



STORY TIME

Discovering the Parables of Jesus

Why is it important to study the Parables?

- One-third of the recorded sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels are in parables.
- If we do not understand the parables, we miss what may be known about the historical Jesus. One must understand parables to know Jesus.
- The parables are designed to portray a reality. In a world of metaphorical redescription, the reality behind the parable is dramatized in word-pictures. (Brad H. Young)
- The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they include many of the same stories, often in a similar sequence and in similar or sometimes identical wording. They stand in contrast to John, whose content is largely distinct. (Wikipedia)

Hebrew noun mashal מִשָּׁל

- Definition: a parable, proverb, riddle, anecdote, allegory
- It defines the unknown by using what is known.
- The mashal begins where the listener is, but then pushes beyond into a new realm of discovery.

Greek noun parabole παραβάλλω

Definition: a comparing, comparison of one thing with another, likeness, similitude, juxtaposition

39 Parables of Jesus

PARABLE/LESSON	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Wheat and tares	13:24-30		
Barren fig tree			13:6-9
Children in market	11:16-19		7:31-35
Budding Fig Tree	24:32-36	13:28-32	21:29-33
Lamp under basket	5:14-16	4:21-23	8:16-18
Dinner guests			14:15-24
Divided kingdom	12:24-30	3:22-27	11:14-23
Faithful servants			12:35-40
Feast invitations			14:12-14
Friend at midnight			11:5-13
Good Samaritan			10:25-37
Great physician	9:10-13	2:15-17	5:29-32
Groom's attendants	9:14-15	2:18-20	5:33-35
Growing seed		4:26-29	
Hidden treasure	13:44		
Humbled guest			14:7-11
King's war plans			14:31-32
Laborers in vineyard	20:1-16		
Leaven	13:33		13:20-21
Lost coin			15:8-10
Lost sheep			15:4-7

PARABLE/LESSON	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Marriage feast	22:1-14		
Mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
Net of fish	13:47-50		
New cloth	9:16	2:21	5:36
New wine	9:17	2:22	5:37-39
Pearl of great price	13:45-46		
Persistent widow			18:1-8
Sower	13:3-23		
Rich man			12:13-21
Talents	25:14-30		
Minas			19:11-27
Prodigal son			15:11-32
Steward and rich man			16:1-8
Ten virgins	25:1-12		
Great Supper			14:15-24
Two sons	21:28-31		
Merciless servant in debt with his master	18:23-35		
Wicked Vinedressers	21:33-46	12:1-11	12:35-48

Parables of the Banquets

Luke 14

It happened that when He [Jesus] went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath [after synagogue service] to eat bread [meal], they were watching Him closely. And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy [swelling]. And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” Luke 14:1-3

- The man who was afflicted with the ailment known as “dropsy” seems hardly to have been there by chance. The inference is clearly that this man was placed here, knowing that his ailment was obvious, and that Jesus’ compassion was so predictable, he would surely not be overlooked by Him.

But they kept silent. And He [Jesus] took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?” And they could make no reply to this. Luke 14:4-6

- Jesus graciously healed the man, but He would not leave him there to be humiliated. Jesus was about to show them their hypocrisy in terms of their own practice. Jesus did not want this man to be among those who were about to be rebuked, and so He sent him away. This is an act of mercy and grace, just as the healing had been.

- Christ's miracle of healing a man with dropsy was the last of SEVEN healings He performed on the Sabbath.
- This is the only case of dropsy found in the Gospels. The term the physician Luke uses to describe the man's condition is a strictly technical one. Dropsy was considered to be a symptom of an organic disease, usually one of the heart or kidneys.
- Sabbath dinners, famous for their festive entertainment, were an integral part of Jewish social life. The Pharisees were well known for their own careless approach to the Sabbath, often feasting and drinking excessively, but at the same time, they nitpicked how others kept it. They had no reservations about throwing a party on God's day, but to heal the sick on the Sabbath was, to them, unforgiveable (Mark 3:1-6).

