

Lesson 16: What is your personal responsibility? Responding

THE GREAT SUPPER

Luke 14:15-24

THE WEDDING SUPPER

Matthew 22:1-14

Introduction:

What would you do if you received an invitation in an obviously expensive envelope, sealed with a gold seal, and embossed with the words, "The White House, Washington, DC?"

Upon opening the envelope you discover a formal invitation. Embossed in a rich script and under a gold embossed presidential seal is this request:

You are urgently requested to join with

President George Walker Bush

For a dinner banquet at the Beverly Hills Hotel

In Beverly Hills, California

At 8:00 PM, On Saturday, January 27, 2001

RSVP

What would you do? I think most people would go.

No matter whether the President was named Clinton or Bush, was a Democrat or a Republican, a bad man or a good man, your nemesis or your favorite person on earth, you would go. Why? Because the invitation came from The President of the United States.

I have seen only two Presidents in person. President John F. Kennedy came to the football stadium at Wheaton College when I was working in Wheaton, Illinois. I was not a great Kennedy fan, but I went to see him and still remember the excitement of the event. He was charismatic.

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When I was a child my dad took me down to State Street in Chicago to see President Dwight D. Eisenhower in a parade. Now Chicago is a Democratic stronghold and had a Democratic demagogue, Richard Daley, as mayor. He was the mayor who told his followers to "vote early and often." But, even in Chicago you had to fight to get a view of "Ike" the Republican President. That's just the way it is.

It is the excitement of the crowd, the respect for the high office, plus the pomp and circumstance of the event.

Even a dead king, King Tut, caused people to wait in line for hours just for a glimpse of his coffin.

It isn't likely that many people would throw away an executive or royal invitation. Today it is honor just to go to such an event, in fact there would probably be a great "black market" on tickets if there were available.

In Jesus' day the refusal of a royal invitation was even more serious. If one refused to attend, they could find themselves guilty of disrespect and that could bring prison or even death.

Today's parables are about this kind of situation. They are twin stories and their plots are basically the same with some minor differences:

The Great Supper Parable was told at the dinner at Simon, the Pharisee's house. That puts it together with last week's lesson when Jesus observed the guests vying for the best seats (Luke 14: 7-11).

He presented them with a parable teaching humility and ended that lesson by stating, *"For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."*

Just to make sure he didn't leave out anybody he followed that up with a message for his host,

Luke 14:12-14, *And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you."*

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"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."

You see, humility and selflessness extends even to the host.

The Wedding Supper Parable was told in the temple late in Jesus' ministry when he had just entered the city of Jerusalem as a proclaimed king, and cleansed the temple.

He confronted the chief priests and Pharisees with the parable of the vine growers who killed the owner's son and tried to steal the vineyard, explaining that they were losing the stewardship of God's Kingdom.

Matt. 21:45 and 46--*"And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. And when they sought to seize Him, they feared the multitudes, because they held Him to be a prophet."*

THE GREAT SUPPER PARABLE--Read Luke 14:15-24

The Invitation

The approach to public and private banquets was quite a bit different in the Middle East during the time of Jesus' ministry.

A general announcement of the event was sent.

Verse 16 *"A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;"*

It would include the date and place and request an RSVP but no specific time would be given. You were expected to clear your schedule and plan to attend the event.

On the day of the event servants were sent out with a message.

Verse 17 *"and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'"*

The party lasted all day.

The party was a "come as you can" time of finger food and fellowship, but the banquet was the highlight. Plenty of time was given so that all who were not yet there could come.

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One of the things I like about the teaching of the Kingdom and limited information on heaven assures us that there will be great meals in heaven. In fact, eternity starts with a banquet.

The Response

Verse 18 *"But they all alike (unanimously) began to make excuses."*

The Greek tense indicates that they all responded without a moment's hesitation or at once.

The just didn't want to come . . . they made a choice.

Jesus had just said to the assembled guests at Simon's house, *"Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"*

Who wouldn't want to have a meal at the table of the God? To eat and fellowship with the King of the Universe? The rich young ruler didn't. The Pharisees didn't. Often, we don't.

Excuse #1-- *'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'*

There is nothing in the text that shows this person to be a bad person. He is probably a good, decent, hardworking careful man.

This is a great excuse. What businessman can invest in land he hasn't seen and the seller is eager to sell, but the truth is, we do what we really want to do.

He said *I need to go* but he meant *I want to go*. The host is put into second place behind a piece of land.

WHEN BUSINESS SUBLIMATES THE CALL OF GOD, GOD GETS ANGRY.

Excuse #2-- *'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused'*

"I bought me a new John Deere tractor and I need to go for a test plow."

There's nothing wrong with testing new equipment. In fact, it's wise to do it while the warrantee's still good. My question is, couldn't he wait to test the oxen? He already bought them, so what's the hurry.

At least he said *I am going* instead of *I have to go*. But he was still putting the host in second place to an object,

WHEN POSSESSIONS STIFLE THE CALL OF GOD, GOD GETS ANGRY.

Excuse #3--'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'

Surly, this one makes more sense--after all it's their honey-moon. This is weak in the light of Orthodox Judaism.

Deut. 24:5--"*When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army, nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken.*

Paul discusses this concern in I Cor. 7:32-34--"*But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and {his interests} are divided.*

And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

It is a paradox that the beautiful thing that God gave us to bring such pleasure into our lives can keep us from Him.

In this case the host is put into second place behind a wife.

WHEN MARRIAGE OR FAMILY DEMANDS OVERPOWER THE CALL OF GOD, GOD GETS ANGRY.

The Reaction

Luke 14:21 "*And the slave came {back} and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household **became angry** . . ."*

He gets angry--Why?

If they were going to refuse they should have done so when the invitation first went out. In Middle Eastern culture refusing the second invitation was a grave insult.

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In fact, it could even mean war.

In the Matthew parable this is exactly what happened.

*Matt. 22:2-7--"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call **those who had been invited** to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are {all} butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.*

But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire."

The natural question that comes up here is, "Does God really get angry or even jealous?"

When it comes to committing the idolatry of allowing things, people, or circumstances to keep us from Him

His reaction is extreme:

*Ex. 20:5--"You shall not worship them or serve them; **for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,*

Deut. 4:24-- "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

There is an interesting passage in Hebrews regarding our handling of the great gift of God's son:

*Heb. 10:28-31--"Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on {the testimony of} two or three witnesses. **How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God**, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

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1. He moves to Plan B

Luke 14:21-24--" 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. " And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel {them} to come in, that my house may be filled. 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

The host fills his banquet with people who recognize their need and are thrilled to be included in the royal feast.

2. This reaction teaches us something

The immediate lesson of Jesus was a condemnation to the Jews who rejected Jesus and God's true kingdom and thus lost it to "the church. But there are lessons for today as well:

Lesson to the Comfortable: If the comfortable and self-righteous are to important and too busy to come, God will bring in the sinners, the poor, the acknowledged needy.

Remember Jesus' comment to His disciples when the rich young ruler left Him:

Matt. 19:24--"it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

And His reaction to the Pharisees in Luke 5:32--"*I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*"

Lesson to the Busy: Respond to God's invitation or it will be given to another. To refuse the call is to be left forever out (Luke) or eternally destroyed (Matthew).

But, how can a loving God consign a person to hell? The Bible makes it clear that man generally loves things above the grace of God. To refuse God's invitation of Jesus' as the substitute sacrifice for sin is to commit suicide. The sin of rebellion brings the wages of death.

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Lesson to the servants of the King: Go out and compel the people in need to come in to the Kingdom of God and enjoy the feast with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords forever.