

Responding to the Invitation, Part 2

Luke 14:15

August 29, 2021

We are picking up where we left off last week in Luke 14. So we're coming back to Luke 14 verse 15, and the parable of the great banquet. We got into the parable last time. As you know, it's a parable that Jesus gave to a room full of Pharisees and religious lawyers. Those who are characterized, all through Luke's Gospel, characterized as sinfully hostile to Jesus and opposing him and his ministry in every way. Trying to undermine it and expose him as a fraud.

And here Jesus is at a dinner that he's been invited to by this host who is a ruler of the Pharisees. And he is speaking, as we've seen, he's been speaking to the guests and to the main host. He's using matters of banqueting etiquette as an extended metaphor to teach everyone in the room, they all needed this lesson, but to teach them all about pride and humility. Damning pride, soul-damning pride, and humility which characterizes those who enter into the kingdom. So he's teaching them, comes to the end of a section and one of the guests speaks up in verse

15 and said, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God."

Naturally, being Jewish, and this man sitting at this table among this privileged company, these religious somebodies in the world, this man assumed that he and his current companions around the table would be part of that great banquet that Jesus is speaking about. That they would be eating bread in the kingdom of God, just as they were doing at this very moment. In fact, what would happen there was just an extension of what was happening here.

So Jesus, knowing a thing or two about the kingdom, and knowing a thing or two about how social propriety operated in that kingdom, and about how banqueting etiquette worked there in that environment, Jesus proceeds to tell this whole company one more parable. Just so they will know that not everyone invited to that great banquet will be attending that great banquet.

Look at verse 15 of Luke chapter 14. "One of those who reclined at the table with him heard these things and said to Jesus, '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 invited many. And at the time for the banquet, he sent his servant to say to those who'd 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 oxen and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I've married a wife and therefore I cannot come.'"

The Jewish nation, there's a representative sample of the Jewish nation seated at the table with Jesus. But the Jewish nation had been invited for centuries to attend the great banquet of the kingdom of God. The fathers and the prophets had delivered the word of God to Israel, and there was always the same response. "All of the Lord has spoken we will do, count on us. We're participants in the covenant. All that he has said we will do. We will be obedient. We accept the invitation. You're our God, we're your people."

And yet when John the Baptist came to the nation of Israel, saying this in Matthew 3:2, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is

at hand." The Jewish nation, again represented in part by the men who were around the table with Jesus, at this moment, those men balked. When Jesus the Messiah came to the nation of Israel following John the Baptist, he said much the same thing.

Matthew 4:17, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is here, it is near, it is in your midst. And the nation, again, represented by the men sitting around the table with Jesus, they rejected him. So in Luke 14:16 to 20, the second half of the parable, Jesus puts all of their excuses into the form of a parable, and he exposes this grand conspiracy.

He does that in the first part of the parable, he exposes this conspiracy. The entire Jewish nation is ready to reject the Messiah, and in doing so to reject the God who invited them. These men, much of Israel following their leadership, they thought far too highly of themselves, their properties, their work, their families, far too highly of themselves, and they thought far too low about God and his grace. They refused to show up when God sent his beloved son to deliver that joyful news, "Come for everything is now ready." We get into the second half of the parable. The rest of the parable is about a new set of guests.

This is the provision that God has made in the face of Israel's rejection, which we just read about in Romans Chapter 11, this is the provision that God has made to fill his banquet hall. To put his great goodness, and the glory of his goodness on full display. To pull out all the stops and let them see his amazing grace and goodness and the riches of his kingdom.

So look what he says in the second half of the parable starting verse 21, "So the servant came and reported all these things." What things are those, they're are all these excuses that have been made. The summary rejection of Israel as a nation. "He came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets, in the lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'"

When the servant said, "Sir," or Lord is the word there, "Lord, what you've commanded has been done, and still there is room." The master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and the 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.'

As we work through those details in the text, seeing the master's intent to bring a new set of guests into his great banquet hall, we need to be careful that we don't forget what we saw in the first half of the parable. That we don't look at that section as done and dusted and in the cabinet, and that's lessons from the past and we can close the door on it.

No, we need to actually pay attention. Pay close attention to what happened to Israel. And use that as a warning for ourselves. To emphasize the point I just want to read again what we read a few minutes ago out of Romans Chapter 11. Romans Chapter 11, you can look there if you'd like to, but we'll be right back here if turning those pages is too much trouble for you, takes a lot of effort you can just stay where you are. But Romans 11:19, he cautions the Gentiles, us Gentiles, cautions us to walk in humility and faith rather than following the pattern of Israel's pride and unbelief.

Some Gentiles, who were not paying attention to that lesson, said something like this in verse 19 of Romans 11, "You will say branches were broken off so that I might be grafted

in." As if to look down upon the branches, as if they're not made of the same stuff, and elevate themselves. Paul acknowledges, that's true, branches were broken off so you might be grafted in. Learn the lesson. They were broken off because of their unbelief. You stand because of faith. Does that make you better? Is faith something that was somehow generated from you in your goodness and greatness and excellence?

