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Plan To Be There

LUKE 14:15-24

Introduction

1. Most if not all of us have received an invitation to a special event at one time in our lives (i.e., birthday party, graduation, wedding, retirement celebration, special dinner, etc.)
 - a. Have you ever turned down an invitation because of a previous engagement?
 - b. Have you ever responded that you would attend but then for whatever reason, you failed to go?
2. In our reading today, Jesus tells us that there is one opportunity that awaits us which we each will do well if we plan to be there.

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3. It is our Lord's invitation to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:6-9) — that great banquet in the eternal home of the redeemed which God will host for His Son.
4. As we noted two weeks ago in our study of Luke 13:28-29, Jesus told of those who would come from the four points of the globe to "recline at the table in the kingdom of God" with people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets of old.
5. The setting for our lesson today is still "the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees" (Luke 14:1).
6. You may remember that it was a setup because they had invited a man afflicted with dropsy (edema) to see if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath.
7. Of course Jesus did heal him, and this set the stage for Jesus to confront the Pharisees about their own problem with pride, how they always sought out the

- seats of honor and how they only invited to their meals those who could repay them for their hospitality.
8. As you can imagine, by the time He was finished the tension in the room was so thick you could have cut it with a knife.
 9. This is where our Scripture reading picks up this morning:
 - a. One of the guests attempted to lighten the mood by changing the subject to the great banquet which God will host in His kingdom.
 - b. He said, “Blessed is everyone who eats bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15).
 - c. No doubt he assumed the Pharisees around him would certainly be among those so blessed.
 10. His remark was something which Jesus could not let pass.
 11. He knew that in their heart of hearts they did not have a true desire for God’s kingdom.
 12. So, He told them a parable about a “great banquet” (“big dinner”) which a wealthy man hosted in order to expose their true motivations and desires.
 13. As we work through this parable let’s remember the man who hosts this great banquet, who is also referred to as “the head of the household” represents God Himself.

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I. Invitation To The Great Banquet

A. INITIAL INVITATIONS ARE SENT OUT (vv. 16-17)

“But He said to him, “A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’” (Luke 14:16–17, NASB95)

1. Jesus tells the Pharisee and those gathered in his house of a man who gave a great supper at his house.
 - a. He invites many to come.

- b. It is to be a grand occasion with an extensive offering of fine food.
- 2. In Jesus' day, when a man planned such a feast, the day of the feast was announced long beforehand and the invitations were sent out and accepted.
 - a. Their accepting of the invitations would have been similar to our own "R.S.V.P" of today which means "Respond if you please."
 - b. These confirm our intended presence at the specific event.
- 3. The one thing that was different is that the hour of the event was not given, only the day.
 - a. When the day of the feast finally came, servants were sent out to summon those who had already been invited.
 - b. To accept the invitation before hand and then refuse it when the day arrived was a grave insult.
- 4. When Jesus speaks of "a great banquet" ("big dinner") He is presenting to us an image of the kingdom of Heaven that is exceeded by its reality.
 - a. We have all heard someone say of something they have experienced, "Words cannot begin to describe it," or "You just had to be there."
 - b. Paul said something similar in 1 Corinthians 2:9, when he said, "No eye has seen, no hear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (NIV84).
- 5. One important truth we must not miss concerning this banquet meal of which Jesus speaks is that it represents our present and future salvation with all its benefits.

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B. RESPONSES TO THE FINAL SUMMONS

- 1. When the meal is finally ready the master sent his servant out to tell all the guests who had indicated they planned to attend, "Come, for everything is now ready." (Luke 14:16b).
- 2. One at a time various guests who had been invited earlier now ask to be excused.

3. Their basic reasons for not coming are either financial or familial in nature.
4. In their minds, the excuses are valid, but in reality, they are lame, even insulting to the host, especially in light of the occasion and the fact they had already promised to come.

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5. The first excuse involved land:

“I have just bought a field, I must go and see it. Please excuse me.” (v. 18).

