

Lovingly Invited

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[0 : 00] the gospel according to Luke chapter 14. Luke chapter 14. And if we take as our text the words of verse 23.

Luke 14 and verse 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.

Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled. So this evening we're continuing our study in the parables found in Luke's gospel.

And as I come to this parable I was thinking to myself I wonder if you have a favorite parable. Do you have a favorite parable?

A parable which speaks to you or a parable which a parable to which you can relate. And we've looked at a few parables already in Luke's gospel. We've looked at the parable of the wise and the foolish builders.

[1 : 09] We looked at the parable of forgiveness. We looked at the parable of the sower. The parable of the good Samaritan. And the parable of the rich fool. And God willing in the months to come we'll be looking at other parables in Luke's gospel.

The parable of the lost sheep. The parable of the lost coin. The parable of the prodigal son. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The parable of the wicked tenants.

And there are many parables of Jesus which are recorded for us in Luke's gospel. But do you have a favorite parable? A parable which encourages you or a parable which you can relate to?

And the reason I ask the question is because my favorite parable is this parable. The parable of the great banquet.

And it's my favorite parable because it reminds me of God's gracious provision of salvation presented to us in the gospel. It reminds me that God has graciously prepared for us this provision.

[2 : 14] this great provision this great banquet in which we can have our sins forgiven and our hearts cleansed and our lives changed and transformed.

But the wonder of God's gracious provision in the great banquet is that it's followed by a gracious invitation. An invitation to come to the banquet and taste and see for yourself that God is good. But the parable of the great banquet it's my favorite parable because it also reminds me that my responsibility not only as a minister of the gospel but as a Christian my responsibility and my role as a Christian is to tell people about God's gracious provision in Jesus Christ and to compel them to take up God's gracious invitation to come to the banquet.

my Christian friend our responsibility is to lovingly invite the people we come into contact with to come to the gospel table and to see the wonder of what's on offer to them.

We are to compel them to come in because there is a great promise which has been issued to us in this parable. There is still room.

[3 : 39] There is still room. And my friend if you're still unconverted still out of Christ still like a stranger to grace and to God if you're still not a committed Christian tonight the promise for you is that there is still room.

There is still room and the word of God comes to you tonight holding out to you the greatest promise and the greatest hope that there is yet room for you in the kingdom of God.

You haven't been shut out. You haven't been told that you can't come in. You haven't been told to stay away. You haven't been told that you're too old or too late.

You haven't been told that you're not good enough and that you you haven't been told that the kingdom of God is now full. No my friend you're being reminded again tonight in this parable that there is still room.

There is still room. Room for you and room for millions more. Because this promise this gracious promise and invitation it's for every home in this community and beyond.

[4 : 51] It's for every family in this community and beyond. It's for every person that we come into contact with. No one is to be exempt. No one is to be left out.

No one is to think that they're not welcome. Because all are invited. And all are promised. There is yet room. And if you take anything home with you tonight from this service take home the promise that there is still room for you in God's kingdom and you are being invited to come.

You are being invited to come. And so as we consider this parable this evening the parable of the great banquet I'd like us to look at it under three headings.

An earnest encouragement an empty excuse and an extended endeavour. An earnest encouragement an empty excuse and an extended endeavour.

So if we look firstly at an earnest encouragement an earnest encouragement if we look first look at verse 12 He said also to the man who had invited him when you give a dinner or a banquet do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

[6 : 15] But when you give a feast invite the poor the crippled the lame the blind and you'll be blessed because they cannot repay you for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. 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.

But Jesus 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 had been invited come for everything is now ready.

And so when Jesus tells the parable of the great banquet we find him sitting in the house of one of the chief Pharisees eating bread with them on the Sabbath day.