Absolutely not. Faith is a gift of God. They were broken off because of their unbelief. You stand, through faith, not become proud but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. You think you're better? "Note then the kindness and the severity of God. Severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off."

Go back to Luke 14. Folks, we need to recognize, if we are in Christ we stand by faith. We need to recognize God's kindness toward us. We're not smarter. We're not better. We certainly don't come from better stock. We're not superior in any way. God has been kind to us. That's the only explanation

for this. We need to let ourselves be sobered by the rejection of Israel as we continue to pay attention to those lessons.

The thought of what God has done with us in the face of the Israel's rejection. That ought to humble us to the floor. So that we don't even dare look up, but we just hold our hand up and say, "God, we are unworthy to be called your servants. Unworthy even more to be called your sons and daughters." God is taking us a wild rabble, and grafted us in. That oughta humble us so that we fear the Lord, walk in the fear of the Lord. We walk in humility. So we stand fast in a reverent faith, being obedient to the things that are written.

The same time as we have a sober minded attitude about what has happened, we should just take stock of where we are. The fact that we stand by faith and let that thought fill us with joy and rejoicing at this great, great privilege that we have, to take our place as Jesus is describing. And it's for good reason that he describes it as a banquet filled with food, filled with tastes and smells and delights of the eye and the visual and all the senses. Can that really be us sitting at

that table? Absolutely, these are the promises of God, and we stand on them by faith.

So as we kind of wade into the details of the text, write down four words. Four words which are really the main outline points, four words: affinity, quality, hesitancy, and diversity. Affinity, quality, hesitancy, and diversity. I'll run through them as we walk through each point.

Number one, the affinity of a new group of guests. The affinity of a new group of guests. As we already saw, the first group of guests who were invited, they had all the external indicators of affinity. That they would be like minded along with the person who invited them. That they and the master would be basically of one mind and one thought.

That same religion, same ethnicity, same nationality. Same social class, same financial status and condition. That is, they're all wealthy. All the normal factors, external factors seem to line up perfectly, so they seem to share a close affinity to the master. But when the external appearance of affinity, of like-minded loyalty and friendship, when those

things are tested just by a simple invitation, they proved to be only paper thin and only skin deep.

Servant sent out by the master, in verse 17, he sent out with this festive message, "Come for everything is now ready." His enthusiasm in announcing and bringing the good news to them, this is a gospel message. His enthusiasm is rebuffed by this chorus of excuses. A unanimous rejection, seemed like a conspiracy like they all got together and agreed, this is how we're going to answer. Imagine being that servant returning in verse 21 to report these things to his master. How disappointing that report would be. So much for the things that we count to be so important, right?

All those external factors, ethnicity, nationality, same religious experience, status of wealth and social standing and all the rest. Those things we count to be so important they really do divide us in our culture and separate between people. All the things that are external factors are truly superficial and skin deep. They burn away under the first test. So as he comes to report these things to his master, it's heartbreaking, I mean, just on a human level. Imagine if this were you and

this were your wedding banquet. This is your invitation that people are renegeing on.

Men think about this being your wife. All these invited guests, all of them RSVP to your wife. You've been helping her with some of the logistics as she's been busy preparing. And on the day of the party they all begged to be excused from what she had planned for, and prepared for, and shopped for, and cooked for, cleaned the house for. Had you busy helping her with.

No wonder, as the servant returns to the master's house, no wonder the master becomes angry in verse 21. He is furious at these ungrateful, arrogant people, and he's angrier still at the politeness of their reply. This nonchalant tone that expects the master to just understand that all this property, or all these yoke of oxen, or oh I just got married. All that is a valid excuse?

This is presumption in the worst way. As if any of those excuses, property, work, family relations, all that stuff, as if any excuse is sufficient for backing out of a promise that they had made to attend the master's banquet. But notice, in the

face of this incredible insult and his anger, notice what the master actually does. Master of the house became angry, but he 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."

God turns away from those who rejected his earliest invitations. And instead, he offers his affection to others. He starts with the social outcasts of popular Judaism. Who are they in verse 21? Throughout, Jesus' ministry they are the tax collectors, the prostitutes. They're the publicans, the sinners. All the people that hung out with that group of people. Those on the edges of society on the fringes. Turns out that they had a much deeper affinity to this master than any of the people in his same social class.

Notice what the master does in his anger, you could say even in spite of his anger. Instead of making immediate war on the ungrateful and the proud, which was justified, the master's immediate energy is much more positively directed here. Need of the moment is to see that his preparations don't go to waste. To see that his banquet hall is filled to overflowing, but with grateful people, with the right kind of people. So, he waits,

he postpones, he waits to execute justice. He spares this city that ought to be slaughtered. He spares the city, and he sends his servant to others. Go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of this city, the same city. This time, though, he sends the servant to the social outcasts. Those whom the master originally invited; those are people that all had mailboxes. Those are people that all had addresses. They lived in homes, they had servants. They lived on real property.

But the master turns to invite those without addresses living in the streets and lanes of the city. The word street refers to a broader open street, a busy thoroughfare. Gotta imagine, these are the places where the shops are set up and little things are sold on the streets. The word lane refers to a narrow passageway between buildings. We call it in the city, alleys. The two words together street and lane, one commentator says they stand for the public places of the town, in which those who have no comfortable homes are likely to be found.