Jesus' teaching is clear and pointed. He brings to the Pharisees' attention that, if their acts of love toward their animals in danger on the Sabbath are acceptable, why would acts of love for human beings on the Sabbath be any less acceptable? He had taught a similar lesson earlier in the synagogue (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-9). He compares the man with dropsy to an animal stuck in a cistern or pit (Luke 14:5) and the woman with a crooked spine to a bound animal (Luke 13:10-16). By healing the man with dropsy, Jesus proves that it is merciful to heal on the Sabbath day, and by His illustration, He exposes their lack of love and consistency.

And He [Jesus] began speaking a **parable** to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them, Luke 14:7

The behavior of the banquet guests in this parable seems to show that a “good” seat at the table didn’t just reflect social standing, but might actually create it. If you snagged a seat next to someone very important, you were guaranteed several hours of that person’s attention. You could sell yourself or your ideas without interruption, and you could be seen doing so by others. This behavior must have been particularly disappointing to Jesus in light of the miraculous healing that He performed right before the guest began their game of musical chairs.

Jesus said [in a parable], “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.”

Luke 14:8-9

- At any banquet or party, guests may think they are free to sit anywhere they want. But in reality, the host can rearrange people however HE wants. It's like the seating arrangement at school. Teachers can rearrange the seating charts any way they want, any time they want.
- If someone else earns the privilege of sitting in the special seat, the person who got it first might just find themselves sitting somewhere else entirely.
- It's that way with God, too. So often we think we're in control of our own lives. But our heavenly Father may have different plans for us than we have for ourselves.
- Proverbs 16:9 says, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."

- So far in this parable we have seen what Jesus says NOT to do. He says don't try to be the most important person, because if you do you might end up feeling ashamed and embarrassed and disappointed. And this doesn't just apply to parties, like the example in the parable. It applies to all parts of your life.
- Jesus said, "Do not take the place of honor because you may have to take the least important place." A time will come when you will be humbled.
- If we're not supposed to take the place of honor, then what ARE we supposed to do?

Jesus said, “But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 14:10-11

- Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of great men; for it is better that it be said to you, “Come up here,” than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.
Proverbs 25:6-7

