

To the Sinners

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[0:00] Take your Bibles, would you?

And open them to the Gospel according to Luke. Luke chapter 14. Let me give a bit of an advertisement. Sometime in the next several weeks as we approach Christmas, get a little closer to Christmas, I'm going to start a series of sermons throughout this book, the book of Luke, the Gospel of Luke.

And we're going to take it from the very beginning. And I'm waiting to start with the beginning until we get closer to Christmas.

And for those of you who know what appears in the first few chapters of Luke, then you'll know why I don't want to start right now. But I am going to have us look at a particular text in Luke this morning and look at it from a particular angle because of a certain implication of the text.

And then later on when I start preaching through the book and we get to chapter 14, sometime before Jesus comes, then we'll look at this text again from a different angle.

[1:31] You're not going to remember this when we get there, possibly, but that's kind of where we're going. And for the next couple of weeks we're going to be doing some different things.

And I, by the way, will be gone on the 11th, be in Ukraine. You pray for me for that. Not while I'm there, not just while I'm there, but right now as I prepare to go.

I'm teaching on a subject I've never taught on before, that is in a classroom. And I've got a lot of preparation to do. You pray for me about that. We'll be doing some different things, looking at Luke in different places.

And then sometime before Christmas we'll start at the very first chapter. All right, Luke chapter 14, though, is where I want you now. And I'm going to read verse 1 and then I'm going to skip over to verse 15.

We'll kind of fill in the blanks a little bit as we go along. But verse 1, now it happened as he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that is they were having supper together, that they watched him closely.

[2:45] Now you won't pay close attention to that. They watched him closely. Then verse 15, And when one of those who sat at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Then he said to him, A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, Come, for all things are now ready.

But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a piece of ground and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.

Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused. Still another said, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.

[3:53] And the servant said, Master, it is done as you commanded and still there is room. Then the master said to the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled.

For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper. That is those invited who did not come. I think you would agree with me.

I hope you would. You should agree with me when I say that mankind's greatest need is eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Greatest need. The forgiveness of sin. The gift of eternal life. Man's greatest need is salvation in Christ. And it is to respond in the right way to respond to the gracious invitation of a gracious, loving God who says, Come.

For all things are now ready. This is man's greatest need. And yet there are so many today, and you know this to be the case, who after hearing the gospel invitation, have come up with all kinds of excuses.

[5 : 23] I guess I've heard many of them, maybe most of them, and you've heard some of them. To which the Bible responds, in effect, there is no time like the present to come to Christ.

That's how I want to apply this parable today. Though I would be quick to tell you that God's redemptive plan, as it is worked out through the Jews first, and then ultimately to the Gentiles, is the larger context of this parable.

And whenever we get to it, we'll discuss that. But this morning, I want you to notice that this parable has some very clear gospel implications.

A very clear gospel message that we need to get. And especially some who are here this morning. When it comes to this, to responding to the gracious invitation of Jesus to come, for all things are now ready.

[6 : 45] It is an invitation that suggests this, there is no time like the present to come to Christ. Now let me give you a little background to the text this morning, and this is where I'll kind of fill in some of the blanks, though we're not going to study all of that part that I skipped a moment ago in my reading.

But to kind of set this up, to kind of give the setting, the background, here is Jesus, the Lord Jesus, invited to the home of a very prominent Jew, a Pharisee.

And there are apparently other important Pharisees invited as well to this home. And the Bible says there in verse 1 that they watched Him closely.

Now, do you get that? Do you get what they're saying here, what the Bible is saying here? This is a staged event. Alright?

This is all set up. They didn't invite Jesus to the home for supper because they liked Him or loved Him or desired fellowship with Him, wanted to show kindness to Him.

[7 : 51] They invited Him to the home so that they could find something to discredit Him with. This was staged. This was a set up.

Now, Jesus knew that. But this is the context. This is what we need to understand about this. And so, we're told that it's the Sabbath.