It's what he's picturing there. This is a picture of the marginalized. This is a picture of the invisible people, the forgettables. The outcasts that are spurned by the Jewish

social elites. The ones who would never make it on the guest list of this ruler of the Pharisees. So who are the most fitting recipients of the kindness of the master? They are the ones who have an affinity for the master. They are the ones who can see his kindness clearly, they're the ones who can appreciate his grace most profoundly. Who are they? Poor, crippled, blind, and lame. You know what they share in the common with the master, just right off the bat? They, along with the master, have the experience, the common experience, of being rejected by the same people.

Those whom the master invited, initially they've been living at the social and relational distance from those in the greatest need, the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. The rich, the healthy, the strong, God gave them all those advantages to help the poor and the crippled and the weak. What do they do with it instead? Indulge themselves, but they keep those people at arm's length.

By keeping them at arm's length, by spurning those with the greatest need, they show that in their heart they have no affinity whatsoever with the master because he designed that

they should have what they have in order to help those who do not have. They don't share his heart at all. They don't have an affinity for the master. It's those with the greatest need, they are the ones who evoke the greatest pity from the master. Their situation elicits all of his compassion. Reveal his heart of kindness in actions of kindness.

And they have nothing to offer in return. They have nothing to buy his affections with. They have nothing to turn his eye, turn his gaze. All they are is the willing recipients of the master's kindness and they respond in gratitude. And when they do that. They show affinity with the master. They show an affinity and a like-mindedness with his heart. So that's why as the master sends a servant out again and sends him into the same city, but this time he sends him into the streets in the alleys. And surely he's gonna find guests for his banquet there.

He'll find those with a close affinity for him for his heart. Not like the rich, not like the self-satisfied. One commentator put it this way. He said the poor would get no other invitation. The maimed would not be likely to marry. The

blind could not go out to see farms, and the lame would not go out to prove and test their oxen.

The master perceived, correctly, that these people were less likely to be tied to the physical and transient matters of this temporal life. And therefore they're all the more likely to accept this invitation. In fact, they're grateful to receive an invitation at all to even being known, to even be thought of, to be paid attention to.

They're likely to accept his invitation and then eager to come whenever the master summoned them. And they're eager to come, eager to experience a goodness beyond any experience that they've ever had. To enter into a home unlike anything that they've ever seen. To sit on couches that are plush beyond understanding, to eat food that is so rich they can only take a few bites. We met quite a few of them already in Luke's gospel. The leper and paralytic in Luke chapter 5. The man with the withered hand in chapter 6. The woman who had an issue of blood in chapter 8. Here's the bent over, crippled woman in the synagogue that Jesus healed in Chapter 13. And there's the man

at the beginning of this chapter that Jesus healed of dropsy or edema.

All those people, and more besides, but all those people suffered conditions that excluded them from Jewish society. All those maladies, those physical maladies, kept them out of the temple, kept them shunned by priests and the religious leadership, and therefore they're out of public life. They're invisible. They are the ones to whom the master turns now, showing his favor, "Go out quickly into the streets in the lanes of the city. Bring in those people, the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame."

All these evidences of the master's kindness. He postpones his judgment; he spares the city; he invites the city's rejects and social outcasts. By these things Jesus is representing a heart of goodness and kindness in God himself. Shows God delaying his judgment and extending his patience. Extending his kindness he's willing to give more time to embrace sinners out of an attitude of tender-heartedness.

But the evidence of the master's kindness is really summed up best by looking at this list of human beings that are rejected by the somebodies of Jewish religion and society, the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. Poverty is obviously a financial condition. Being crippled, blind, and lame, those are all physical conditions. But you just know how those two conditions interweave into one another. The one results in the other oftentimes. People who suffered all those physical conditions, they often live below the poverty line. In Jewish society, they're treated as cursed people even by God.

The social elites treated them as having a curse from God. They're suffering maladies from God because they're harboring hidden sin. And because of what they have hidden, God has exposed it through the judgments of being crippled, being blind, being lame. So they're treated as cursed people by the social elite. And by doing that, by saying, "Well, it's because of their sin" they can easily sweep them aside. I don't have to pay attention to them.

So they're excluded from temple life, often from synagogue life, from religious life, and that has an impact on their

financial, social status. It's even harder to make a living. To be excluded in religious life in Israel, that meant being excluded from social, cultural life. It had an impact on all their financial opportunities, business dealings and all the rest. It made it extremely difficult to make little living, take care of the most basic needs, let alone build any kind of a business, let alone accrue any kind of wealth. So the crippled, blind, lame, this meant poverty as well. God has a heart for those people. And when God shows them grace, and mercy, and kindness, when he treats them tenderly, it turns out that they respond to him. And they have an affinity for his offer.

So there's an affinity between these new guests and the master who's extended his invitation to them. It reveals a mysterious and wonderful purpose in God's sovereign election, to bring glory to himself by favoring people like this. We'll see that in the second point, which is called the quality of the new guests, number two. So first we saw the affinity of the new guests. The new guests with the heart of the master. The second point is about the quality of the new guests.

