

Dear congregation, we have here before us one of the most remarkable parables that the Lord Jesus ever told. When the Lord first spoke it, he spoke it to a crowd that perhaps was very offended by them.

The Lord had just spoken about how when you have a feast, don't just invite your friends or other people who are prominent in society, but invite the poor, the needy. And don't take the highest place when you go somewhere. It's far better for someone to say to you, "Friend, come up higher," than for someone to say, "You know, listen, take your proper place."

And as he is giving this teaching, all of a sudden there's a voice of someone who says, "You know, blessed is the man that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." It's almost as if this man wants to change the topic. It's too uncomfortable to talk about feasts and who you invite and don't invite and the place that you should take. And so he wants to turn his mind and everyone else's mind on the kingdom of God. Truly blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Now what this man says is not wrong, it's actually very true. You're blessed if you may eat and drink in the kingdom of God from the table of the Lord, the gospel table. But the way in which this man says it provokes a response from the Lord Jesus in this parable that shows that this man's heart is not right and not good. He's not ready to deal with the profound realities of the kingdom of God of which he speaks.

And so the question immediately for all of us here this morning is, it's not what you say that ultimately matters. It's how things are in your heart. And from out of the heart, issuing into everyday life, what you do with that, that's truly what matters.

And so the Lord speaks this parable, which shines light on all of our hearts here this morning, as we hope to see with the Lord's help from this wonderful parable in Luke chapter 14, 15 through 24. And I'll read it this time only Verse 22 and 23, and the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled.

Our theme is go ye into the highways

We'll see here three thoughts:

1. The open heart of the master.
2. The hard heart of the excusers.
3. The broken heart that God loves.

The open heart of the master

Well, congregation, a certain man made a great supper. Before we look at the heart of the excusers and the heart that God loves, we have to see someone else's heart. And thanks be to God, we have that privilege of looking through this parable straight into the heart of God. How? Well, our parable says:

A certain man made a great supper.

It's speaking here about God, the triune God. In this parable, which is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, we see this man who has it in his mind, who has it in his heart to make the greatest of feasts and suppers. And it's not great just because of the many people that will end up coming to this supper, but no, the supper is great in terms of all the food and all the supplies. It's a great feast, a great supper.

I said already there's no doubt but that this is a picture of the Lord, who in various places of the scriptures is said to make a feast. For example, in Isaiah 25 or six:

In this mountain, shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, a feast full things, a feast full of marrow, of wines of lees well refined.

And what is the Bible talking about when it says that the Lord makes a feast? Well, it's speaking about the gospel. The gospel, which proclaims the grace and mercy of a triune God for undeserving sinners like you and me.

Is there anything in all the world like the gospel? The good news of complete and abundant provision of salvation for the deepest needs of men, women, boys, and girls. When you think about it, there's nothing like it. Man by nature has nothing, nothing to feed on. He's hungry, he's alone, he's without hope in this world, without provision of any kind, at least as it concerns the spiritual needs of his never-dying soul. And he would live out his days and he would end in utter misery if it were not that God has prepared a feast, a great feast.

Friends, have you ever heard that call of the gospel? I know you've heard it, but have you answered it?

Ho, everyone that thirsts, come ye to the waters. And he who has no money, come, buy and eat. Eat wine and milk without money and without price.

The Lord has to call people to this feast that he has prepared, which was in his heart from the never begun eternity, a great supper.

Let's stop for a moment and just think about this. Many people have this idea of religion that it really calls you to a life of drudgery or deprivation, dullness, dryness, deadness. That's how the world looks at it. And sometimes, congregation, we give that impression, that that's what the Christian life is like. And that's why we need to be brought time and again to the reality that The Lord has made a great supper in which he has provided everything necessary for soul and for body, for time and for eternity in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It isn't just every time the table is spread and communion is served that we have a visible representation of all that the Lord has done for sinners like you and me. In every sermon, the Lord, as it were, spreads a table and he says to sinners far and wide, come, for all things are ready in the gospel. There is yet room. There is everything to fill the need of your heart now and forever.

