

Guest Preacher - Rev Kenneth M Ferguson

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

Date: 08 December 2024

Preacher: Rev. Kenneth M Ferguson

[0 : 0 0] Now I'd like to turn back to the portion of Scripture we read together. The Gospel according to Luke, and chapter 14.

And we may read at verse 15. 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 he said to him, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many, and so on. We see Jesus here from the beginning of the chapter, having gone to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees.

Now the Pharisees were a sect of the Jews that were very dominant. They were focusing particularly on the externals of religion.

And they had 613 laws, as it were, to try and keep. So that their life would, as far as they felt, would be pleasing to God.

[1 : 3 0] But when the Lord Jesus spoke to them, among many of the things he said to them, describing the kind of people they were, was that they were like people who washed the outside of their cup, but the inside was still filthy.

And he's describing the kind of attitude they had, keeping, as it were, things outwardly in order, but all the time they were ruled by selfishness and hypocrisy of various kinds.

And we find that when Jesus here is in this house, dining at the house of a Pharisee, we see there before him a man who has dropsy, a particular physical condition.

And the Pharisees, it says, at the end of verse 1, were watching Jesus carefully. It's as if somebody said, this man with this physical condition had been planted there in front of Jesus to see what he would do with him on the Sabbath day.

Would he heal him or not? The Pharisees were ready to find fault with Jesus at every turn. But Jesus does heal him, and he tells them that they themselves would have to do a work of necessity and mercy on the Sabbath day if a son or an ox had fallen into a well.

[3 : 1 4] They would immediately go out and pull him to safety. So Jesus was teaching the Pharisees, and they weren't really happy with the kind of person he was.

They expected a Messiah who was going to be a king and who was going to subdue the enemies of Israel and who would sit enthroned, as it were, as a great king of Israel.

But when they see Jesus coming, they find fault with him because he is associating with publicans and sinners, ordinary people.

But Jesus says, it is the people who are ill who need the physician, not the people who are well. I have come, he said, to bring eternal life to people.

And then, throughout this chapter, he's addressing the people at the feast. And then, coming to the verse that I highlighted here, one of those reclining at table with Jesus, when he heard what Jesus was saying, he says, blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.

[4 : 36] And Jesus uses that statement that idea that the Pharisees had regarding the kingdom of God, it was going to be a great kingdom with the Messiah as a physical king, historically placed in Jerusalem, dominating all nations round about, and they're looking forward to this great elevation of status to themselves.

But then Jesus explains what the kingdom of God really is like. And there are four points I'd like to highlight.

First of all, he talks about a man who had prepared a great banquet. The banquet. This is from verse 16.

Secondly, this man who had prepared the banquet sends out invitations. And then, we discover the different responses to the invitations to this banquet.

And fourthly, there is still room, although many people have already come to take their place in this banquet.

[6 : 08] Firstly then, one or two words on this banquet, this lavish feast that's being prepared. And Jesus is going to illustrate that this is really what the kingdom of God is like.

Not the kind of idea, the grandiose idea that the Pharisees had of a kingdom in this world and they themselves elevated to great positions. No.

Jesus says the kingdom of God is of a different nature altogether. And he says it's like a banquet prepared to which people are being invited to partake of it.

Well, first of all, this banquet is a great banquet. And when a man of means prepared a banquet like this, he would send word around to all of his influential friends and he would say on such and such a date I'm going to have a banquet and you're invited cordially and the people would say yes, we would like to come.

And when the banquet had been prepared, these people who had been notified of the banquets being prepared, they would be reminded of it.

[7 : 39] And that's what we see here. The servant went out at the time when the banquet was ready to invite the people who had been notified already.

This is amazing as a picture of what the Lord is doing in a spiritual sense.

The Lord is producing or preparing a banquet of good things, spiritual things to do with our soul's salvation.

And he is one who is notifying you that that banquet is now prepared. All is now ready. The servant said, come to the feast.

Come to the feast. And we find that those who had been notified notified of the banquet. They start refusing.