When the master considers a new set of guests for his great banquet, he extends the invitation on a completely different basis. He's looking for certain qualities or characteristics among those who are going to sit around his table and share his banquet meal. So let's think a little more carefully about what those physical descriptions are and what they represent on a spiritual level. The poor we've talked about this before in the Sermon on the Mount, but the poor, the *ptóchos*, that's the Greek word *ptóchos*, they are the spiritually destitute. The word *ptóchos* refers to an absolute beggar. Someone who has no money whatsoever, not even two pennies to rub together. And they are those, spiritually speaking, those who know that they're spiritual beggars, that they have nothing to offer God whatsoever.

They have no claim on God and as beggars, as the spiritually destitute, all they can do is bow down before God and appeal to his mercy. Look to his heart of compassion and plead for his grace and plead for his unmerited favor. That's the poor, the crippled, the maimed. They recognize, spiritually speaking, this represents those who recognize, that sin has crippled them. It's sin, because of its working in and through their life, sin has deprived them of any ability whatsoever, or

any capacity to please God, to do his will. In fact they understand being crippled. They don't understand God's will well enough, and even if they could, they don't have the ability to put it into practice. They find themselves stumbling over and over.

I think it was Jeramy's testimony, who described that, feeling powerless against sin. Stumbling over and over and over again, and how many of us can say the same thing. That's exactly what we were before Christ. It wasn't a struggle; it was a full-on failure. That's how we felt as sinners. The blind, who were they? Spiritually speaking, the blind picture those who lack spiritual sight. Again, they may have legs to walk around and feel like they can do, and act, but they don't have the eyes to see. If they were to walk they don't know if they're going to fall off a cliff. They don't understand God's will. They don't understand his ways.

This is those who lack spiritual understanding, and they realize it. But they are content to have God lead them by the hand. They're content to be completely dependent on him and his spirit to, to lead them into his will, to give them eyes to see,

and ears to hear, and a heart to respond. They're content to wait on God. Give them the gift of sight and show them light, teach them truth, illuminate the truth to them. Those who are blind, they understand that there is no sight in and of themselves, that it must come from God. What about the lame? The lame are those who cannot walk, and so in a spiritual sense, they're unable to walk in God's ways. They're unable to walk in his wisdom. They're unable to enter through that narrow gate, unable to walk that narrow road.

They're spiritually lame, so they can't make any progress forward. They gotta be carried. They know it has to be all of God. It's God who carries them. He picks them up and he carries them forward and their spiritual progress, if it's to be made, is going to be made by the power of God. So that's the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. My friend is that you? Do you see yourself in those terms? Because if so, this invitation is for you. This is who Christ was sent to seek and to save.

But the lawyers and the Pharisees. Along with any proud, self-assured, religious person, even in our own day, to admit

that they are among the poor, and the crippled, and the blind, and the lame, that is absolutely repugnant to their pride. They are not ready to admit, "I can't see things, I can't understand things, I can't do if I know. I don't have anything to offer before God." They can't say that. They esteem themselves so highly. And because they're so far up in the clouds, in their own mind, they refuse to identify with any of those social outcasts, with the rejects. They refuse to identify with the poor because they long to be numbered among the rich, climb that social ladder.

This is why Jesus pronounced woes upon those who are rich and satisfied, and laughing now, remember in the sermon on the mount. Those who enjoy a good reputation with the world, he pronounced woes on them because they don't see their desperate need for God salvation because they're going to be among those who turn away from the invitation.

On the other hand, he said to those who are poor, and the crippled, and the lame, the blind. He said this, "Blessed are you who are poor," *makarios*, "blessed are you, for yours is the kingdom of God." You thought you were poor, instead, you're

very rich. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied." Wait till you get around that banquet table.

"Blessed there are you who weep now." Because you're gonna laugh, you're gonna sit around that table. We're gonna share stories. We're gonna talk about what God did in your life, and your life, and your life. All mourning will be turned into laughter in that day, and "Blessed are you when people hate you now, when they exclude you, when they revile and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man."

Why? rejoice in that day, leap for joy, because your reward in heaven is great! So their fathers did to the prophets. You are going to be sitting around that table in the company of the Son of Man and the prophets and all of those who have been like that, spurned and reviled and excluded.

And guess what, you're going to be in that company of close affinity with the heart of the Father with one another. Those were the poor, hungry, sorrowful, spiritually speaking. All those who are hated, excluded, reviled, spurned. These poor, crippled, blind, lame. These are the ones with whom the Son of

Man identifies. These are the ones who share in the rejection of the prophets. These are the ones who can identify with the God of heaven who himself and his Messiah has been spurned and rejected and insulted by the proud, self-centered, self-satisfied sinners of this world. We're going to be in good company.

One of my favorite texts of scripture, for its value as a reality check, but also as a reminder of what truly matters before God, is in 1 Corinthians 1:26 and following. In the first chapter there in 1 Corinthians, Paul reminds the Corinthians, and he's reminding them of this because they had become a little too big for their britches.