And of course, it's always on the Sabbath when the Pharisees try to trip Jesus up. It's always in the context of the Sabbath. And they wanted to catch Him at something and they were at least initially not disappointed.

And so, it's the Sabbath. And after church, quote, church that morning, Jesus is invited by a Pharisee, invited by a Pharisee, to come to His house for dinner.

And things did not go well. Well, depends on how you look at it. The whole event, it seems, was filled with controversy.

[8 : 55] First of all, as soon as they arrived at the house, Jesus heals a man of, quote, dropsy. Today, I think we would call that edema, some form of edema, some swelling of the extremities, a fluid buildup.

And so, this man was suffering and Jesus heals him. And it's on the Sabbath. Alright. That's the first thing Jesus did. And then, Jesus turns to the Pharisees and rebukes them for their condemnation of the healing.

Because they were quick to jump on that. It's the Sabbath. You've broken the Sabbath laws by healing this man. And so, Jesus turns to them and rebukes them with a parable. Now, I didn't read the parable a moment ago.

But it is a parable about a donkey or an ox. Some translations have a son. But the best understanding of the original text is it's a parable about a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit on the Sabbath.

And so, He uses that parable to rebuke the Pharisees and, in effect, is saying to them, you have more compassion for your donkey than you do for this man who is ill. And so, a quick rebuke.

[10 : 07] And then, Jesus is on a roll here. His rebuke then is turned towards some of the dinner guests who have gathered there because He's noticed that the dinner guests, some of them, are

kind of, you know, jockeying for the best seats around the table.

It was a custom of the day. There were certain seats that were seats of honor. And some of those who had been invited to the house were striving to sit at the best seats around the table.

And so, Jesus tells a parable to rebuke them. And then He's not through. To add insult to injury, Jesus then turns to His dinner host because He has noticed that the dinner host, the host of the house, has invited the best people and He tells a parable or really rebukes Him for that.

Alright? And that's what we find in verse 12. Now, it's not my intent to get into those particular texts. Just understand how this is set up here. The Pharisees have kind of set this up, staged this, because they're looking for a way to rebuke Jesus and instead, Jesus rebukes them. And He's not making any friends here. I think it's safe to say. This is not increasing His popularity. Quite the opposite. And it really does seem that Jesus has faced off against nearly everyone in the room.

[11:40] Now, with that background in mind, I want us to see what happens next. To see what Jesus does next, says next, and learn, I think, some powerful truths about the urgency of salvation.

the urgency of responding to the gracious invitation of God to come. To come to Jesus.

And so I want us to see, first of all this morning, Satan in this, because Satan is here. And so I want us to see, first of all, the deception of Satan.

The deception of Satan. Again, now remember, almost everyone in the room has now been thoroughly offended. And we're not blaming Jesus for that.

He's not done something wicked here. This is all by design. But they have, because of the wickedness of their own hearts, they have been offended. And so just get the whole scene set in your minds.

[12:50] On one side of the room, we have the red-faced, teeth-gritting, snarling Pharisees. And on the other side of the room, we have the Lord Jesus.

The epitome of purity and innocence. So the two are there. And the Pharisees have set the whole thing up to trap Jesus and to back Him into some kind of a corner.

But instead, Jesus has turned the tables on them and put them to shame. And now they're mad.

They're mad. And so as I think you could imagine, it is a very uncomfortable kind of atmosphere.

I think, you know, the hostility in the atmosphere, I believe you could cut it with a knife. Very uncomfortable. And then, there is this fellow who speaks up.

And he, I think, is trying to diffuse the whole kind of uncomfortable atmosphere. kind of diffuse the hostility.

[13:55] And what does he say in verse 15? Look at it again. Now, when one of those who sat at the table with him heard these things, all the things that had been transpiring, he said to him, blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Now, what's this all about? Now, whether this guy was one of the Pharisees or whether he was just one of the guests there, just another Jew, we don't really know that.