- a. Who would ever purchase land without first looking it over?
 - 1) Is it good land or just a rock?
 - 2) Is it suitable for the purpose I intend?
- b. He, at least, asked to be excused.
- c. He framed his excuse as a matter of duty, “I must go and see it.”

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6. The second excuse involved livestock:

- a. This man was less courteous, “I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.” (v. 19).
- b. No one would buy one ox, much less ten oxen without knowing whether or not they can do the work.
 - 1) How old are they? Will they pull together?
 - 2) This is why people look at a horse’s teeth — to tell how old it is and the condition of its health.

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7. The final excuse focused on marriage:

- a. His excuse was very blunt — “I just got married, so I can’t come” (v. 20).
- b. Old Testament law exempted a newly married man from military duties (Deuteronomy 24:5), but not from banquets.
- c. Did this man not know when he responded to the original invitation that he was to be married on or shortly before that date?

8. What is Jesus telling us about the kingdom of God through these various excuses?
9. It is that our possessions and affections are the basic reasons we give when it comes to our regrets concerning God's kingdom.
10. You and I are no different than the people of Jesus' day. We still choose such things over all that God offers today.
11. Jesus isn't saying that these things aren't important in our lives.
12. However, to prefer these things to the extent that we turn down the feast which our Lord offers is to put our souls in danger.
13. In our Lord's kingdom you and I are offered . . .
 - a. Peace, guidance, friendship, rest
 - b. Joy, tranquility, a life which knows no death, hope
 - c. Salvation
14. The real reason these three individuals offered their excuses was because they did not want to go to the banquet.
15. If they truly wanted to be there, they would have found a way around their excuses.
16. Today, the reason people turn down a seat at the banquet table of God is one of two things:
 - a. They do not truly understand all that God is offering.
 - b. They do not really want to be there.

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II. God Continues To Invite

A. THE POOR, THE CRIPPLED, THE BLIND AND THE LAME

"And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'" (Luke 14:21, NASB95)

1. Upon learning that a number of his invitees were not coming, “the head of the household became angry” (v. 21a).
2. He changed his plans and acted quickly because the meal was ready to be eaten.
3. He sent his servant out again, this time into the city’s streets and back alleys.
4. He tells him to invite “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.”
5. The servant searches the city to find those who are among the outcasts and afflicted.

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B. THE MASTER’S DESIRE IS THAT HIS HOUSE BE FULL

“And the slave said, ‘Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ “And the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.” (Luke 14:22–23, NASB95)

1. However, as Jesus tells the parable, even after all this effort, there is still room at the table.
2. The host is determined for his banquet room to be full.
3. His desire is that others be invited to share in the occasion.
4. So, he sends his servant out a third time.
5. This time he instructs him to go to the highways outside the city and to the hedges around those highways — areas where a traveler might stop during a journey.
6. He is to “compel them to come in” — His appeal isn’t so much to force people to come in as it is to urge them to attend.
 - a. He realizes they will not know him:
 - 1) What kind of person is he.
 - 2) Is this for real or is it some kind of trick.
 - b. They need encouragement to attend.

7. With all of this, Jesus seeks to convince us of God's generosity and His true desire that all might come to salvation.

Conclusion

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1. The last words of the host include a warning we must not miss because they are our Lord's words to us.

"I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet" (Luke 14:24).

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2. The words to a hymn by Charles Gabriel over a century ago extend to each of us our Lord's invitation to that great feast which awaits us.

**"All things are ready," come to the feast!
Come for the table now is spread;
Ye famishing, ye weary, come,
And thou shalt be richly fed.**

**Hear the invitation,
Come, whosoever will;
Praise God for full salvation
For whosoever will.**

3. You and I can accept or reject our Lord's invitation, but either way, the great banquet is coming.
4. It will not be rescheduled or postponed.
5. Are you looking forward to sitting at our Lord's table? Have you responded to His invitation?
6. If not, why not today?