They'd become a little bit proud and self-centered and thought that they were something when they were really nothing. And Paul reminds them there in 1 Corinthians 1 he says, "For consider your calling brothers. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many of you were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised

in the world, even the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. So that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

You count yourself in that list? The foolish, the weak, the low, despised of the world. Putting that into physical categories of the parable, the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. No chance these social outcasts will be able to steal glory from God. No chance that they'll be able to boast in themselves before him. All credit belongs to him, and so all credit goes to him.

So these on the new guest list, they share an affinity with the master, both they and the master have been rejected by the proud, the wealthy, the strong of the world. The quality of those on the guest list by almost every human measure, their quality is not great at all. In and of themselves, they know that they're the wretched, the pitiable, the poor, the blind. They have never been first to be picked on any team, anytime, anyplace.

Because they know that, they put no confidence in the flesh. Because they know that, they attribute all glory and honor to God. Their quality is measured by God. It's in their humility that God now esteems them. He esteems them very highly. God says Isaiah 66:2, "This is the one to whom I will look. He who is humble, and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word." God esteems those kinds of people. Those who're humble, and contrite, and God fearing, the people who heed his word. That's who God esteems.

He looks at no external measure. He looks inside the heart. He looks to the person, that character before him. Their quality same thing he says in Jeremiah, Jeremiah 9:23,24, "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might. Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me. Then I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, and justice, and righteousness, in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

How do you understand and know God? Well, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And those who fear the Lord,

are those who are humble before him, meek before men, contrite in their hearts. So the poor man doesn't need to worry about his empty bank account. This was never about money to begin with. The crippled, blind, lame, they don't need to worry about their physical disabilities because it was never about their ability in the first place.

It was never about their ability to make it across the finish line. In fact, God says to them in Psalm 147:10, "God's delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of man. But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him. And those who hope in his steadfast love."

That is what marks their quality. So these are grateful people. They're surprised to receive any mention at all, for anybody to pay attention to them. Surprised to be invited. So when that summons comes they are rejoicing. They are eager to come when the master calls. Nothing tying them down, no oxen to go try out, no property to go look at, no wife holding them back. Nothing is too important on their schedule. They are ready, and they come when he calls.

So there is room at the master's banquet table for people like that. Those who were counted as the social outcasts of Israel, verse 21. They're characterized by humility and the fear of the Lord, and that's what matters to God.

So thanks be to God that there is room for more. Not just the social outcasts of Israel, but for, verse 22, "for us." Master of the house said in verse 21, "'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city' and he says, 'bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame.' The servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded,' (or Lord what you commanded,) 'has been done, and still there's room.' The master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them, compel people to come in. So that my house may be filled.'"

We see how the rejection of the Jews opens a window of opportunity for targeted salvation to the Gentile peoples. This is what we're seeing here. And before we get to that glorious truth that we all have benefited from, I wanna just insert a third point into the outline before we look at that Gentile salvation.

This quality is shared by the new guests. Described it as humility, contrition, meekness, the fear of God. We see in the text's third point, the hesitancy of the new guests. We see their hesitancy is implied in the text here. Back in verse 21, after returning to the, you know, returning to the master, getting his command. Want you to see a single verb in that verse of the master's command, he says, to the servant, he says, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city.."

And then it says, "and bring in the poor, crippled, blind, lame." The verb bring in, *eisagó*, it means to conduct somebody from one place to another. You could think of bringing or leading someone from one place to another. It's like escorting them. It can also mean to carry somebody from one place to another and thus conduct them. Again, it's because that commentator had put it, the poor would get no other invitation. They expected no invitation.

The maimed would not be likely to marry, they're maimed. They are disabled. The blind, they couldn't see to go. Lame wouldn't go to prove the oxen. So because these poor, crippled, blind, lame, people, they are used to being passed over. So

used to it so used to being despised, rejected, the master must command his servant go out quickly and bring them in. Carry them if you have to. And that very well may be necessary.

Notice the eagerness of the servant here. You'll remember the servant here represents Jesus in the parable. The master is the Father, the servant is Jesus. Notice his eagerness to invite and carry even the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. It's evident in verse 22, "Lord, what you commanded has been done." The words have barely gotten out of the master's mouth, and he says, "already done." Check! You said go quickly, carry them in already been done, Sir. This is the compassion of the master. It's made effectual by this eager obedience of the servant.

I'll just insert a footnote here. Isn't it neat to see when the master's heart is exposed, and revealed to us in his will is known, that we are eager as Jesus is and joyful as Jesus is, to run to obedience? That's how the master's heart in his compassion, his goodness, his kindness is made effectual, is by our eager and zealous obedience. What a joy to be a part of that. End of footnote.

Remember I mentioned earlier, those we've already come across in Luke's gospel, the leper, the paralytic, the man with the withered hand, and so on. Remember back in Luke 5:12 the leper asked Jesus, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus, what did he do? He didn't say, "You know what, I am willing. Come on over here." Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him before he said a word. You don't touch a leper in 1st century Judaism, stretched out his hand and touched him. And then he said, "I am willing, be clean" and immediately the leprosy left him.