Isn't that amazing? People can come right off the street, they can walk in the doors of the church, and they can hear of everlasting life, of that which satisfies our soul's deepest yearnings. spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Paul says in Ephesians 1, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And he starts to list them all, forgiveness of sins, and a peace that endures, adoption into the family of God, no longer a stranger, life evermore, strength for the journey, hope in this life and for the life to come, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for them that believe.

Isn't this wonderful, majestic? Have you tasted it? Do you know this? Have you come to the Lord Jesus and drank so as to be satisfied?

Come, everyone that thirsts, come ye to the waters. Come, and inside you there'll be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

Well, don't you agree he is a great master with a great supper? And he has a great call, a call which you could never do anything to deserve. You could do nothing ever to repay this great master with this great supper.

You see this morning, do you see into the heart of God? What a feast. And at what a cost. Not to you. You didn't pay a penny, child of God, for that feast. It's bought at the price of the precious blood of the Lord's own dear Son. He paid for it all. As sinners like you and like me, and sinners all over, can come and eat and be satisfied.

Don't you agree, congregation, that to hear of the heart of God before we ever touch the heart of man is just an overwhelming flood of mercy and grace? In a certain sense, child of God, this is enough. This is enough to put your needy heart in and to drink and be satisfied that God, for reasons that you will never understand, that God would show mercy to someone like you. And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ came to show and to preach and to display and even to merit in His death on the cross.

The hard heart of the excusers

Well, this brings us now secondly to the hard heart of the excusers. We come now to verse 17 where we read that this master sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come for all things are ready.

Now, children, maybe you think that this is a bit strange. Let me explain this to you. Especially in the Middle East in Bible times, and it's still true today in Africa, in the Middle East, and in other parts of our world, they would have a first invitation that would go out and say, there's going to be a great supper, and you are invited. Come, plan on it. And because life is a bit different in the Middle East and time doesn't run exactly like it does here, at least in the sense of how people think about it, they don't know if it will take two weeks or four weeks to put something together, so they'll just say to you, you know, there's gonna be this feast in a couple weeks, we'll let you know, but prepare for it, you're invited, and we'll send another messenger, and then be sure you come.

And so all these people have heard, and all these people who were invited, they presumably, at some level, they had said that they were going to plan to come. But now that it is all ready, and the servant goes out at the time of the supper to call them to partake of the supper, something dreadful happens. It is summarized in our text like this, and they all, with one consent, began to make excuse. Verse 18.

They tell the servant something that makes clear that they're not coming, and they give an excuse. And notice how the Bible says that. They all with one consent began to make excuse. That means they're not saying the real reason, they're making an excuse for why they're not coming. But the real reason is underneath that.

Well, what are some of these excuses? Well, there's three of them that are listed here. The first one says, I've just bought a parcel of ground and I really need to get a good look at it so I can't come.

Now, each of these excuses, by the way, they're a window into a certain kind of person. So look with me through this window and perhaps you'll see yourself on the other side. Who is this person? Well, in this particular instance, this man, he's taken up with possessions. He has money, and he's expended this money. He's bought a piece of ground. Not a wrong thing to do. It's often a good thing to do if that's something that you can do. But he's taken up with his possessions. They've caught his fancy. They hold his attention. They hold his interest. And next to that, the gospel just fades away in terms of relevance, excitement, eagerness.

I've bought a piece of property. You can just see this man coming home and he tells his wife, he tells his children, he tells his friends, you know, I have this most beautiful piece of property. I'd looked at it for a long time. I didn't think that I could afford it or I thought someone else would beat me in getting it, but I have it. Oh, it's so beautiful. It's just, it's perfectly situated, you could do so many things with it. I'm already thinking and strategizing of all the things that I can do with this piece of property. Come, come, let's go, I wanna show you.

Do you see this heart that's preoccupied with stuff, with things, with goods, with land? And what a temptation Money can be to the natural heart. Now, you don't need a lot of money to fall into this camp and to have this excuse. Sometimes people who have very little money, their hearts are still taken up with these possessions. They're preoccupied perhaps with what they don't have and wish they had. Or they live vicariously through others and they read or they watch things that just magnify stuff. Possessions, property, houses, beautiful things.