And Jesus he was the special guest that day not many people had been given such privileges to sit with all the churchmen of his day but Jesus was invited and yet the agenda for Jesus being invited was wasn't to listen to Jesus or to take in anything that Jesus had to say the agenda was to find a reason and to find evidence to accuse Jesus for proclaiming a false message because there was a lot of talk going on around the villages at that time where many people had said that they had never heard a man speak like this Jesus because he was different he was unique he was doing miracles he was preaching a wonderful message of salvation but the problem for the Pharisees was that he was taking the spotlight away from them and Luke tells us in verse 1 that all of these Pharisees they watched him they were watching him and they watched Jesus' every move and they wondered what he would do or say next but while they spent all their time watching Jesus and looking at his body language and reading his mannerisms

Jesus was sitting watching them and reading their hearts and when Jesus read the hearts of the Pharisees he could see that they were self-righteous and full of pride and so Jesus speaks to them about their need for humility they need to be humbled they need humility in their life and with a disabled man who was present this man who had dropsy Jesus asks is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day or not and the Pharisees would have straight away said no but they kept silent and then having healed the disabled man and sent him out Jesus asked another question which of you having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on the Sabbath day will not immediately pull him out and again there was silence and so Jesus proceeds he tells this parable to the Pharisees about the need to humble themselves and take the lowest position that when you're at a wedding take the lowest position because when you take the lowest position someone the host will say to you move up you are now exalted and that's what

[9 : 23] Jesus talks about he says in verse 14 or verse 11 for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted and after talking about this need for humility Jesus then turns to the host the host who had invited him for dinner and Jesus says to him when you give a dinner or a banquet don't invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbours lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid but when you give a feast invite the poor the crippled the lame and the blind and you'll be blessed because they cannot repay you for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just and the point that Jesus was trying to get across to the Pharisees was that their religious meals and their religious gatherings they shouldn't be about ego and pride and self-righteousness and good works and position and honour no says Jesus the blessing comes when you reach out to those in need the blessing comes when you invite those to sit at your table who are less fortunate than you the blessing comes when you earnestly encourage

those who do not have to come and experience what you have but what we must be clear on from the outset is that Jesus isn't talking about temporal things because when Jesus says invite the poor the crippled the blind and the lame he's talking about them spiritually he means invite the spiritually poor those who are in poverty spiritual poverty and are bankrupt because of their sin invite the spiritually crippled those whose lives are broken and crippled because of the effects of their sinful nature invite the spiritually lame those who are unable to walk and who have no desire to walk in the paths of righteousness invite those who are spiritually blind those who are still in darkness still blinded by the God of this world and blinded by the desires of their own heart and Jesus says invite them invite them because the blessing comes when you reach out to those in need the blessing comes when you invite those who are spiritually poor crippled lame and blind to come and sit at your table the blessing comes when you earnestly encourage those who do not have to come and experience what you have and you know

Jesus was giving to the Pharisees and he's giving to us as Christians the greatest form of evangelism because it's evangelism that's based around the dinner table and what Jesus is showing us is that the greatest form of evangelism is to reach out to those who are spiritually poor crippled lame and blind and he says invite them into your home and get to know them and build a relationship with them and let them see what you have in Jesus Christ and that they desperately need it my friend Jesus says that the blessing comes when you earnestly encourage those who do not have to come and experience what you have and it's the greatest form of evangelism spending time with people investing in people getting to know people building relationships with people because that's what

Jesus did that's how Jesus did it because when we read the gospels we often find Jesus not only sitting with his disciples but as we see here he's also sitting and eating with those who don't know him and even those who were at enmity towards him because Jesus knew that the blessing comes when you earnestly encourage those who do not have to come and experience what you have but as Jesus is speaking one of the Pharisees interrupts him and he interrupts him by praising God for his wonderful provision of salvation he says blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God but the problem with what this Pharisee said is that he had missed the point he had missed the point which Jesus was trying to make because Jesus wasn't speaking about blessing in the sense of heaven and eating bread in the kingdom of