He's eager to go seek these people out. Jesus said to the paralytic Luke 5:20, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And then in verse 24, "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." Immediately he rose up before him, he picked up what he'd been lying on, and he went home glorifying God.

A woman who suffered that 12-year flow of blood, who she'd spend all of her income on physicians. She hears that Jesus is coming through, passing through. There's this massive throng of people all surrounding him, and she thinks, "Oh, here's my

opportunity. I can sneak in unnoticed, and perhaps power from him will heal me. I'm undeserving, I don't have any claim on him, I can't stop him. Who am I?"

From the crowd, she reached out, touched the fringe of his garment, trusting his power would heal, and blood flow stopped immediately. She realized she'd been discovered. She's mortified, she comes. It's discovered because Jesus is seeking her out.

She comes trembling, falling before him, but there is no need for fear. She's hesitant, she's got the quality of meekness and contrition and humility. There's no reason for her to be hesitant. There's no reason for her to draw back, but she does. And Jesus overcomes that hesitancy. "Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace". So tender. This is how our Lord deals with the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame.

He has such great compassion. Such tenderness of heart for us who are the crippled and those who are used to being

marginalized and pushed aside. It makes us uncomfortable, doesn't it? That we would be singled out for his favor.

Who are we? He shows such kindness. He leads them out of all their poverty. Leads us out of our sinful maladies. He takes us by the hand, as if he's the great strong adult and we're the little child. He leads us out by the hand, and he conveys us into the presence of the Father. To sit around a table. And you know what? There's a place with our name on it, a seat for us. Who are we?

With the Gentiles, God shows that same compassion, and Jesus shows that same eagerness toward us. Look verse 23, "Go out in the highways and hedges," and look at the word there. "compel them to come in." Compel them, compel people to come in. He has to overcome their hesitancy. These are Gentiles after all. They're not used to this kind of treatment by Jews.

James Edwards says this is an expression of what he calls compulsory benevolence. He explains the need for it. He says this, "People who are invited to occasions unexpectedly and for which they are unprepared are, not surprisingly, reticent to

accept them. The use of compel reflects ancient Near Eastern practices, in which a resolute host takes the hand of a hesitant guest and ushers him or her personally into the house." End quote. Frédéric Godet, he says that this, "applies to a people who would like to enter but are yet kept back by a false timidity. A servant is, is to push them in a manner, into the house, in spite of their scruples." End Quote.

This is why the master sends his servant, and he sends him out with the command, "overcome their hesitancy by compelling them." Compel. This isn't forcing them against their will. That's not the idea here. This isn't conversion at the point of a sword or at the end of our M4. This is leading the hesitant. This is being gentle to the timid. This is overcoming the anxieties of the fearful. It's leading them by the hand gently but firmly into the banquet hall.

It's insisting along the way: No, he chose you for this. No, here's your invitation. It's got your name right here. It's your name, it's not a forgery, really did come from me." Here's the promise in scripture. This is rightly called an expression of compulsory benevolence. This is how we need to

evangelize. This is how we need to go out to them. This is how it was brought to us.

Just like the poor, crippled, blind, and lame among the Jews, the social outcasts among the Jews, the Gentiles too. They're used to being despised by the Jews. Paul says that in Ephesians 2:12, that they're separated from Christ. They're alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. They're strangers to the covenants of promise. They have no hope, they're without God in the world. They're pagans.

It's clear evidence yet again, of God's great, great kindness. His goodness, his compassion, his power to put all that into effect, to save those who are despised and rejected. He shows compassion to the dregs and the castaways. He is gentle and tender toward those who are rejected by the proud, and the wealthy, and the elite. Oh, we're going to need a dose of this gospel, aren't we in our day?

As we see elites basically taking over the world, and government, and politics, and setting direction for the world ahead of us. There's no gentleness, and tenderness, and

compassion among the elite, among the wealthy. They despise and look down upon those whom they rule.

Oh, but this is a gospel for our time. This is a gospel for our day, and we are the bearers of this good news. God's compassion is not partial to ethnic Jews only. God's compassion extends to an entire world of lost people as he illustrates in verse 23, he previews there in verse 23, a future work in this parable. A work that is secured by his cross. Go out there, the master says, and compel people to come in and use that compulsory benevolence to bring those Gentiles who are very far, to bring them near.

So that brings us to a final point, and this is what reveals the master's intent. There's actually a subordinating conjunction that is used to express purpose here in this section. That shows the divine will. Point number four, the diversity of the new guests. The diversity of the new guests. And we can at least say a diversity of Jew and Gentile. Diversity of the new guests. The master instructed his servant in verse 21, he says, "Go and bring in the social outcasts from

popular Judaism, bring them in." And that's been done. Jesus comes, reports, that's been done.

He invited the tax collectors, the sinners in verse 21. Many of them responded in faith. But there's still room, praise be to God, and the opportunity then widens to reveal the master's full intent to bare his heart and intention all along. Go out into the, what he calls the highways and the hedges, the highways and the hedges.

