



The Great Banquet
Part 2 – You Are Cordially Invited
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We are in this series. It was just a quick two-part series called *The Great Banquet*. And we are in Luke 14. We're going to pick up where we left off last week and talk about this invitation we've all been given. We're talking about the humility, the gratitude, the hospitality that comes with this. I'm just curious on this Sunday after Thanksgiving. How many of you are visiting from out of town? Wow! We welcome you on behalf of the Chamber. Thank you for being here and supporting our community.

And I just want to say thank you to those in our hospitality business around Branson. I was talking to entertainers this week. Y'all are finally getting ramped up for Christmas. We've been doing this for two months. They started thinking about it in November.

We're looking at this great text in Luke 14 and today we are going to get to the Parable of The Great Banquet. Last week, we looked at Jesus on his way into the home of a pharisee to have dinner, and he has to confront religious attitudes outside. He gets into the dinner, and he confronts prideful attitudes. They were vying for that position of honor next to the host and Jesus has teaching for them.

Today we are going to see that in the invitation, many in this room, across campus, and online, have received, this invitation to eternal life, this invitation to become part of the family of God, to become part of the kingdom of God, which is something we take with great humility. And when we understand it, it fills our hearts with gratitude. And it creates in us this desire to offer the hospitality that Jesus talks about in this text.

When I woke up this morning.. I hadn't thought about this song all week, but if you don't know me, I've got an entire Baptist hymnal in my head and in my heart from childhood. I woke up and the Lord gave me this song. I sang it word for word, so I'm going to lightly sing it. And there may be some Baptists in here that take it over and we're okay with that. We just kind of let this stuff go where it goes.

Come and dine.

*"Come and dine," the Master calleth, "Come and dine";
You may feast at Jesus' table all the time;
He Who fed the multitude, turned the water into wine,
To the hungry calleth now, "Come and dine."*

The Baptists are like "Take another offering because you gave us a hymn and we are ready to go."

When I hear this song, I'm just reminded of the invitation that I received as a child and many of you received this invitation. But today we are talking about the invitation that we've been given to go out and invite people.

We're going to pick up where we left off last week in Luke 14: 11. Because this was the main lesson as Jesus looked at what was happening at this dinner. **11 For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.**"

We know that from the mindset that we are to have, the mindset that was in Christ Jesus. And what is that mindset? We read in Philippians 2 – Jesus emptied himself, he took on the nature of a servant and he humbled himself. And that's what you are I are called to do.

We read this in Philippians 2: 3-4. **3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.** And that is not what was happening in the home that we looked at last week. The Pharisees were moving to the fastest position as quickly as possible to the place of honor. And Jesus said you are going to be humbled. And those who humble themselves will be exalted.

So, we looked at it last week and it continues this week. We're talking about increasing humility, increasing hospitality, and increasing gratitude. And increasing humility is a sure sign your faith is growing.

Do you ever wonder, *Am I growing closer to the Lord? How am I doing in my walk with Jesus?* We would call this descending into greatness. Your walk with the Lord should not be puffing you up, should not be getting you to a place of entitlement where you think you deserve where you are right now, *I deserve the seat at the table that I have.* No. And Paul had this attitude of descending into greatness. When you read throughout his ministry, these passages, a couple of years apart each, you see that he had a more sane estimate of who he was when he understood who God is and who he was.

1 Corinthians 15: 9 – **9 For I am the least of the apostles...** That's where he starts. When he walked into the room with apostles he would say, "I'm the one that needs to back from this group because I'm the least of these. But then, give it a little bit more time in his ministry and walk with the Lord In Ephesians 3: 8, we read, I'm the least of all the saints. So now, put a multitude of saints together and I'm the least of them." You see this is descending into greatness. At the end of his ministry, we read this as he wrote to Timothy. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and I am the worst of them."

You see this progression of descending into greatness – the least of the apostles, least of the saints, and chief of sinners.

