come across somebody like this Jesus.
- Different. In a good way, and in a mysterious way.
- They build a friendship with them, and eventually – maybe over a meal – begin to have a deeper conversation about what makes them tick – why they are who they are.
- ***And they come to find out this person is pretty narrow about morality and the afterlife.***
 - That the only answers to the questions of LIFE reside in what He believes.
- When individuals are confronted with such an ideal, they have one of two responses:
 - **1) Rejection**
 - **2) Conviction**
 - Rejection: “So you’re saying I’ve been doing it wrong all my life?”
 - Conviction: “Finally, this weight of wrestling and losing all the time is being lifted! What must I do?”
 - The question for you this morning: ***which response is mine?***
 - I think my 3-way application might help you figure that out...

There are so many ways to apply this parable – but I think **3 direct applications** are fully within the direct context:

- The banquet contextually represents 3 things:
 - Salvation
 - Discipleship
 - Eternal Life

1) Salvation

- ***God truly loves you.***
- The banquet ultimately symbolizes Heaven, but access to heaven has a pre-requisite: Salvation
- Everyone is extended the grace of salvation
- Salvation is a religious term that simply addresses the problem of sin.
 - ***Sin = anything out of line with God’s character.***
 - ***Romans 3:23*** tells us what we already know: ***All have sinned.***

- **1 Peter 1:16 says “God is holy.”**
- If sin joins with holiness, that which was holy is no longer holy.
- Rather than start over or give up, God devised a plan:
 - He himself would pay for the sin – on behalf of the sinner.
 - Every single one.
 - And thus create a pathway to relationship with Him once more.
 - And if the relationship was to be uninterrupted, all sin – past, present, and future – would have to be paid for all at once.
- Enter Jesus, Son of God, God among us, revealing God’s truth to the masses, being rejected by the front line of the very people he came to save, and ultimately crucified.
- What the Pharisees and Romans alike didn’t understand was Jesus lived a sinless life – the just was dying for the unjust.
- In my place, Jesus died.
- His purpose: a Father-Son relationship with me for eternity.
- And it doesn’t end there, as some would have you believe.
 - He was buried that night.
 - Dead for sure, hastily embalmed and entombed.
 - But days later, God raised Him up – defeating death altogether.
 - Jessica and I saw “Risen” a couple weeks ago.
 - A blend of the real events of the cross and the resurrection, side-by-side with a fictional Roman centurion who witnessed it all.
 - I highly recommend it.
 - In it, Jesus – straight from the gospel of John – says to Thomas after the resurrection, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”
- **My part / Your part: Take Him at His Word. Believe.**
 - Believe that Jesus is truly God – the only one qualified to sacrifice Himself for such a relationship to happen.
 - Believe that indeed – as we celebrate on this Resurrection Sunday – that Jesus was raised from the dead so that YOU can live!
- So the parable – in context, then – asks the question, “What excuses do you give not to accept the invitation to salvation?”
 - And with all the Bible tells us about God’s love, why would we even give such excuses?

2) Discipleship and Fellowship

- Among its most basic applications is this: The Master wants to hang out with you.
- **God truly loves you.**
 - He’s invited you to his house...
 - Set a place for you with your name on it
 - Wants to shower you with the best food ever
 - AND he invited your friends, ‘cause he kinda likes them, too
 - You’re invited into fellowship with him
 - He doesn’t want you to “go to church”
 - He doesn’t want you to “be religious” and “get your church in”
 - But he DOES want you in fellowship
 - He does desire your worship – He is worthy of it

- He does want you to know the truth and be challenged to live it
 - Be in relationships with people who love Him and love you.
 - And in this culture, the weekly gathering is the place for all of the above.
 - **Heb 10:25, “do not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”**
- So, what are your excuses when you decline the invitation to a regular gathering?
 - Sunday, home group, and yes, even the Holy Spirit's pull to study the Bible, pray, or seek God in ANY way?
 - Confession: I do it, too!
 - Sometimes when I'm working... distractions from sermon prep!
 - Sometimes after really long Tuesday, I don't want to go to Home group
 - Bible Commentator Warren Weirsbe's entire take on this passage deals specifically with our excuses not to do ANYTHING spiritual.
 - So consider your excuses
 - Then consider that God created you FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM – most likely NOT whatever your excuse might be.
- Sometimes the Christian church looks back on the OT, shaking our heads at how the Israelites just kept going after other gods.
 - And the heart of God is grieved
 - We say,
 - “Man, God always was so REAL to them – took care of them...”
 - Don’t they read their history??
 - Can’t they see the folly in other gods?
 - And yet, in our own hypocrisy, we live in such a way as to not need or want God in our everyday lives.
 - Did you know that **“do not grieve the Holy Spirit” (Eph 4:30)** is packed tightly in the context of relationships with one another and with God?
 - And yet we make excuses for the fellowship, grieving the heart of God just like our OT models before us.
- A challenging question:
 - ***Do you think you'd be fired from your job if you missed as much time at work as you do Sundays or home groups?***
 - I'll just leave that there.

3) Eternal Life

- Christians are occasionally guilty of losing our eternal perspective from time to time.
- So much so sometimes, that we live as though we'd like Jesus to postpone His coming.
 - Not so others have more time to be saved...
 - ... but so that we can experience things in this life more fully.
- **Church, there is really nothing here for you.**
 - Comparing earth to the Kingdom of Heaven as the Bible describes it is like comparing **Pinnacle Peak to Disney Land.**
 - **Like McDonalds to Sullivan's Steak House.**
 - **Like a prison cell to the comforts of your own home.**
 - And even those, according to what we know, can't do it justice.

And God – the Master of the banquet, perhaps NOW can be understood as to His incredulity in this parable.

- God truly loves all His created.
- And that love is rejected. With lame excuses.
- ***Wait... they're not coming???***
- ***They're tied up doing what???***
- ***Imagine the love you have for your own children...***
 - And if you're not a parent, for your most favorite people in the world...
- ... imagine preparing your BEST meal for them
- ... imagine inviting them weeks ahead – and they all say yes
 - And the day comes, and you text them "Hey! Come on over whenever you're ready – can't wait to see you!"
 - And they, one by one, reply,
 - "Sorry mom – sorry dad – we decided Burger King sounds better..."
 - "sorry mom, we're gonna go to a movie instead..."
 - "sorry dad, I have to work in the morning..." "but it's 2 in the afternoon..." "yeah, sorry."
- ***It's not about guilting people into relationships.***
 - God's heart is simply FOR YOU.
 - He is not a guilt-master.
 - He is a lover of your soul that simply can't help himself.
 - He dotes over you every day.
 - Showers His love every day.
 - ***Even on your darkest days, He's still putting His face right in front of yours...***
 - (get a volunteer to come up, look sad, and I get in their face...)
 - And we want to push Him out of the way.
 - But that's what love does.
 - Love stays.
 - Love hopes.
 - Love encourages.
 - Love never ends.
- ***God truly loves you.***
 - ***And it is His desire that on each and every Resurrection Sunday – and EVERY DAY for the rest of your life on earth – you'll always know it.***
 - ***And live accordingly.***

Pray