God with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob Jesus was emphasizing that the blessing comes when you invite those who do not have to come and experience what you have the blessing comes when you share what you have with others and this is key to understanding the whole parable because the Pharisees the Pharisee who interrupted Jesus he was a typical Pharisee a typical Pharisee because as you know the Jews and especially the Pharisees they believed that salvation was for the Jews and no one else and this was because the Jews were known as the elect people of God where the nation of Israel had been chosen by God to be a light in darkness and they were to be God's covenant people and they were to be this light in darkness to shine out a light that would shine so that all the other nations would be drawn to them by the way they lived their lives in accordance with God's law but the problem which many of the Jews had was that they kept the light of God's salvation to themselves and they shared it with no one they had the light but they hid the light and because of their privileged position as God's elect people it made them proud and self righteous and that's what the Pharisees were they viewed themselves as this cut above the rest they considered themselves to be greater than all the other nations than all the Gentiles because the Gentiles all these other nations of the world apart from Israel they were those who were poor crippled lame and blind they were the outcasts they were the outsider and they certainly weren't to be part of God's covenant people but that was never God's plan salvation was to be of the Jews but that didn't mean salvation was only for the Jews it meant that from the Jews from this central nation in the world all the nations of the world would be blessed and that was the promise that was given to Abraham in Genesis through your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed that was the longing of the psalmist in psalm 100 that all people that on earth would sing to the Lord with cheerful voice the psalmist was longing for the promise of Abraham to be fulfilled but for many generations the promise had been hindered by the pride and the self-righteousness of the Pharisees that was until Jesus came because when [17 : 15] Jesus came the promise of Abraham was fulfilled that all nations of the earth would be blessed the gospel would go from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth

but not only that the promises of the Old Testament they were all fulfilled that there would come from the seed of the woman one to crush the head of the serpent there would be a king like the son of David who would have this eternal reign and an everlasting kingdom that there would be one who would be wounded for the transgressions of his people and this promise it was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ and this is why Jesus tells the parable of the great banquet because through him through him the banquet of God's salvation was set through him the banquet of God's salvation was prepared and nothing else needs to be done there's nothing missing from the work that Jesus has undertaken the banquet the banquet which he has provided is the provision of a full redemption full redemption from sin

Jesus came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many he came to spread before us the great banquet feast of the gospel and it was my favorite commentator G.C. Ryle he said he said that forgiveness of all sin and peace with God grace by the way and glory in the end they are the gracious provision which God has prepared for the needs of our souls there is nothing that sin laden hearts can wish or weary consciences require which is not spread before us rich in abundance in Christ Christ in one word says Ryle is the sum and substance of this great banquet and my friend the host has sent his servant to earnestly encourage you to come for all things are now ready come for all things are now ready but how will you respond will you accept the invitation will you respond to the earnest encouragement to come or will you be like those in this parable who presented an empty excuse because as

Jesus continues to tell us the parable of the great banquet he says that an earnest encouragement to come was met with an empty excuse so we look secondly at an empty excuse look at verse 17 again 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 but they all alike began to make excuses and in these words Jesus reminds us of our natural reluctance to come to Christ for our salvation because as the Bible tells us the natural man or woman is a dignity with God and even though they are presented with God's gracious provision a provision consisting of God's everlasting love for us of forgiveness of sins of peace with God of the promise of heaven the promise of escaping hell even though the light of God's salvation is presented to us so clearly in his word the Bible reminds us that the natural man or woman loves darkness rather than the light the spiritual man or woman loves the light rather than the darkness but the natural man or woman loves the darkness rather than the light and we saw this last week when we were looking at Nicodemus we met him in John chapter 3 and Jesus was reminding