But he is kind of, I think, one of these guys who doesn't like uncomfortable kind of situations. Like that.

And, you know, you've met people like that. Maybe there's some right here. Don't like that kind of tension, you know, among people. And so, you seek to find some way to diffuse it.

And we can imagine someone doing this today, you know, who just kind of, you know, to break the tension. Someone might say, well, God is so good. Isn't God good? You know, praise the Lord.

[15:00] You know, just kind of, you know, to diffuse everything. Make people feel better about it. But, what we need to understand is this, that what this man said revealed an error in his theology.

It's not real apparent in the English translation, but when you analyze what he said, it's very clear that there was an error in his theology.

What he said represented a deception of Satan that was common among the Jews. And still very common today among a lot of people in its various forms.

And it is universalism. Universalism. Now, to the Jews, to this man who spoke up, to him, to the Jews of the day, that universalism extended to all those who were born Jews.

That is, the idea that they're all saved. You know, they're all accepted by God. They don't need salvation because they're Jews. And so, it was a universalism that extended to his, quote, race.

[16:18] But to many today, it extends even beyond that ultimately to everyone. And so, universalism is the belief that God is the Father of all.

Ever heard anybody say that? That we're all God's children? That's universalism. That is, no matter who you are, that God's salvation extends to all of us.

We are all saved universally. And it doesn't matter whether you're a Christian or a Jew or a Buddhist or a Hindu or a Muslim or a Mormon.

doesn't really matter whatever you are, whatever your faith is, you're saved. Even if you have no faith at all to some.

Just by virtue of the fact that we're part of the human race. We're all saved. And by the way, and I think you'd be right to interject this at this point.

[17:34] There are many Christians who are going to be voting for Mitt Romney this November 6th. I'm not making an endorsement. That's just a reality. Many Christians will be voting for Mitt Romney.

And if you are, that's fine. I have no problem with that. I think you'd make a great president.

Speaking of tension, you can feel that right now, can't you?

May I say something to you? If you're voting for Mitt Romney, don't be deceived into thinking that Mormonism is just another brand of Christianity.

It's not. when you hear Romney speak of praying and praying to God and he speaks of God, I'm sorry, but he's not talking about the God of the Bible.

That may offend some of you. it shouldn't. Mormonism is not Christianity. When a Mormon speaks of Jesus, he's not speaking of the Jesus of the Bible, the one and only Jesus.

[19:03] And by the same token, if you're going to be voting for Barack Obama on November 6th, don't tell me you're voting for him because he is the Christian on the ticket.

Now, he professes to be a born-again believer and I can't judge his heart, but I can judge his actions. And by the way he leads, the things he says, decisions he has made, they're not Christian. The very platform of his party is not Christian. I'm sorry. I'm not making a recommendation to you. I'm just telling you the facts from a scriptural point of view. Any man that would have a campaign commercial that likens voting for the first time to losing your virginity is not approaching that from any Christian perspective.

And whether it's on the issue of homosexuality or abortion, so-called gay marriage marriage and so forth, that is not Christian, not biblical no matter how you want to interpret.

[20:45] So let's just, you know, let's just not think that Christianity is the issue. We're voting for a man because of his faith.

vote. Well, let me close that by saying this. Vote. Now, after chasing that little rabbit, it's probably going to get me in trouble.

Let's get back to what this man said. In today's plain English, we might translate what this guy said this way. Listen, everybody, let's just stop arguing theology.

Let's not argue theology. We're all going to the same place. And some are going a different way and this way and that way, but all roads lead to heaven and it doesn't really matter what you believe as long as you believe something and you're committed to it.

That sounds silly, doesn't it? Yet that's what many believe. And that's the philosophy or the theology of universal and it sounds wonderful. I'd love to be able to believe that.

[22:02] I really would. And we're all going to heaven. There is no hell, no judgment and you can just pick one of the many roads.