[8 : 43] This really would be unheard of in Israel. I mean, what Jesus is highlighting here, it would be a shock to the people sitting around the table with him on that particular day when he's telling this story.

They wouldn't have expected the kind of responses given by the people who had been notified to come to this banquet. The first one says, I'd like you to excuse me.

I've just bought a field and I must go and see it. Please excuse me. Well, when you think of the land area of Israel and the kind of land that there is there and there was there at that time, anybody who was going to buy a piece of land would have made sure that that land was exactly what he was looking for.

He would know the kind of rainfall in that area, whether it was stony ground or not, all of these different things. But when this man comes with this excuse, he says, I've bought land and I have to go and see it.

It doesn't rain through. It doesn't rain through. He just doesn't want to come to this banquet prepared at all. And the other one who had been notified, he says, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I'm going to examine them.

[10:18] Please excuse me. He's bought the oxen already and he hasn't tested them yet. Evidently, if anybody was selling oxen or livestock like that to be used on the land, at the point of selling, they would make a piece of land available so that the person proposing to buy the animals to do plowing or whatever, that they could test them out on this piece of land before they actually sealed the deal and bought the animals.

But this man says, I've bought the oxen and I have to go and see them. He doesn't sing that he's telling the truth at all. And the third one says, I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come.

Well, I'm not quite sure why that was, because he could have taken his wife with him and he would be very well-received, I believe.

But these three who make their excuses, the excuses don't run through at all. They just said to the man, well, we're not bothered about your feast.

There's something else going on in my life that's more important. I don't want to come to your banquet at all. I don't care if your banquet is a failure. These are the kinds of excuses that many people have nowadays when they're invited to the gospel banquet.

[12:03] I mean, the banquet there would have been very lavish, depending on the number of people who were going to attend. The man who was preparing it would have to slay some animals, probably some sheep, maybe slay or kill animals, appropriately to the number of people expected.

And all of that food is going to go waste, so far as these refusers are concerned. They don't care. What about our Lord?

He has prepared a banquet in spiritual terms. And he's inviting people to the banquet to come and receive the good things I prepared for you.

Where did the banquet that the Lord has prepared, where did that originate? Well, it originated in the heart of God, when God from all eternity, planned and prepared a way of salvation for perishing sinners.

And the banquet is, all things are now ready. Jesus has come. He has died for the sins of poor sinners. And he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him.

[13:37] when you think of the banquet God has made, what's involved in it when you come to it?

Well, what about this for a start? Forgiveness of sins. Jesus calls people, come unto me and I will give you rest.

Your sins will be forgiven. As if you had never sinned before in your life, you will be given a clean slate. The Lord will not condemn you forever.

If you trust in Jesus Christ. But as well as forgiveness of sin, the Bible talks about being justified.

You are justified. In other words, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to you, given to you. And you wear it as it were in the presence of God so that God does not condemn you.

[14:43] He doesn't see any sin in you whatsoever because the righteousness of Christ covers all of your sin. And what about this other element in the great banquet?

There is adoption. God is not only forgiveness of sins and justification, there is also adoption into God's family. The people who believe in Jesus, they are believing in him to the extent that he as God receives them as sons and daughters.

And God is their father. God says, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. And there is also on the gospel table what we call sanctification.

That is, those who believe in Jesus are given the Holy Spirit of God in their lives and he sanctifies them, gives them to grow in holiness day by day.

And at last, as the catechism reminds us, when death comes and closes our eyes, it says that the souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness and to immediately pass into glory and their bodies being still united to Christ, rest in their graves until the resurrection.

[16 : 26] With such an amazing banquet prepared, glory and glory and glory and glory at last.

It's amazing, isn't it, at one level that anybody would refuse to come. What did the first man say?

glory, I've bought a piece of ground and I must go and see it. Wow. People in this world, they love a piece of ground more than this glorious provision God has made in the gospel. earth comes between us and the Savior. Earth comes between you and the saving of your soul.

And what about the second man? He says, I have bought five yoke of oxen. Must go and test them out.