Nicodemus that that's the position of the Jews he was a ruler of the Jews and that was the position the Jews were meant to be a light to all the nations of the world they were meant to be the light that would shine and draw every other nation to see God's provision of salvation but the reality of the Jews was that the Jews loved the darkness rather than the light they loved the darkness of pride and self righteousness rather than the light of God's salvation salvation in Jesus Christ and even though the banquet was prepared and to be given to them first they rejected God's salvation John says that he came to his own people and his own people did not receive him Jesus came to the Jews and they despised and they rejected him because when the servant Jesus came to tell those whom the banquet had been prepared for the Jews all alike began to make excuses and they made excuses because in their hearts they were all Pharisees they were proud of who they were as Jews and they were so self-righteous that they didn't see the need to come to the banquet and they all alike began to make excuses and this is why the anonymous Pharisee interrupted Jesus by praising God because he thought that one day he would be in heaven he thought that he would be part of the kingdom of God because he said blessed is everyone who eats bread in the kingdom of heaven he thought that he was safe he thought that his Jewish roots and his Jewish upbringing was enough he assumed that all his outward religion was enough to make him acceptable before God I mean why not why not think like that he was a good person he was a church goer he went to all the services he knew the scriptures he was good to his neighbor and he was an upstanding member in his community and he felt that he was in a good position as anyone else to get to heaven and because he's so proud of himself and so self-righteous in his upbringing and his biblical knowledge he thinks to himself why do I need

[24 : 00] Jesus why do I need to come to the banquet at all why do I need to accept God's provision if I can make myself acceptable to God my friend beware beware of the self-righteousness in your heart that will tell you you are fine without Jesus beware of the pride in

your heart that will tell you that you don't need to commit your life to Jesus Christ but as Jesus tells this parable he explains that being invited to the banquet is not the same as coming to the banquet being in the place of privilege is not the same as being in the place of promise being close to the kingdom of God is not close enough because you have to come into the kingdom you have to come to the banquet the only way to get to heaven says

Jesus is to come and embrace God's provision in the person of Jesus Christ and Jesus says everyone's invited everyone's invited but those who were proud and self righteous in their own heart says Jesus they began to make excuses those who were privileged began to make excuses and my unconverted friend there is one thing you are and that is you are privileged you are privileged because you've been privileged to have the gospel in your hearing all your life all your life many of you have had it at home family worship morning and evening many of you have had it in your family with Christian parents or grandparents many of you have had it at school with bible reading teaching from the bible many of you have had it at sabbath school many of you have had it and seen it in the community you've seen the gospel in the community the gospel and the presence of the gospel has been around you all your life and yet even though you're in such a privileged position just like the Jews were you still reject

Jesus you still put off coming to the banquet you still will not have this man to rule over you and you keep giving excuses as to why you will not come and your excuses are either because you're too busy your life is too full and there's too much going on in your experience and maybe you're saying to yourself well it's not the fact that I don't like the gospel and I don't like coming to church it's just that becoming a Christian would be an inconvenience right now becoming a Christian and committing my life to Jesus Christ it's not what I want right now and so you remain where you are and you say that it's not for you just now because you have other things to attend to and like many people when the topic of salvation or eternity or the gospel when it's brought up with you you change the subject and talk about everything else but your soul everything else but the one thing that's needful your undying soul and you'll give every excuse possible in order to avoid confrontation and to avoid following

Jesus Christ but my friend the truth is there is no excuse good enough to refuse a free offer of the gospel there's no excuse good enough and in this parable Jesus highlights three types of people who are likely to give an excuse an empty excuse the first person Jesus describes is the person who's too busy and too preoccupied with material possessions to come to Christ for their salvation and he says this particular person they had bought a piece of land and they had to go and see it but everyone knows that buying a piece of land is a lengthy process it's not straightforward there are things that have to be seen to before a deal can go through and the transaction is completed and besides he could have easily come to see his land or gone to see his land the following morning and you know there are many like him maybe you're like him too busy too preoccupied with your land your houses your cars your family your friends your bigger and better barns and you put all these things before coming to Jesus and Jesus says it's an empty excuse it's an empty excuse but the second person