Now again, there's nothing wrong per se with property and houses and all those things, but if they have your heart, and if when the gospel is preached, your mind, instead of going to the gospel, it goes to stuff, what does it tell you? There are idols in your heart. The room that there should be for God, for Christ, for the gospel, is instead filled with stuff, with things that ultimately can never satisfy.

What a fool this man is. He doesn't give any regard to his never-dying soul that this property can never satisfy. Job says, naked came I into this world, naked shall I return to the dust. This man can't take his property or any of his possessions with him. And the gospel, the gospel which could give him not only eternal life, but already here in this life it could give him fulfillment and purpose and significance and a God and a Christ. He ignores it all and instead is preoccupied with stuff.

Let's go to the second man. Somewhat similar and yet a bit different. This is his excuse: I bought five yoke of oxen. And it just so happens that I am on my way to break them in. I don't want to change my plans and my priorities. This is the thing that demands my attention right now. And so I can't, I'm sorry. I really regret it, but I can't come to the feast right now.

Now this man also has quite a bit of money. You don't just simply go out and buy 10 oxen, five yoke of oxen. But his focus is not on the possession as much as on working, doing. You know, I've just hooked up these ten oxen, five yoke of oxen, and I'm about to do this. He's a man who has a plan. He's a man of action. He's going to do this, he's going to do that. He sees it right there in front of him, and he can't be bothered. He can't have anything interrupt his plans and his priority. He's what we call the preoccupied man. And you can be a preoccupied woman as well. Working, doing, busy. Occupied with all sorts of things. Even legitimate things.

There's nothing wrong with working, even hard work. It's good that this man uses his talents, you could say, and he works with them. The Bible nowhere condones laziness or anything of that sort. But this man is rejecting the gospel, despising the gospel in favor of what he has planned and what he is preoccupied with and what he can do, do.

And then there's a third one. I've just married a wife. And I'm sorry, this banquet can't interfere with that. Now, why wouldn't he take his wife to the banquet? It makes no sense. It is an excuse. It's a cover for the real reason that he doesn't want to go.

But in this third category, as we look into this third window into human hearts, we not only have the man who's preoccupied with stuff, with things, we not only have the man who's preoccupied with his priorities and his plans and his work, but we have here thirdly, a person who's preoccupied with relationships with other people. In this particular instance, a wife. He's just married a wife. But you could expand this. There are some people who are unmarried, but they're still obsessed with people. With your girlfriend, or your boyfriend, or your friends, or your friend group, or whatever it is.

You see, Jesus isn't just giving here just three types of persons, but he's giving a window into the kinds of obsessions and preoccupations that we have and by which we miss out and lose the kingdom. You know, there are many people who are preoccupied with how other people view them, or what they can do to get more friends, or to keep their friends, or to keep their relationships, or grow their relationships.

And again, there's nothing wrong with that, certainly not with marriage. In a biblical way, there's certainly nothing wrong with that. But even earthly friends and earthly pleasures and things like that, they are not in and of themselves wrong. But if you choose them instead of the gospel, in place of God and Christ and eternal life, then the Lord Jesus puts one word to all of those things. E-X-C-U-S-E, excuse, excuse. In other words, you're covering up the real reason why you're rejecting the gospel and you're rejecting me.

Well, what is that real reason? The real reason is they don't want to go to the supper. They don't truly, really want to go to the supper. Sure, they have different things that they cite and quote in order to avoid going to the supper, but it's an excuse.

There is a profound lesson here for each and every one of us, myself included, elders, deacons, older ones, younger ones. It doesn't matter. We have here a diagnosis of the human heart. And there's one thing we need to see very, carefully. None of these people were in and of themselves doing something wrong, sinful. J.C. Ryle says it like this, some go to hell because they lived in debauchery, immorality and things like that. But many more go to hell because of legitimate things. There's nothing wrong with possessions, nothing wrong with work, even hard work. There's nothing wrong with marriage and with family responsibilities. These are all legitimate things.