Pastor Eric Geiger from Mariner's Church in California says this – *"The closer we get to God, the more we understand his holiness, thus realizing more and more how sinful we really are. This makes us all the more grateful for his grace. Because of his grace, an increasing view of his holiness, and our sinfulness, causes us to rejoice in Christ who takes all our sin and generously gives us all his righteousness."*

This is why we don't teach works salvation. Works, obedience, it's the overflow of our salvation, not the source of it. Obedience is the overflow, not a requirement for salvation.

So, Jesus goes in and keeps going in Verse 12 – 14. **12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind..."** Hold onto that because that's going to be a callback in The Parable of the Great Banquet. **14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."** Jesus is giving instruction on how to treat those who are outside the home that he just walked into. He's saying, "This is actually how the kingdom of God works. This is how the family of God works. Go out and get them and invite them in.

I was encouraged this week as we headed into Thanksgiving. I heard three stories and there are probably a lot more than this. I heard stories of people in our church who had room at their Thanksgiving table, and they just heard stories. One was in a restaurant. Another was in passing. But I heard from one church member who invited someone who was going to eat alone in a hotel room, and they said, "No, come eat with us."

Another said this to a student who was here and needed to stay on campus and work and didn't have any plans for thanksgiving. Another was a widow in our church who was planning on seeing family at Christmas and just decided at Thanksgiving not to travel. She was invited to another home. I thought, We don't need a program or a budget for what I'm about to introduce, but wouldn't it be cool next year in November if we had a campaign that was simply – No one eats alone. That this church will always be known for increasing hospitality. And increasing hospitality is a sure sign your heart for the marginalized is growing. In other words, our table and our church should always reflect God's table. It should always reflect the people he is inviting to take a seat. May that always be true of us. We can hang with the people we feel comfortable with, and in that list, he gave it – rich neighbors, family members, but let us never lose sight of who God has a heart for.

Acts 2: 42-47 is the first century church. I want you to see how Verses 45-46 connect this idea. Talking about the first century believers, **They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.** Again, that's your generosity. Every time we take an offering, we're thinking about the physical needs of people in our church and in our community. And you go way beyond that, with Convoy of Hope and with our missionaries, to meet needs outside of our country.

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes...

Now keep in mind, we're talking about people who had means providing for people who did not have means. **...and ate together with glad and sincere hearts...** May that always be true of your home and your table and this church.

I look at the hospitality budget in our church... You might as well just call it a coffee budget. It's a big dollar amount. And there are times you look at it and you go, "Whoa!" I hope we never think about cutting that. I hope we never think about doing less for hospitality. I hope our church thinks about increasing hospitality so that when you invite family and friends to the 8:15 or 11:45, you're like, "There's a place here for you." And I hope when you're walking on this campus, and you look around,

I hope you see there are a lot of people who look like you and dress like you and there are a lot of people who don't. Let's praise our father in heaven for that. And let's be even more urgent in our going out and inviting them in.

I fly with American Airlines a lot and there is this status with American Airlines that they always call. If you're there at a gate in Springfield, they always start with, "We'd like to invite our concierge key." I'm always like, "Oh, la-di-da." And no one ever comes forward in the Springfield airport. I've been in Dallas Airport and Chicago Airport and sometimes they come in. But no one ever comes forward in Springfield.

So, I researched the perks of Concierge Key. And it's awesome. And then I started thinking Man, what can I do to become Concierge key? And do you know what the answer is? Nothing. It's never going to happen for me. And here's why. I've researched it. I should have been studying the Bible more, but I got on American Airlines... cause it's starting to hack me off. Cause I want the place of honor at American Airlines. Concierge Key is an invitation only tier. Not open to the general public. Not you people that bring your chickens and livestock on the plane. You unwashed masses, you're not getting it, we're not getting it.

It says, This is not open to the general public. Concierge Key is primarily meant for those who have primary decision-making ability for large corporate travel accounts. Or they are influencers who American feels can sway travel toward the brand. Because these people get treated so well. And every time I'm there... You've seen the signs that say, "Priority Boarding." Super special important people over here and then this doesn't even have a logo. It says, "General Boarding." And every time I walk by that, I think to myself, *That is how so many people view the church. It's how so many people view the kingdom of God and the family of God. They are super, elite, special, superhero Christians who get special access. And then there's those with general.*

I hope you're learning from the test we are in in Luke 14. We all have the same access. There is no super elite special concierge key Christian access. There is no "you've done more, you've influenced more, you get better access." Nope. We all get the same access. And how do we get this access? Come and dine, the Master calleth. You may feast at Jesus' table all the time. Our access is through Jesus... period. There's no specials. So, I'm not getting concierge key. I'm going to let that go right now.