They all leave the same place. I'd love to believe that. It sounds wonderful. Sounds gracious.

Sounds tolerant. And that's what we want to be, right? tolerant.

It's one problem. It's not true. It's not true. It is a lie from Satan. And you know, Jesus does not let this guy off the hook, you notice.

Though it may not seem all that apparent. In response to what he said, the error of his theology, Jesus tells another parable. And I read the parable a moment ago. And I could just say in short, without reading the parable again, and we're going to dig a little bit more in depth into the parable eventually.

But what he said, this parable is saying to every man there that day and to us today, it says this, that only those who respond to my invitation will eat bread in the kingdom of God.

[23:19] That's what this parable is saying. Those who refuse it, Jesus is saying, and this is how he closes off the parable, really, those who refuse it, those who reject that invitation, will never eat of that supper.

Never. Where do people get the idea that salvation is universal? Where do they get that idea? They don't get it from the Bible.

people. In fact, the Word of God very plainly says when it comes to salvation, Jesus, for example, said in Matthew 7, 14, narrow is the way that leads to life and there are how many?

Few that find it. Few that enter that way. Very narrow. He also said in John 14, this famous, famous passage, he said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Literally, he's saying, I am the one and only way, one and only truth, one and only life. Apart from me, there's no going.

[24 : 32] Apart from me, there's no knowing. Apart from me, there is no living. He's been very deliberate, very restrictive.

There's no universalism in what he said. And just to cap that off, just to make sure there are no misunderstandings in what Jesus said, he goes on to say, no one comes to the Father but by me. The deception of Satan. I want you to notice the second thing here in the parable. Not only the deception of Satan, but the invitation of the Savior.

The invitation of a Savior. I know that we reformed theologians. Some would call Calvinists.

Don't like this word invitation. It's not my invitation, invitation, it's the Lord's invitation. And he said, it's so simple, he said in verse 17, come, for all things are now ready.

[25 : 52] That's an invitation. Come, for all things are now ready. The invitation of the Savior. Now think for a moment about this invitation.

First, the simplicity of it. I mean, it could hardly have been put more simply. Come. The simplicity of it.

That's it. He said, come, come. Now, repentance is implied in there because you can't come anywhere without leaving somewhere.

Alright. But that aside, he just simply says, come. Think of the many times in Scripture that we find this simple invitation.

It's all throughout the Bible. Let me give you a couple of examples. Remember that certain man by the name of Zacchaeus in Luke chapter 19? Everybody knows about Zacchaeus.

[26 : 52] Remember Zacchaeus? He was a hated man. Even though it's a beloved story among children, let's just get down to the brass tacks of it. Zacchaeus was hated. A hated Jew. A dishonest man.

A dishonest tax collector. A thief. And a liar. But Jesus extended a simple invitation to Zacchaeus after he had climbed up into that tree, you know, just so he could see.

And what did Jesus say to him? He extended an invitation to him. He said, come. Come.

Zacchaeus, come. There was the invitation. Come. And the Bible says, and he, that is Zacchaeus, made haste and came and received Jesus joyfully.

Praise the Lord. Simple invitation. Simple invitation. All Zacchaeus had to do was come. All Zacchaeus did was respond obediently to Jesus' command.

And it was in the form of a command. He obeyed to that command. And Jesus radically transformed his life. And Scripture is testimony to that.

[28 : 00] The simplicity of it. Here's another example. After the death and resurrection of Jesus in John chapter 21, the disciples were discouraged.

They were disillusioned. They were confused by it all. And so they decided to do a highly spiritual thing. They went fishing. Some of you would agree.

It's a very spiritual thing to go fishing. And maybe it can be. Just don't do it on Sunday, all right?

They went fishing. And you kind of know the story.

I'm not going to retell the story, but eventually from the fishing boat, they saw Jesus. He was there on the shore. And when they came to meet with Jesus, Jesus had prepared supper for them.