Humility is a Challenge for Everyone

James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory.”
Mark 10:35-37

Questions for Us

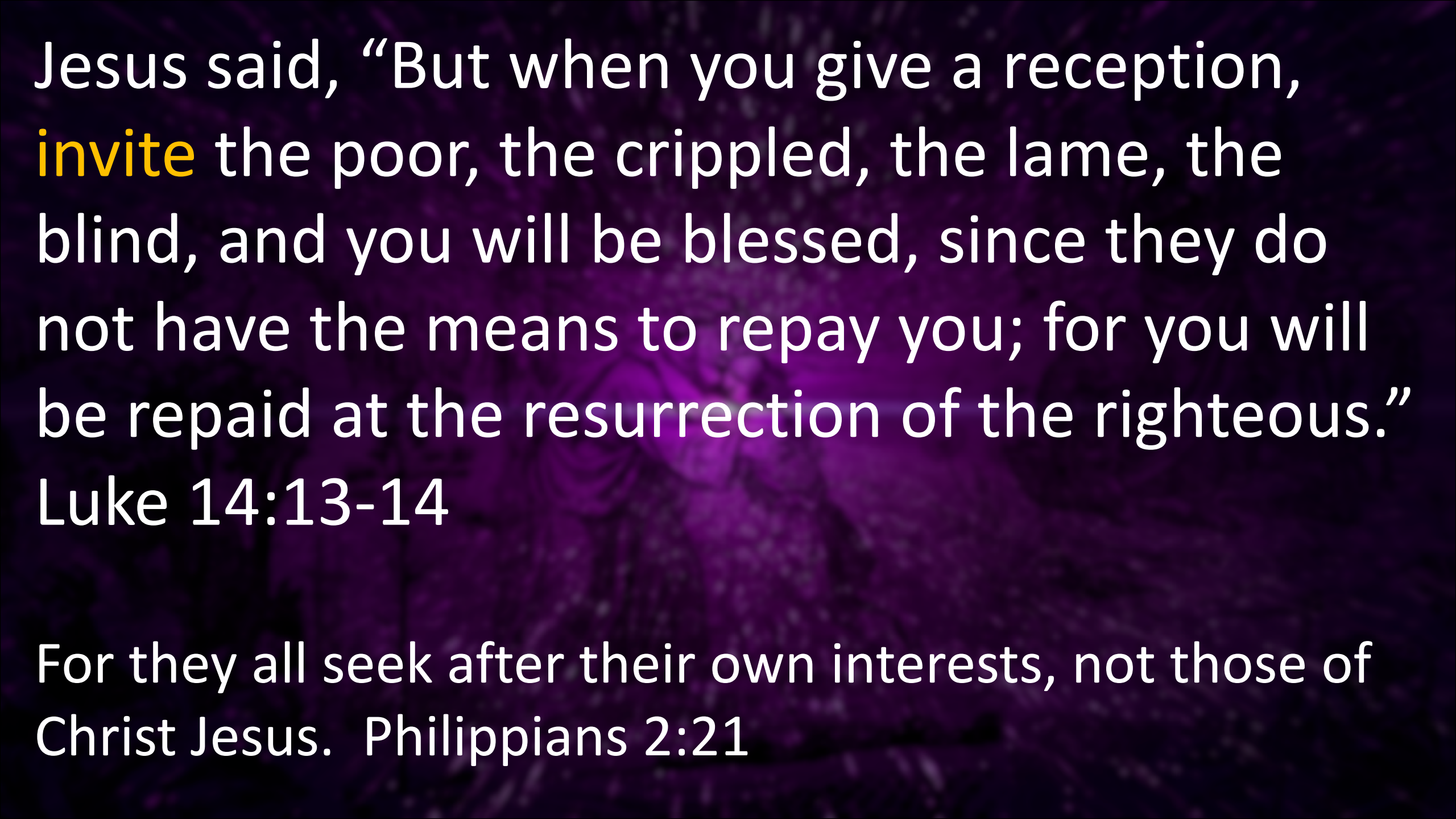
- How can we be humble people?
- How can we be a humble congregation?
- Why do we support our missions partners around the world?
- Why are we engaged in the Sprouts Project?
- Why do we invite friends to worship with us?
- Why do we tell others about the Savior?

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:3-8

And He [Jesus] also went on to say to the one who had invited Him [a leader of the Pharisees], “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment.” Luke 14:12

- When planning a banquet, the temptation is to invite those who are most likely to do us some good in return. Thus, one thinks first of inviting family members or rich friends, who will reciprocate in kind. We are tempted to give in order to get.

- Jesus says that when you try to make other people think you are important or better than them, then you will be humbled against your will. But if you humble yourself, then God will honor you!
- People who are humble don't think that they are better than others. In fact, they think just the opposite. They see others as being more important than they are. And they don't just think that, they act like others are more important, too.
- For though the Lord is exalted, yet He regards the lowly, hut the haughty He knows from afar. Psalm 138:6
- Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, but humility goes before honor. Proverbs 18:12
- Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Romans 12:16



Jesus said, “But when you give a reception, **invite** the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Luke 14:13-14

For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:21

- Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows **in their distress**, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James 1:27

- Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But **store up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” Luke 14:15

- The mention of the resurrection led one of the guests to comment on the happy situation of the people who would share in the heavenly banquet. In reply Jesus raised the question of what kind of people would be invited to be present. - New Bible Commentary

*Jesus, at a banquet, now tells another parable about a banquet.

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

*While it may seem strange in light of invitation practices in the twenty-first century, in the first century world the invitation was two-fold: (1) the initial invitation some time ahead, and (2) the actual summons to the meal when it is ready, and is attested both in Jewish and Roman settings.