When he says go out, he means go out of the city. So he's been talking about ministry in the city. Now let's go outside of the city that is into the open countryside. It's a picture of the gospel that leaves the boundaries of the nation of Israel. It's like Acts 1:8 in those terms. It's leaving Jerusalem and Judea and then extending and entering into Samaria at first, and then extending even further to the Gentiles who live at the uttermost parts of the earth. That's where the country roads will take you. Keep wandering them and keep going. That's where it takes you is to the very far reaches of the empire, far reaches of the world.

As Jesus is telling this parable, it reveals something that these people around the table have not only no heart or stomach for, but no mind for. This is completely outside their understanding, but he is revealing something to us here that we are living proof it's happening. Parable here portrays the master's concern for those who are outside the borders of Israel. "Go out into the highways and the hedges," he says. Paul wrote in Romans 11:11, this is what he described there is through Israel's trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, the highways in the hedges. This parable anticipates not only Gentile salvation, but in light of the Jewish rejection of Jesus and his crucifixion on the cross, it also indicates the post, resurrection post ascension, mission to the Gentiles in light of the Jews' continuing opposition to the gospel.

So there's a clear hint here of the connection. And between what he says here in that mission to the Gentiles, you can see that in Jesus' use of the word hedge, hedge. It's the word *phragmos*, *phragmos*, barrier that's formed by a hedge. And in over in England they call them hedgerows, but it's a row of trees or bushes. You can see them all through the eastern plains. And then it can refer to the path where people walk along that barrier, that wall, that fence, that hedgerow. It

separates fields from field, it divides between farms. So the basic idea of a hedge or a *phragmos* is separation. That's what that word pictures, *phragmos* pictures division. A wall that divides, a wall that separates.

This is exactly how the Jews thought of themselves. The Pharisees, they thought of themselves as separate. Set apart from the hoi polloi, but especially the Gentiles. They were divided from the Gentiles, separated from them. And Jesus speaks of the master's intent to fill his house with those who are divided, and separated out, and distant, outside the city, separated from the Jews.

Just wanna take a brief foray into the letter of the Ephesians. If you'd like to turn there to Ephesians Chapter 2. And we'll just work out a little bit of the theology that's there in Ephesians Chapter 2. Paul, when he refers to a dividing wall in Ephesians 2, not only does he refer to what is a historical reference for the Jews, a physical reality in the temple environment, but he may be alluding to Jesus' use of the word hedge right here in this parable.

In Ephesians 2:14, if you identify that verse there, Paul uses that same word, *phragmos*, Ephesians 2:14 it says, "For Christ himself is our peace who has made us both one, Jews and Gentiles. And he, (that is Christ) has broken down in his flesh, (there it is right there,) the dividing wall. That's the *phragmos*, that's the dividing wall of hostility.

This dividing wall of hostility, it pictures a wall in the temple courtyard. A literal wall that separated Jew from Gentile. He describes it as a wall of hostility. Not simply a physical barrier, not just simply a *phragmos*, he describes as a wall of hostility, which is very accurate. Hostility is the word, *echthra*. It's enmity, it's hatred, animosity. The Jews thought that way about the Gentiles. They were lower, they're unenlightened barbarians. They are veritable dogs.

Even today, a Jewish prayer book called the *Siddur*, it contains a daily prayer for Jewish men, "Blessed are you Hashem (that is to say blessed are you The Name, they just call him The Name) king of the universe. Blessed are you for not having made me a Gentile." The daily prayer.

Jews kept this Gentile court separate from the inner court, a Jew-only area. Marking the two areas was a short wall called *Soreq*. It was four and a half feet high, literally a dividing wall. And it kept the Gentiles from entering into the inner court where the Jews were. And they had posted a message on that wall written in several languages. Put different places it says, "No stranger," by that they're referring to a Gentile, "No stranger is to enter within the balustrade, round the temple and enclosure. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue."

In other words, you cross this line you die. Probably could have saved some ink if they would have just written it that way. It was not friendly at all. It's a threat. It's intended to be a threat. It's intended to convey the enmity and the hostility from Jew to Gentile. Because they, the Jews felt that they had experienced that from the Gentiles back to them. In fact, the presence of the Romans within their land demonstrated that very fact. They hated each other. There's enmity. There's a dividing wall of *phragmos*, dividing them and reminding them all the time of this hostility, and hatred, and enmity.

So how did this get resolved in Christ? Look at Ephesians 2, "For he himself is our peace, he has made us both one. He's broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two. So making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."

God has unleashed power in this text, power in Christ. First, it's a destructive power. It's a power to destroy what divides us first from himself, he's destroyed that. He unleashes another destructive power to destroy what's divides us from one another in Christ. Look at the language there, God broke down, he abolished, he killed. And then God unleashed another power, a creative power positively focused, reconciling Jew and Gentile to himself, bringing them together in Christ. There's this profound, unbreakable unity. Paul said he is our peace. He made both of us one, he created in himself one new man, to replace the two. He made peace, not only is that he is our peace, but he made peace, how's that, by reconciling us both to God in one body.