Jesus takes this... and if you go to Verse 15 of Luke 14, **15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus...** And this one statement is going to launch into The Parable of the Great Banquet. **"Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."** And most scholars believe this statement right here is making a major assumption. And the assumption is all of us gathered around this table will be there and you're going to see in this parable, Jesus is saying, "Hold on... not so fast. There are people around this table right now who think they'll be there, and they won't. Because the way you've been acting around this table is how many of you view the Kingdom and that's not how the kingdom works.

We introduced this last week, **6 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.** In that day, you would do an invitation. You would send it out early. Day of the banquet, you would send out a servant to announce, "Hey, it is time now. Supper is ready."

17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

We looked at it last week. This is not a potluck, this is not a restaurant. You can't buy your way into this, you can't bring anything. That's not how this works. Jesus has done everything for you, and he simply gives you the invitation and asks you accept it. And when you think about that... This was the whole message last week. There is nothing you can bring. Just receive the invitation.

Who do you think is the biggest Chief's fan in this room? Josh Gabriell. I knew his hand would go up fast. I'm going to throw this out at Josh. Josh, the next Chief's game is December 10 against the Bills at Arrowhead. That's the next home game. He's like, "I know, Ted, Move on."

You get a call on the 9th and someone says, "Josh, I just bought a suite at Arrowhead, and I want you and whoever you want to invite to come with you. But before you even get to these seats, let me just tell you, you get VIP parking. So, you're steps away from the Stadium and then when you get there, we're going to take you to the press room, the locker room. You're going to get to meet the players. Mahomes is going to sign a bunch of stuff for you. You're going to be able to take all that and put it on eBay later. And then, the buffet. You should see the spread that's going to be laid out for you. You are going to have all you can eat for the whole game. And then once you get all that, you come up to these cushy seats. Whatever the temperature is, you don't care because it's going to be perfect. You have a great seat in the house.

Josh, what's your attitude at this point? He says, "I'm in" We can close the service down right there. He's in, but then once he gets there, what's his attitude. Would he have any attitude? Would there be any entitlement? Would Josh, for a moment, go, "I deserve this. I have earned this. I have been a fan for so long, through the good times and the bad times." No, he wouldn't walk up to the buffet and be like, "This is it?" No, he would have gratitude. How many of us, as time goes on... We've accepted the invitation years ago. We have a level of entitlement, thinking we've gotten to a place. We have to guard ourselves. We talked about it last week. Don't be a pharisee. We talked about don't let a pharisee stop you, but don't be one yourself thinking somehow, you've earned this. For by grace you've been saved through faith. It's not of works so that you can't boast about it. There is no entitlement.

Nape Argetsy has a whole bit on this in his new special. He says, "You get invitations all the time. In your twenties, a friend calls and invites you somewhere and you're like, "Yeah, I'm going. I'm down for whatever. I don't even care where we're going. I'll go."

But in your thirties, a friend calls and gives you the invitation and you respond with "Where are we going? How late are they open? Is it loud? I'm driving separately.

In your forties, the same friend calls and invites you to somewhere and you're like, "I'm not going. I'm even mad you thought I would go."

He doesn't go into the fifties, but I'll add the fifties there. People call and ask you to do something and in your fifties you're like, "You know you shouldn't have even called because Amy and I sit on the couch this time of night and send each other Reels and memes. Don't ever call me again."

Isn't it something how we handle invitations and think that we are owed something.

I've been following this family online from California. I don't follow a lot of influencers, but somebody sent me this a couple of months ago and I am fully hooked. It's the Salinger Family. Maybe some of you follow Dan Salinger online, but Dan and Mark are two brothers caring for their 91-year-old father who has Alzheimer's. They have filmed that whole journey. It has been so encouraging to me and I just am so endeared to Ed, the 91-year-old with dementia.