“The setting in the culture of the Second Temple period is described with great authenticity in this colorful portrayal of village life. A banquet for so many required extensive preparation. Generous hospitality was prized highly. The best foods, finest wines, and carefully prepared meats would have been served. The home of the host would have been a bustle of activity. The servants would have already invited the guests, who would be waiting for the second call given when the dinner was ready. In essence they would have already accepted the invitation with an obligation to attend. Under normal circumstances the invited guests would wait eagerly for the festivities to begin... One would expect a troupe of musicians to be present at the feast... Anticipation would grow regarding the great banquet, a social occasion where many of the people could share their lives in one of the favorite communal activities of the culture. During the feast, the village people had the opportunity to interact with one another in a festive atmosphere.” – Brad H. Young

- It was the custom when giving a dinner, to invite a certain number of people. Those who accepted the invitation were then counted. The meal was prepared according to the number who accepted the invitation. The more people coming, the more food had to be prepared. For example, a chicken would be for 2-4 guests, a duck for 5-8, a lamb for 10-15, a sheep for 15-35, and a calf for 35-75. The amount and type of meat depends on the number of people who accept the invitation. Once an animal has been killed it must be eaten soon or else it will spoil. To back out at the last minute would be rude. The invited guest is duty-bound to attend the banquet.
- Also, it was considered very rude to attend a banquet if you were not invited; after all, the meal had not been prepared with you in mind.

“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.’ Another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’ Another one said, ‘I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’”

Luke 14:18-20

- Not to come to a banquet where one had previously indicated acceptance was a grave breach of social etiquette. It was an insult to the host. In a society where one's social standing was determined by peer approval -- who is invited to whose dinners -- this was an act of social insult as well. For a whole series of guests to reject the final summons appears to be a conspiracy to discredit the host.

- All the invitees now begin to make excuses. The Greek phrase used, *apo mias pantes*, means "from the first, all...." The rejection was unanimous. But the excuses are lame, and the three Jesus mentions are representative of the rest.
- The first has just bought a field and must inspect it. But surely no one buys a field sight unseen.
- The second has just bought five pairs of oxen and must try them out. But no one buys five pairs of oxen without testing them first. These two excuses are flimsy on the surface. Both indicate men of wealth. Purchasing property is a wealthy man's luxury. Five yoke of oxen are for an estate; one or two pairs of oxen would be adequate for a small farm.
- The third excuse, that the guest has just been married, also is lame. When he accepted the invitation he would have known of his wedding plans. That was the time to politely decline. But to back out at the last minute is an act of calculated rudeness.

- Ralph F. Wilson <https://www.jesuswalk.com/luke/064-banquet.htm>

- God invites sinners to His salvation banquet and receives a chorus of ridiculously transparent and insulting excuses. These excuses reflect not weak commitment but intentionally ignoring the invitation and despising the host, coupled with hypocritically refusing to say so forthrightly.

-Jewish New Testament Commentary

- In the middle East, no one buys a field without first examining it thoroughly. The springs, wells, stone walls, trees, paths, and anticipated rainfall are all well-known long before a discussion of the purchase is even begun. The excuse is a lie, an obvious one, and the guest is stating in no uncertain terms that the field is more important than his relationship with the host. In a community where interpersonal relationships are very important, this strikes even harder as an offense.
- Teams of oxen are sold in the Middle East in two ways. They are taken to the market place and a nearby field and there they plow the field. Anyone wishing to buy may then drive the oxen himself and examine the animals thoroughly to see if they work well as a team.
- The other way to buy the oxen is to announce that the team is for sale and say what day the team will be working in the field. Prospective buyers can then come to the field, watch, examine, and test them for themselves. Only after the team is examined thoroughly is a price discussed. This excuse, like the other one, is also an insult.
- In the tightly knit community of the Middle East, a wedding calls for a celebration. At a celebration is food, and lots of it. The community would have been aware of the wedding and many people would have been invited. Meals would have been prepared beforehand. Therefore, the banquet would not have been scheduled for the same day as a wedding. Also, if the man simply wants to be with his wife then why did he accept the invitation in the first place. This one doesn't even say, "Please."