But what a terrifying thought it is that many people go lost. Not because they love illegitimate things like murder, adultery, and theft, but because they love legitimate things wrongly. You see, congregation, it's a matter of the heart. The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. And how dangerous it is to be in church to hear the gospel, nod your head at some level, agree in general to the idea that a banquet is wonderful, it's nice, sometime, somewhere. It's nice that I'm getting this invitation. You know, many other people are not, and I'm getting that. Wow, wonderful. And yet in your mind to go back to your land, and to go back to your oxen, and to go back to your marriage, and go back to all the legitimate things, and when the rubber meets the road, with one consent, to make excuse.

Congregation, I don't know if you've seen your heart yet, but if we are honest, I think our heart has just been opened up before us, the preoccupied heart, preoccupied with possessions, preoccupied with priorities, preoccupied with people, and that while the gospel of free and sovereign grace is spread. And you've not only had one invitation, but you've had a servant come knocking on your door, saying, come, you, come. Everything's ready. No need to bring anything. No need to do anything. Just come.

This great master has made it all. And it's all ready. Come, come. And your heart, your heart, it says, nice idea, but what about this? What about that? What about that? And in the end of the day, you're not partaking of the gospel.

Well, friends, as we close this second point, I'm here today on behalf of my master. What shall I tell my master? What should I go back and tell him? Are you coming? Like now? Or do I tell him you have land, you have people, you have work, you have priorities? You know, what if I met you there at the door as we exited and I took down your names and and what's your response? What would it be like? Honestly, truly. Not just what you say, but truly, really honestly, what's in your heart?

Is it the gospel free and sovereign grace that fills you with such awe and love and adoration? Oh, sure, you love your work, and you love your family, and you love what God has given you, but in the way scale of life, there's God, and there's Christ, and there's the gospel, and that has the priority. And all these things, if God gives them, sure, from out of what He gives me, I'll seek His honor and His glory.

Or if really our hearts could speak, what would they say? Would they say, not yet, not now, not me. Too much to do. I told you this is really the sin of every age. But I want to speak to you young people a minute. Young people, you're early in life, but God wants you in his service. He wants you. He wants your heart. He says it in his words, seek your creator in the days of your youth. Don't just seek him, but find him and live for him.

And today, he's calling you. He is, as it were, going from pew to pew and from heart to heart, and he's saying, what will it be? Everything's ready. My son has come into this world. He's blood, he's died. He's accomplished a full salvation. What will it be?

And Satan's right there. You know, some people think that Satan doesn't go to church, but he goes to church. Believe you me. He comes to preoccupy you, he comes to distract you, he comes to think about your work tomorrow and what all you need to do and maybe not oxen but you have these plans, you have these priorities, and Satan's right there dangling all those things and he doesn't even really need to do it because your heart does the same thing.

And there it is, in the way scale of your heart, what has priority? Is it God? Is it Christ? Is it the gospel? It will show itself in your life, not just in your words, because remember, these people, their words had said, sure, I'll come. But what happens in your actions? What happens in a moment when we leave church and you talk with your friends and you go home and life unfolds itself? Is it Christ above all that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection? Being conformed to the image of Christ the Son.

And when the rubber meets the road and God comes with His will for your life, and God impacts your life, and things have to change in your life, and you don't only just have to mortify sin, which the Lord calls you to do, but also even legitimate things have to all come under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ, what do you do then?

Is religion just something for Sunday, for church, for those certain times in your life, and for the rest, it has nothing to do with what you do? It can't be that way. God is shining a searchlight on each and every one of our hearts today.

What is it? The people of God. If you're honest, together with me, you'll say, you know, I see myself right here. When I look out over this past week, it's been legitimate things, maybe even illegitimate things, but it's been legitimate things that have captured my attention and drawn me away from that focus on the Lord and on Christ and the gospel.