[17 : 44] Excuse me. There are some people and their possessions are so close to their mind and close to their heart and take so much of their time and affections that they come between them and God.

that could be anything in your life. Any of your possessions. Maybe your house. Maybe your property.

Maybe your car. Maybe your motorbike. Whatever it is. Whatever it is. Whatever it is. If it comes between you and Jesus, it's a killer.

Deprives you of eternal life. And the third man says, I have married a wife, so I cannot come.

Well, there's nothing wrong all other things being equal. Nothing wrong with marrying a wife. A good wife is from the Lord, the scripture says.

[18 : 53] But however good or loving your relationship with your wife, your husband, your children, whatever, however close it is, it mustn't be closer than the relationship that Jesus requires of you.

He says, my son, my daughter, give me your heart. Give me your heart. And if he has the place of priority in our lives, all other things will fall into place.

Doesn't matter what it is, if we set the Lord before us, everything will take its proper place in our lives. lives. You remember that young man a hundred years ago at the Paris Olympics who refused to run on Sunday because of his love for the Lord and the Lord's Day.

At the beginning of the race, a friend of his, put a slip of paper in his hand and he looked at it and something like this was written, as the good book says, they who honour me, I will honour.

Eric Little closed his hand on that and ran. Not only did he win the race, but the record he set that day stood for ten years.

[20 : 45] They who honour me, I will honour. We have to make, by grace, the space that's central to our affections and our lives, available for Jesus.

Otherwise, things are going to fall apart. when the master who had prepared the wonderful provision heard all these excuses, the servant told him and the master became angry.

And he said to the servant, go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, bring in the poor, the crippled and the blind and the lame.

These were looked down on by the elite of society, people who really were in their estimation the roof right.

Ah, but you see, the Lord knows how much we need him. And he sends the gospel to those who are so broken as these people were in the streets and in the lanes of the city.

[22 : 19] What are these people like? Well, it says here that they were poor. They were impoverished.

They had very little. sin. And that describes us as sinners. We have been impoverished because of our sin. We have lost the good things that Adam, our first father, had in the Garden of Eden.

He lost his righteousness. He lost his fellowship with God. And now he was impoverished greatly. And because he was our covenant father, we inherited that poverty from him.

We are poor. We have no righteousness to commend us. We have nothing to commend us to God. But then he says there were others who were crippled.

Crippled, disabled, injured, maimed. And sin did that to us also. Disabled us.

[23 : 35] We cannot even pray as we are by nature. We cannot even take a step of true faith as we are by nature.

But the Lord has sent his servant to tell us to come to him. To tell us to come. However, this maimed man came, I don't know, but he came to the banquet.

And then also the blind. We cannot see our own need as we are by nature. We have to come to the word of God to tell us what we're like.

The word of God is like a mirror. It shows us exactly what we're like before God. And the picture it draws of us is very, very discouraging.

None of us is righteous. No, not one. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. God. When Isaiah opens his marvelous prophecy at the beginning, the Lord tells him that Israel, who had been so favored as a people down through the years, nevertheless had drifted away.

[24 : 57] And the Lord says of them, the ass knows its owner, and the ox his master's crib. But this people, my people don't know.

They don't even consider. we're so blind by nature. Spiritually blind. Mentally blind.

Our mind is closed to the things of God. We'd rather read something that was worldly than something that was edifying for our soul. That's the way we are by nature.

But the Lord brings us to this marvelous banquet where new hearts are given to people, where cataracts spiritually are removed and people have been given new eyesight, and new hearts, and new legs, and new hands, and new wills, and new affections.

That's the kind of banquet the Lord is producing. That's the kind of banquet he's prepared in Jesus. That's why the gospel is here among us, telling us to look unto Jesus and be saved, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

[26 : 17] The blind, bring them in, he says. The word bring them in is in the imperative.

In other words, the servant is charged to do it. You go and bring them. Maybe you have to lift them in. Maybe you have to provide transport to get them in, but bring them in, that they may taste of my marvelous banquet.