Jesus describes is the person who lets his job or his business or his career take over his life that he has no time for Jesus he says that this particular person had bought five yoke of oxen and he had to go and try them out but I mean who would do that I mean who would buy a used car would you buy a used car without testing it first giving it a test drive nobody would do that but Jesus indicates that this was a person where everything for him was about work it was all about working hard and getting a bigger workforce and making a better living and earning more money it was about bettering yourself climbing the career ladder and of course there's nothing wrong with working or working hard in life and earning a living so long as it doesn't get in the way of following Jesus and again it's an empty excuse it's an empty excuse because no excuse is good enough but then the third type of person Jesus describes is the person who has no interest whatsoever no interest whatsoever because when they are invited to the banquet they don't even give an excuse they don't give a reason for not coming they don't apologize they don't say please excuse me all the previous people here they made great excuses they made great apologies and expressions of regret and they were even very sorry they said please excuse me even though they didn't want to come but [31 : 07] Jesus says that this type of person they have no interest whatsoever no interest whatsoever he just hid behind the lie that his wife was keeping him back from coming to the banquet I've married a wife therefore I cannot come it was an empty excuse and my friend there are

many people and many privileged people who have heard the gospel all their life and when they're presented with the gospel and asked to come to Jesus to come to church they just present an empty excuse a lie anything to get out of it but Jesus says that no excuse is good enough no excuse is good enough and so you are receiving tonight an earnest encouragement to come to the banquet of the gospel to come to

Jesus and you're being reminded that you cannot present an empty excuse because no excuse is good enough but what Jesus says in the closing verses of this parable is that because an empty excuse is not good enough there is now an extended endeavour to everyone to come to this banquet and that's what I would like us to see last of all we've considered an earnest encouragement and an empty excuse but now we see an extended endeavour an extended endeavour look at verse 21 Jesus says so the servant came and reported these things to his master then the master of the house became angry and 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 and the servant said sir what you have commanded has been done and there is still room and the master said to the servant go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled for I tell you none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet as well as Jesus brings his parable of the great banquet to its climax we can see that the reason the master of the house became angry was because the guests rejected the servant's invitation to come to the banquet and of course Jesus is once again highlighting the attitude of the Jews because they rejected the message of the servant they rejected Jesus he came to them but they would not receive him they wouldn't have anything to do with him and they came to him with all their empty excuses leaning upon all their privileges and basing all their excuses upon their pride their self righteousness their biblical knowledge all these things and what Jesus explains to us is that because the earnest encouragement to the Jews was met with an empty excuse he not only says in verse 24 that all those who were earnestly encouraged to come will not taste his banquet he also says that there is now an extended endeavour there is an extended endeavour to invite all people to the banquet whether they are a Jew or a Gentile

Jesus says to the master says the master of the house said to the servant go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor the crippled the blind and the lame and is this not what Jesus was saying to the Pharisees about inviting those who are the outcasts to the banquet Jesus says that those who are invited to the great banquet of the gospel are not those with an ego or obsessed with good works or their own pride or their self-righteousness or presenting this facade before God Jesus says the banquet is for those in need and those who see their need the banquet is for those who are spiritually poor those who are bankrupt and poverty stricken because of their sin the banquet is for those who are spiritually crippled those who have broken lives because of their sinful nature the banquet is for those who are spiritually lame those who are unable to walk the paths of righteousness the banquet is for those who are spiritually blind those who are still in darkness still blinded blinded by the desires of their own heart and Jesus says they are to be invited they are to be invited those in need those who see their need they are invited but then Jesus he extends the endeavour even further when the servant comes and says sir what you commanded has been done and there is still room and the master said to the servant go out into the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled and in these words we see that the invitation to come to the banquet of the gospel it's extended to whosoever whosoever the invitation is to whosoever which means that the invitation to come includes everyone and excludes no one the invitation is to whosoever whether Jew or Gentile religious or not good or bad male or female rich or poor young or old whatever situation they find themselves in life Jesus says the gospel is to be offered to everyone because the banquet is set and the master of the house doesn't want it to go to waste the father wants as many people to come into his house so that it will be filled he wants those who have been invited many times to come and he wants those who have never been invited to come he wants anyone and he wants everyone to come he wants anyone and everyone who doesn't have an excuse to come but you know