I need something. I need someone. Oh God, give me a clean heart. Give me a new heart. Renew my heart constantly. I don't want this. I don't like this. I want the Great Supper. I want God as my refuge and my strength, my ever-present help in time of trouble. I want Christ to know Him, to live for Him. But there's just so much in my heart that's wrong, that's disordered, that's going the wrong way. That's preoccupied. It happens just like that. Oh, God, help me. God, save me. God, heal me. God, deliver me.

Song 415 v 3,4

The broken heart that God loves

Well, congregation, we have seen the hard heart of the excusers, but we come now thirdly and lastly, to the broken heart that God loves. As this servant comes back, he gives a report to his master and he says, you know, There were so many excusers. This house, this supper, there's still lots of room. So much room.

What does the master say? Well, he's angry. Notice that. That's not my word. It's the word in our text. None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. The master of the house being angry. Just a word to you who reject this call of the gospel here today. It's not my anger that you will meet. That would be nothing. The Bible says it like this, kiss the son lest he be angry. And you perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a moment.

You know, God is a God of love, never forget it. But it is a jealous love that when spurned, when rejected, it is a holy love which cannot countenance rejection.

Well, friends, hell is a place where that anger of the Lord burns. And it will, reverently speaking, it will be hottest for those who have heard the gospel, but rejected it. You know, on our way to church, we can see so many people that don't observe the Lord's day, that don't see the inside of a church. And sadly, many of them are perishing. And they too will open their eyes in hell. They need the gospel. We'll come to that in a moment.

But the worst places in hell are for those who heard the invitation, the entreaties, who had the supper pictured, displayed before their very eyes. They had forgiveness of sin, as it were, held out before their very eyes. Peace with God, pardon, eternal life. And they nodded their head, and they could even describe it. They could even tell other people about it. But in the end of the day, they turned away from it.

Oh friends, while he offers peace and pardon, let us hear his voice today.

Today. Lest if we our hearts should harden, we would perish in the way.

But thanks be to God, his house will not be empty. It will not even be half empty. Because as we read in our text, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in hither the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind. For the Lord's house must be full and he will do all to fill it.

And so these servants go out, they literally go into the streets and the lanes of the city, and there's a poor person. He doesn't have what it takes to make it in life. But these servants stop and say, you know, there's a banquet, and my master has given orders, come.

“But I'm so poor, I don't have, I look at my clothes, you can see, people pass me by all the time.”

No, he said distinctly, call the poor.

There's a man, he's sitting, he's maimed. Maybe from birth or maybe just through the trouble of life, he's broken, he's maimed. Missing an arm, missing a leg. Can't do what other people do. There he is. Many pass him by. Life, in a certain sense, seems to pass him by, but the servant of God doesn't pass him by.

There he sits. Says, you know, I have a master. That master has said, go into the streets, find the poor, find the maimed. He has a banquet, a supper. You don't have to bring anything. All you have to do is come, for everything is ready.

And then there's the halt. What does the Bible mean when it says the halt? Well, that's people who don't walk very well. Kind of like Jacob, who was touched in the hollow of his thigh, and we read that he halted, he limped.

You know, there are people like that in church too. Maybe you don't even see it, but they can't do life so well. They struggle through life, through every day, in their mind, their emotions, and their body sometimes doesn't cooperate, they're halt, through whatever circumstances, but the Lord knows you, and the servant of the Lord comes right up to you and says, you know, you too, bruised and broken, halting through life, never ahead of people, always at the end of the pack, my master says, come and welcome to the banquet of grace, because it's grace, not deserved, you've not deserved it, It's all His grace and love.

And there's a blind man. He needs others to show him the way. And there he is, and he's lost, and there's darkness all around him. And the servant of the Lord stops at him, and he can't even see him, but he can hear him.

And the servant says, you know, there's a banquet, and you're invited, come.

“But how do I get there?”

“Well, there's the poor, there's the lame, there's the maim, there's the halt, there's the blind. I'll show you the way. The Lord will make every provision.”

Remember, it's all His work. And the Lord says it in prophecies like Jeremiah 31 verse 8:

I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the coasts of the earth and with them the blind and the lame. And they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them.