And then the servant comes and he says, Master, what you have asked me to do is done, and yet there is room.

room. I think that's an amazing version. Yet there is room. Even the Lord Jesus Christ, today, maybe you have rejected him down through the years, I don't know.

Maybe you have turned your back upon him. Maybe you have refused to open your life to him. He says, well, there's room still at the banquet. forgiveness is still available.

[27 : 37] Eternal life is still a reality for those who believe. People can still taste and see that the Lord is good.

And that's why we meet at these services, because the banquet is laid forth before us. The word of God is full of good things to nourish the soul, to prompt us to action, to encourage us to turn away from sin.

And when the Holy Spirit accompanies that word, he enables us and persuades us to embrace Jesus Christ, who is freely offered in the gospel.

At one level, Jesus Christ himself is the banquet. He himself is the banquet. he himself says, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

What does that mean? Well, I believe it means this, that we are asked to embrace by faith the mediator, the God-man mediator, who came into this world to fulfil every aspect of God's holy law, and who did it in the room instead of his people, and if we receive him as he's freely offered in the gospel, he is the one who feeds us with spiritual food, and will continue to do so, not only in this world, but throughout eternity.

[29 : 27] It speaks in the book of Revelation of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, that's Jesus Christ glorified. He will feed them.

He will feed them. The marriage supper of the Lamb is still in the future for us. We have come to the banquet of the gospel here, received the blessings of the gospel here, but the eternal banquet is still waiting for us, and the promise is that the Lamb, that is Jesus, will lead us into living fountains of water, tears, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Can you imagine these poor and maimed and lame and blind people having been helped to come to this banquet? How relieved they would have been to have received all these good things.

They probably hadn't tasted of anything like that before. And that's true, spiritually speaking. you haven't tasted of anything as good and as glorious as a moment's fellowship by faith with Jesus Christ.

And for the people of God, the eternity is waiting for a full disclosure of that love and full experience of that peace of God that even passes understanding here.

[31 : 14] yet there is room. Don't be discouraged, but be encouraged that there is still room.

You come and take your place at the feet of Jesus. Come and take your place at the cross of Calvary and there say, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to your cross I claim.

Jesus paid it all. Jesus is it all. He is our life and he is the one today who speaks timelessly in this section of scripture to us.

He says, there is a banquet, come to it, there is still room, but don't leave it too late and don't make excuses like these people did, saying they had other things on their mind that they had to do.

Please, make Jesus number one, come to him, follow him every day. Amen. May God bless these thoughts to us.

[32 : 32] Let us pray. Help us, Lord, this day to bow before you as the giver of every good and perfect gift. And you have provided many gifts to us in the world.

Gift of life and health and strength and family and friends. All of these are wonderful gifts from you that give us to see that Jesus is the greatest of all the gifts.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Oh, make Jesus number one in our lives and our affections, we pray. bless this congregation, bless your servant who is going to preach this evening.

May the waters of heaven flood through the word of God for him and for all who are to be present here.

[33 : 46] May people be nourished, may souls be satisfied, and may God be glorified. forgive our many sins, we pray, Jesus' name, and for his sake, amen.

Amen. We bring your worship to our close, singing again from the Scottish Psalter and Psalm 23, the 23rd Psalm, on page 229 of the Blue Psalm book.

The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want, he makes me down to lie in pastures green, he leadeth me the quiet waters by, my soul he doth restore again, and me to walk doth make, within the paths of righteousness, even for his own name's sake.

Through to the end of the Psalm, goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me, and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

The whole of the Psalm to God's praise, the Lord's my shepherd. Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want, he makes me down to lie, in pasture me, he leadeth me, the quiet waters by, my soul he doth restore again, and me to walk doth make, within the paths of righteousness, in for his own name's sake.

[36 : 28] ye, though I walk in death I quail, yet will I fear not hell, for thou are with me young thy word, and stuff become or stale, my table thou hast burn shed, in presence of my foes, my head thou rest with oil anoint, and my cup cup overflows, goodness and mercy all my life, judge dearly follow me, but in the causes forever more, my dwelling place shall be.

now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all, now and forever more.

Amen.