[37 : 56] I love what Jesus says that the servant was to do and this is the reason this parable is my favorite parable the servant was commanded to go to the highways and to the hedges everywhere and compel people to come to come in that the master's house may be filled he was to compel them to come in and I just love that word compel compel them to come in it means to lovingly invite lovingly invite and Jesus is saying to us that the people of this congregation this community this

island this nation they are lovingly invited to come to the banquet they are lovingly invited to come to Jesus for their salvation but you know we can't miss the point that Jesus is stressing to us that it's the responsibility of the church it's the responsibility of every

Christian to lovingly invite people to the banquet it's our responsibility to tell people all about God's gracious provision in Jesus Christ it's our responsibility to lovingly invite people to come to church so that they'll see their need of Jesus my friend we are to go we are to compel them to come in we can't sit and wait for them to come to church because they won't come if they don't know about Jesus why should they bother coming they have no interest why should they come at all the reason the pews are empty is because we need to compel them to come we need to compel them to come and the command that we are given is simple go out quickly go out quickly because time is short time is short there are people in our community who are going to hell and we need to invite them to come to the banquet and our command from the host is that we are to go and compel them to come in we are to lovingly invite them and ask them and encourage them and maybe even plead with them to come that the

Lord's house may be filled they might say no they might give their empty excuses they might turn their back they might tell you to go away but that shouldn't stop the invitation going out that shouldn't stop us asking again because the invitation Jesus says it must go out our responsibility is to lovingly invite them our responsibility is to tell them that the God of heaven has graciously prepared for us a great banquet in which we can have our sins forgiven our hearts cleansed our lives transformed and changed to we need to compel them to come in we need to have a burden for the lost we need to look at people and see their soul and see that without Christ they are going to hell we need to compel them lovingly invite them we need to do it because we love them so that they will come in and see what's on offer in the gospel but my friend if you are still unconverted tonight still not a committed

Christian the promise for you is that there is yet room the word of God comes to you tonight holding out the greatest promise and the greatest hope there is yet room for you in the kingdom of God you are lovingly invited to come and accept the free offer of salvation by committing your life to Jesus Christ I hope that none of you will leave here this evening without knowing that the offer of the gospel is for you it's for you personally it has your name on it I hope that none of you will leave here this evening without knowing that the offer of the gospel is for you and that you can come to Jesus Christ for your salvation but what will you do with this offer what you do with this offer is up to you you have been invited it's up to you how you respond it's up to you how you respond may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for the free offer of the gospel we thank thee that it is full and it is offered to us in the name of thy son Jesus Christ help us Lord we pray thee not to walk away from a hand that is outstretched to us not to turn our back upon an offer that is of eternal benefit to our soul oh Lord help us we pray to walk into the light and not to return to the darkness oh Father we plead that thou wouldst work in our experience work in our homes and our families our community oh Lord we plead with thee thou art able to save to the uttermost and so Lord we ask that thou wilt save do us good then we pray thee bless us in the week that lies ahead a week for some will be a week of mourning and Lord we pray that thou wouldst bless them remember them we pray thee remember us all we ask that we may look to Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith cleanse us we pray in his name we ask it amen we shall conclude by singing in Psalm 95

[44 : 52] Psalm 95 in the Scottish Psalter Psalm 95 page 357 singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 6 another psalm which focuses upon the theme to come oh come let us sing to the Lord come let us everyone a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation let us before his presence come change we in this the one beginning in la streaming