You see, the Lord himself goes before them. The Lord even carries them. If that's what they need, he carries them. He carries the lambs in his arms. And those who can't make it, Mephibosheth, for example, he couldn't make it to David's table, but David made sure he got there.

You see, there is no excuse. Do you see that? Of all people, these blind, these maimed, these halt, they could make excuse, you know, nice banquet, but I can't get there. I really can't get there. So the Lord, He comes and He's everything.

Listen to what He says in other passages. In Zephaniah 3:

I will save her that halteth. and gather her that was driven out. And I will yet get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

And so these servants, they fill the house, but yet there is room. Does the master say, well, you've done your best, and I guess this is how it's going to have to be. There's yet one more layer. He says, go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Now the highways, those were the places where you had the wanderers, people who had left society, people who had, like the prodigal, they had gone to the far country, far away. You still see that, by the way, in the Middle East, if you're driving along the highways, you have all these beggars, all these people just, they have no homes, but there they are. Somehow they've landed up there, and life is passing them by.

Go into the highways, and the byways, into the hedges, go to those places where people have made a makeshift dwelling for themselves, under a bridge, we would say today, or some other encampment, just a temporary house. There's a man lying under a hedge. Talk to him. Crawl down yourself there and talk to him. Sure, there might be some prickly thorns along the way, but don't consider that there's a soul. There's a never-dying soul under some hedge somewhere. And there's still room in the banquet hall.

And there he is. And he doesn't want to come.

“No, I've lain here for years and no one's had mercy on me. It can't be for me. No way it can be for me.”

My master's words are ringing in my ears, compel them to come in. In other words, don't take no for an answer. Use every argument. Tell them everything that you've heard, everything that you've seen. Tell them there's a place there. There's room there. There's a place. Don't leave it empty. Don't reject it. Don't despise it. Compel them to come in.

Obviously, we can't force you into the kingdom. But whatever we can do, may the Lord enable us to do, not just we ministers of the gospel, elders, deacons, but every one of you. You know people that don't see the inside of a church. You know people that won't hear the call of the gospel today. Go and sit with them and compel them. Don't take their excuses, but answer their excusers from out of the word of God. And however it is that lies in you, compel them to come in.

Of course, looking to the Holy Spirit, who draws with cords of loving kindness, but he uses means, and he uses men, people that will not let others go. You know the kind of preaching. You know the opposite preaching, don't you? You know the preaching that just kind of leaves you to yourself. Take it or leave it, that's it. That's not the preaching we need.

That's not the preaching of the scriptures. You need that preaching that wrestles with souls, that looks people in the eye and says, why are you rejecting eternal salvation and the God who is worth everything? Also, your life, he's worth to be served by you. In Christ, His Son not sparing, He came to die for the likes of you. There's no reason in yourself why you should go lost. There's no reason in God why you should go lost. The gospel is so free. Come, for all things are ready.

Charles Spurgeon put it like this, he said, gospel ministers should be the kind that would lie in front of the door of hell as it were, to keep people from entering into those gates of no return and to beseech them and to beg them and to not let them go. Have you ever known a person who loved your soul more than you loved it yourself? That's a gospel preacher. That's a gospel man, a gospel woman. And that's what we need.

And that's what I'm here to do with God's help this morning. And to call for you also as a congregation. That God would raise up from your midst. That God would give you a spirit as well as a congregation. That you would compel sinners to come in, to not let them go, to not take no for an answer, but plead with men. While you have life, while you have health, while you still are here on the earth, there's every reason in God and in the gospel why you should come to the banquet, congregation, there is yet room, this morning. there's still room.

If the room was full, life would be over. Christ would appear with the clouds, but there is yet room. There's room for sinners. There's room for the poor, the broken, the needy, the maimed, the halt, the highways, the byways. You're lying under some hedge this morning. My friend, there's room for you. There's room. today, but don't make excuse. Are you sending me back to my master with excuse? No, please, no. He'll be angry to spurn such a great salvation.

Come, come friends, come, come. For all things are ready for Christ's sake. Amen.