Why does God extend his mercy universally? Beyond his chosen people? It's because his glory is that great. It can't be contained. His glory is eternal. It is infinite and therefore by definition it is uncontainable. God intends, as Romans 9:23 and following says he intends, "to make known the riches of his glory. For vessels of mercy which he's prepared beforehand for glory - even us whom he's called not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? As indeed it says in Hosea, 'Those who are not my people [it's us] I will call "my people." And her who was not beloved, I'll call "beloved." The very place where it was said to them, "You're not my people," there they will be called "sons of the living God."'" Where is that going to happen? By obliterating that wall in the heart of the temple. They were called, "not my people" there outside the wall, outside, treated with enmity and now obliterating that dividing wall in that place, they're called "my people."

So we've dipped into the writing of Paul. Just filling out some of the theology, let's go back to Luke 14:23, finish this out. "The master said to his servant..." And that is, as you know, the father speaking to his son Jesus. He says "...go out..." verse 23, "...go out to the highways and hedges and compel people

to come in, in order that my house may be filled. For I tell you none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

He reveals the father's intention. It's portrayed in the diversity of the new guests who enter into the kingdom, who come into his great banquet. They raise a chorus of praise in honor of his son, who is their savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's this Jesus who in reconciling us to God through his atoning sacrifice on the cross, this Jesus broke down that dividing wall of hostility. And it says at the end of the book at the end of the Bible, Revelation 5:9, "They're all saying 'Worthy are you, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God, (get this) from (what) every tribe and language, and people and nation'" All kinds of ways to divide us up, all kinds of ways to distinguish us from one another. Every tribe, language, people, and nation and you've made them a kingdom, priests to our God, one.

All these guests share an affinity with God. They are eager and grateful recipients of God's amazing grace. These new guests are all united with that same quality. They're humbled to the floor, contrite in spirit, trembling at God's word.

They're amazed that they're favored. Especially in light of who they know themselves to be. In spite of their own inherent unworthiness. These new guests then are united in Jesus Christ. They're redeemed by his blood. They're justified by God's grace.

Over in Revelation Chapter 7, it says, using this again this diversity language Chapter 7 verse 9, "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!'" Unity in that diversity. The glorious diversity of that great multitude, from every nation, all tribes, all peoples, all languages. Even at the end God still regards those distinctions. He still sees distinctions among us.

The fact that we come from 21st century now America, the fact that we come from Northern Colorado, and all the peculiarities we have in our own place and time. We're going to

have those there, sanctified, but we'll have them there, and we'll identify those people from 13th century China, and from 5th century BC Greece, everybody in between.

They all have their unique flavors, and dialects, and words, and ethnicities. God sees that, spots that, we're gonna see that, spot that. We're going to see even at the end how he regards all these nations. He marks their national, tribal lingual identity. There's a veritable kaleidoscope of color and design there, testifying to the glory of God's creativity. But all of them, all those people united with one voice.

They show forth the unity and the harmony of a shared salvation as they stand before the same throne, before the only Lamb of God, clothed in the same white robes of one person, the righteousness of God in Christ. They cry out with one voice, harmonious, singing the same song of praise, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to his Lamb."

That's what makes the end of this parable here. Which is joy for us, isn't it? But it makes it into this parable in which Jesus, he's speaking half in and half out of the parable.

He's kind of stepping out of the parable. Just make a point to the guests there. He inserts himself into the story. He speaks here in the first person in verse 24. He addresses the men in the room with the plural form of you in verse 24, "I tell you, you people sitting here, all of you sitting here before me around this table. None of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

That's hard. He issued a similar warning back in Luke 13:28, "Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all the prophets, they're going to recline the kingdom of God. But you Jewish leaders are going to be cast out. You who were invited will be cast out. People are going to come from the east and the west and the north and the south (that's all of us Gentiles) they're going to recline with them at the table in the kingdom of God."

The glory of this diversity in God's plan of salvation. Joy for us, but it becomes a warning for the nation of Israel. And it's warning for the nation of Israel, it becomes a warning right back to us as well, doesn't it? As we started in the beginning, we read from Romans 11:22, "Note then [take careful note of] the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward

those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, provided [what] you continue in that kindness."

What a story. What a story we're caught up in. We see God's great kindness toward us, but in as we do that, let us also see the rejection of Israel and let it do its instructing work in our hearts. So that we fear the Lord always so that we walk in humility and meekness before him. So we stand firm in the faith so that we rejoice always in our Lord's salvation. Humbled to the floor that he'd extend an invitation to the likes of us. Beloved, we have a seat at the table. We're numbered among the new guests who were invited to share in that great banquet. Let's give thanks for that now as we pray.

Our Father, we, we are humbled to the floor. Because we are the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame. We are those who are, spiritually speaking, wretches before you. We have nothing to commend ourselves, nothing that should cause you to turn your eye of favor upon us. We just give thanks to you for your kindness to us in Christ, even as we see what it took, what it cost. As we see what it costs for those who were

originally invited and now rejected. We also see what it costs your beloved son. He would die on the cross.

Father, we just want to thank you for your goodness to us and faithfulness. Father we're caught up into a plan that's so far, so far above us, so much greater than us. And yet you pay attention to each and every one of us, showing kindness and compassion. Speaking tenderly to us, compelling us to come, leading us by the hand and carrying us into our eternal home. We love you and thank you for all that we've learned in Jesus' name, amen.