Many of you have cared for a parent or family member with dementia or Alzheimer's and you know that right after a nap or when they wake up first thing in the morning is when they are the most disoriented and confused. Ed has several things he's always worried about. His keys to a car he no longer owns. And he'll ask them, "Where's my car?"

They tell him he sold it.

"I sold it?!"

Everything is a shock to him. And the gratefulness that comes out of him. They'll tell him something and he always responds with,

"What!"

"Yeah, you don't drive anymore.""

"Why don't I drive?"

"The DMV took your driver's license."

"Why did they take my driver's license?"

"You ran a red light."

"You're not going to take somebody's license over one infraction."

"You ran it a lot. The same light, multiple times."

He's worried about his checkbook, his phone. He brings up his brother Bill often, who passed away 15 years ago.

Almost every day, he goes, "I need to call Bill." And Mark, The 56-year-old son sounds like he's yelling, but Dad has loss of hearing and so he's got to almost scream at him almost all day.

"Dad, your brother Bill died 15 years ago."

"He did!" you see it all over him like he's grieving almost again every day when he hears it. He wants to make sure all six of his children are eating. He's always worried about money. He'll pull out his wallet. He's a 91-year-old.

He'll pull out his wallet and he's be like, "I ain't got no money!"

Dad, you don't need money."

I don't need money?" "

No, you live in this house."

"I live in this house? Who's house is this?"

It's my house, dad."

Every now and then... this is what I love. He'll come in and he wants to pay for something. He is just overwhelmed by the fact that everything is being provided for him for nothing. He sat down a couple weeks ago and he goes,

"I want to do something to help out around here."

Dan goes, "Great, Dad, grab that vacuum. Just Vacuum for us." Ed looked back and it ang goes, "Nah, I don't want to do that."

Video after video after video, you see gratefulness, gratefulness, gratefulness. It's something to watch.

I thought about it. I think sometimes we could maybe benefit from forgetfulness. Because after we've served the Lord for a while, we can develop that attitude like *This is my seat. This is my parking space.* Whenever someone wants to start a conversation with me with "You know I tithe at this church," There's never going to be a good conversation after that right there. Because what happens is we build up this entitlement.

You heard what Carrie Neuhoff said years ago when he was at our church. He said, "Those of us who feel entitled to everything will be grateful for nothing."

I'm looking around at young people in here today. To every child that's in here right now, living at home with your parents. I want you to go home today, walk into a house you don't pay for in the clothes you didn't pay for, eating food you did not provide. I want you to walk into your home after today and just look around and be like, "What?! This is amazing. Mom and Dad, I'm overwhelmed with your generosity for my daily needs." You'll pick your parents up off the floor...

But isn't that to be our attitude when it comes to the Kingdom of Heaven? That should be our only attitude.

AW Tozier said this, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." I just need you to know this: What you feel about yourself is not the most important thing about you. What God says about you is far more important than what you feel about yourself.

By the way, that's all that Christian counseling is going to do for you. Christian counseling is going to call out the lie that you believe about yourself and tell you this is actually what God says about you, and you have forgotten this.

Dallas Willard adds to this. "*All human troubles come from thinking of God wrongly.*" And I'll add here, thinking of the kingdom wrongly, thinking of how God's economy works, how his family works. Which then means thinking about ourselves wrongly.

And this Parable of the Great Banquet... Here's what we understand and here's why we have humility and gratitude as we move forward. When it comes to entering the Kingdom of Heaven and becoming a part of God's family, we bring nothing to the table. we simply accept the invitation.

"What about my giving?" "What about my works?" "What about church attendance?" All of that is an overflow, but it's not what is required to accept the invitation. This now is the mindset of the Pharisees. Your positions, titles, we looked at that last week in Matthew 23. Education, morality, religion, church

attendance, and good works will not earn you a seat at the table... period. Jesus paid it all and invites you to dine with him. And I can tell you because I know Josh well enough. If he shows up on the 10th to a suite... and if there is anybody here that has one and has an extra room, just offer it to him. Let's see if this plays out. They say it's the thought that counts. I can tell you I know him well enough to know he would have just two words on his lips the entire time – Thank You. Thank You. Thank You. Because a person who feels entitled to something will never be grateful for anything.