Remember? Baked fish and fresh bread. I can smell it. By the way, it seems pretty easy to figure out where he got the fish.

[29 : 08] Where did he get the bread? Where did he get the bread? Where did he get the bread? Yeah, I kind of think maybe he took some stones and turned them into bread.

Satan wanted him to do that before. He would not do that. But now he's free. He just take the stones and make it into bread. But that notwithstanding, Jesus said to them, Come and dine.

Simple invitation. Come and dine. The invitation is so clear, so simple. Come. The simplicity of it. Also, the availability of it. The availability of it. all things are now ready. All things are now ready.

You know, the customs of Jesus' day were quite strange, I think, compared to ours, certainly. In Jesus' day, an invitation was given after the table was set.

[30 : 15] The supper would be prepared, the table would be set, and then the invitation would be extended, would go out to the guests to come, because now all things are ready.

Now, that would be strange for us today, of course, but it is such a picture of salvation. When it comes to salvation, guess what?

Everything is now ready. Everything is now ready. God has set everything on the table for this feast, for salvation.

salvation. This is not potluck. God has set the table. And God has then therefore provided everything you need for salvation.

Everything. You see, man has death because of sin, but God has provided life through faith in His Son.

[31 : 16] Man has sin and condemnation as a result of it, but God has provided forgiveness through faith in His Son. Man has a filthy heart.

The Bible describes this way, deceitful and desperately wicked, but God has provided complete cleansing through the blood of His Son given at the cross.

Man has sorrow and guilt and fear because of sinfulness, but God has provided peace and hope and fullness of joy.

Man has guilt, guilt because of sin, but God has provided full acquittal. Man has weakness, but God has provided strength.

And on and on we could go. Everything is now ready. Everything you need is now ready. Come! Come!

[32 : 17] But you say, I need to do something first. I need to change something first. I need to take care of this thing first. I'm not ready to be saved right now, but now wait a minute.

Let me ask you something. In this invitation, are you expected to set the table for salvation? Are you expected to provide the meat for this supper?

Are you going to bring the dessert? No. No. The invitation has come.

And the implication of that is to come empty handed. In the words of that old hymn, nothing in my hand I bring, but simply to thy cross I cling.

the invitation. Listen. Listen to me. The absolute readiness of salvation is the reason why you should come.

[33 : 28] The grace of God. The invitation of the Savior. The simplicity of it. Come. The availability of it.

All things are now ready. And no reason why you should not come now. And then the urgency of it. Is there any urgency here in this invitation? Well, just ask those guys at the end of the parable who Jesus said would never eat at this supper.

Is there any urgency here? here? literally we could translate it this way.

Come now for all things are now ready. Come now. The word come, the verb is an imperative.

[34 : 27] This is a command. He's issuing a command. the gospel invitation is a command. Come and come now.

And that's further fortified by the next phrase, all things are now ready. They're now ready. May I lovingly remind, even warn some of you here this morning?

I don't know who you are. You know, but may I warn you? There is absolutely no guarantee whatsoever that this invitation will extend beyond this moment right now.

There's no guarantee of that. Now is all you really have.

Now. Isaiah 1.18 Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord.

[35 : 38] Though your sins be or like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be or are red like crimson, they shall be as wool, white, pure.

forever. 2 Corinthians 6.2 And we heard this a moment ago in our service. Behold, what?

Now. Now. Now is the accepted time. Behold, what? Now.

Now is the day of salvation. Hebrews 4.7 Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your heart. The invitation of the Savior. There are two more things I want us to see in this parable that cause us to focus in a little different direction and we'll see that next Sunday.

[36 : 54] But for now, what about this invitation? What about this gospel invitation to come?

Have you responded to it? If not, everything in me as a minister of the gospel pleads with you, come.

Come right now. Everything's ready. Jesus has done it all. There's nothing, there's nothing that remains to be done except to come.