“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.’ And the slave said, ‘Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’” Luke 14:21-22

- You can't blame the host for being angry when he hears of this rude affront and unanimous rejection by his social peers. So he tells his servant to do what would have been social suicide had he not have already been rejected -- invite the lower classes. But now it is an act that says, "I'll show them!" The host will *not* have an empty house at his feast. He will have guests! The list of guests to be invited is identical to the list Jesus had suggested to his Pharisee host in verse 13 -- those who could not repay him by inviting him in return -- the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.

- Ralph F. Wilson <https://www.jesuswalk.com/luke/064-banquet.htm>

- Some have already been saved. But there is room for more.

- Matt Slick <https://carm.org/parables/the-great-banquet-luke-1415-24/>

“And the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel [urge] them to come in, so that my house may be filled.’ Luke 14:23

- The first sweep of the town included "broad, main streets or public squares" (*platys*) and "narrow streets, lanes, alleys" (*rumē*). The second sweep was outside the town in the rural areas, the "road, highway" (*hodos*) and "fences, hedges" (*phragmos*). Inside the town would be the poor, the beggars, the indigent. But outside the town would be the vagabonds and sojourners, those who were shunned and unwelcome in the towns.
- Such people would have felt very uncomfortable at the feast of a rich man, socially very out of place. Additionally, it was a custom to politely refuse to come until pressed to. The Greek word used is *anankazō*, "compel, force," of inner and outer compulsion, and then weakened, "strongly urge/invite, urge upon, press." To encourage and strongly urge everyone they meet to accept this invitation.

“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 14:23

- The Greek word translated “compel” or “insistently persuade” is *anangkason*, which has a range of meanings from physically forcing to verbally convincing; throughout this spectrum of significations is a tone of intensity and urgency.
- In times past this verse was used to justify forcing people, especially Jews, to be baptized against their will. Nowhere in the Bible does God say or suggest that He wants people to be forced to accept His love and kindness. It is impossible to force people to repent or believe, for these things are matters of the heart. Thus “forced conversion” is a contradiction in terms, since true “conversion” means inwardly turning from sin to God through Yeshua. Attempting to force “conversion” is not obeying God; quite the contrary, the coercion and cruelty involved constitute gross disobedience. But “insistent persuasion” that respects the hearer’s dignity is commanded and can produce good results. - Jewish New Testament Commentary

“For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.’ ” Luke 14:24

- [About Jesus it was written...] He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:11-13
- This parable is a bittersweet reminder of rejection, but also of mercy. Those who reject the invitation -- for whatever reason -- will not taste of the Master's banquet. We bear good news, but with humility and sadness, realizing that contained within the very message are the seeds of judgment.

What Does the Parable Mean?

The host is God the Father, inviting His people Israel to the messianic banquet in the Kingdom of God. The rich and socially elite, who reject at the last minute the host's invitation, are the Pharisees who begin to plot against Jesus and eventually render the ultimate insult of having Jesus executed as a common criminal in coordination with the Romans. The poor and downtrodden are the common people, considered unclean by the Pharisees. Perhaps, those inside the town are the Jews, while those in the outlying areas are the Gentiles.

Why Are Excuses so Dangerous When it Comes to Salvation?

Jesus paid the price for a full hall of revelers at His banquet. He wants us, His children, to take advantage of His enormous sacrifice and generosity. Jesus is the ultimate host, welcoming us to a party and hoping and praying we will attend.

- <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/how-the-parable-of-the-banquet-teaches-us.html>

This parable teaches that no one may enter the kingdom of God without an invitation from God. An invitation by grace. It also is a warning to heed the invitation when it is heard; the invitation does not last forever.

- Matt Slick <https://carm.org/parables/the-great-banquet-luke-1415-24/>

The Banquet of King Jesus

Jesus said, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

- You have been invited to the banquet of King Jesus.
- Will you accept His invitation?
- Will you humbly invite others?