When the pharisees were taking that position of honor, they were assuming, “Hey, we can't wait to have this meal.” and Jesus says, “You're missing the whole point.

Starting now in Verse 18, the invitation goes out and look at what starts. **18 “But they all alike began to make excuses.** You've invited people into a relationship with Jesus, you've shared your faith, you've shared the gospel, and people make excuses. And these excuses, thousands of years ago, are no different than what we hear today, dealing with our possessions, our money, relationships. **The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’** Can't take it. **19 “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen... which would imply wealth because in that day, a family would need one or two. ...and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’** ²⁰ **“Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can't come.’**

People will always make excuses for this invitation. And so, we see that increasing gratitude fuels us to invite others to dine with us.

I don't know if you've been invited somewhere that was just extra special and you were overwhelmed and like, “I don't belong here.” “I don't deserve to be here.” But then you start thinking of other people.

Now, I like watching football, but if someone invited me to a box or to a suite at Arrowhead, I'll be honest with you, my first thought would be Josh and a couple other people in our church that I know they just... They've got to hear about this. Sometimes, I think... and we know the vast majority of Christians don't share their faith on a regular basis and we think it's because they're not equipped. They don't know what to say. I get that's a good reason that people give. Others would say, “Oh, my faith is more private. It's not really something to be shared.” But we know with the Great Commission we are to go and tell all. This invitation goes out to all. A lot of it is motivation. And a lot of it is the drift that we have toward entitlement when it comes to our salvation rather than the gratitude. And when I am grateful for what I've been given, I want other people to experience this. I want other people to come and dine.

Luke 14: 21-24, as we wrap this up. **21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’** Those who are in covenant community would have been considered unclean. So, what you are going to see here are three groups in this parable. The Jews in covenant community that think they've earned it and Jesus is going to tell them “You have not. That's not how this works.” So, now go out and get those that they would say they're not supposed to be in here. Go get them because theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. So, he does this. He goes out and he invites and he brings in.

22 *“Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’* Meaning more invitations can be given.

23 *“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes...* Most scholars believe now Jesus is talking about those Jews in covenant community, the first group, the second group, the Jews that would be considered unclean. Now, guess what? Go to the gentiles, those outside of covenant community *...and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.* Now, this statement goes out to that first group. It goes out to that assumption that we read at the beginning of the parable. Jesus says, **24** *“I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.”* Why? Because your titles mean nothing when it comes to the invitation. Your positions mean nothing when it comes to the invitation. Your bank account means nothing when it comes to the invitation. Your good works, your church attendance, the baptism that your parents had performed when you were an infant, that is not how you accept the invitation.

It is by faith and repentance that we enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That we accept the invitation. And that’s our prayer for you today. That you would start by just saying, “What have I been relying on?” And if we just put it all in one category, for many in here, it’s just good works. I’m trying to do the best “I can, and I hope in the end it all shakes out.” That’s not how it works at all. It works by accepting the invitation. So, to end with the hymn that we started with, this is the invitation for you today if you’ve never accepted Christ. If you’ve never accepted this invitation, here it is really simple. “Come and Dine, the Master calleth, come and dine. And you may feast at Jesus table all the time. “He who fed the multitude and turned water into wine, to the hungry, that’s you, calleth now. Come and dine.”

Father, I pray right now for the one who has never accepted the invitation to life in the kingdom. That today would be the day of their salvation, that they would come forward and meet with someone from the prayer team, fill out a card and let us know of this decision so we can connect with them and encourage them in their journey.

I pray for our church that as we hear a message on salvation that we pause to be reminded and to be humble and to be grateful and to turn around and offer that hospitality to those who have not received the invitation. That today would be that day. Turn our hearts toward gratefulness. I pray for this church as we enter into the Christmas season and just all that you have blessed us with, that we would consider the blessings in our life, grateful for them, our desire to share them, and to encourage others to do the same.

We pray all of this in the authority of the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.