

Luke Chapter 14 v 1 - 24

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[0 : 00] at that meeting with these verses from Psalm 34. I will extol the Lord at all times. His praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord.

Let the afflicted hear and rejoice. And this is the main verse that we thought about particularly.

Verse 3. Glorify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together.

And that verse is a wonderful verse of unity. A unity of purpose. And we talked about this briefly on the Thursday. A unity of purpose. Our purpose as a church together is to glorify God.

That's the one purpose. Above everything else. We do all sorts of things as you know. And we're involved in all sorts of ways. But our primary purpose as a church and together is to glorify God. And that means we have one practice. And that is that we do that together. And we don't do it on our own solely. We do it one with each other.

[0 : 59] One purpose. One practice. That's to glorify the Lord with me. And that's our gospel in one sense. That's our message to the world. That's what we're saying to the people of Whitby. Come and glorify God with us.

As we seek to glorify him for his wonderful salvation. And his son the Lord Jesus Christ. And our first hymn. It's going to come up on the screen behind me now. It reminds us that we are to worship God.

And the chorus goes to the praise of his glorious grace. Let's stand and sing. Oh the mercy of God. Let's pray together.

Let's draw near to this amazing and glorious God in prayer. Let us pray. Oh Lord we're here this morning because of your glory.

Because of your grace. Because of your mercy. Because of who you are. Lord it's only because of who you are that we can draw near to you.

[2 : 04] It's only because of who you are that we can know you. And praise you. And delight in you. And rejoice in you. It's only because you are the God who is full of grace.

The God who is full of goodness. The God who is full of love. The God who is full of mercy. The God who is full of justice and holiness and righteousness. Because you are the only God.

The living God. We come to you again this morning. We know oh Lord that it's because of who you are. And because of what you've done. Your actions and your deeds are the outflowing of your heart.

The out the overflowing of your very person and character. For oh Lord though we have sinned against you. And continue to fall short of your glory. Continue to go our own way and get things wrong.

And make a mess. We thank you that you are so full of grace. That you have not left us to our own devices. You have not abandoned us and given us up to our own sins.

[3 : 06] And selfishness and pride. But Lord you reached down to us. In your son the Lord Jesus Christ. And have saved us. You have washed us and cleansed us from our sins.

You have made us new creations by your Holy Spirit. You have given us a new purpose. A new meaning. A new reason. You have given us hope in a hopeless world.

We thank you again oh Lord. That for every single person. Whoever we are. Whatever we've done. Wherever we've been. There is for us oh Lord. Grace to be had.

In Jesus. We thank you oh Lord. That you have not withheld. Your wonderful love from us. You haven't Lord. Put a great door in the way. And said you can't come in.

But you've opened the door. Of your salvation. You've opened the door to all. Whoever will call on the name of the Lord. Will be saved. And Lord we ask. And pray oh Lord.

[4 : 02] That even this morning. That those of us here. Who never entered into the fullness of the life. And the joy of Jesus. That Lord we might enter in. That we might come to you.

And receive from you. That forgiveness that we need. That grace Lord. That overflows in Jesus your son. We thank you for those of us Lord. Who know this grace. Who experience this forgiveness daily.

Lord this Sunday. Is just another opportunity. For us to come together. To rejoice in. And to delight in. And to grow in that knowledge. Of your love and grace to us. And we pray that we might come. With hearts overflowing. With praise and thanksgiving. That we might come oh Lord. With that one purpose. And that one practice. That one way of living. That all that we do.

Not only as a church. But as individuals. That we might live for your glory. And your praise alone. That you would deliver us. From selfishness. And self-centeredness. And arrogance. And pride.

[4 : 57] That you would cause us again. To be those oh Lord. Whose desire and joy. Is found. In the glory of Jesus. We ask these things. In his name. Because we know that his name.

Is the name above every name. The name that. By which we must be saved. And we thank you by God's grace. We have been saved. Amen. Amen. We're going to turn together now.

In our Bibles. And to Luke. And chapter 14. Beginning a new chapter. In the gospel of Luke. Please would you turn there. It's page 1047.

If you have the. One of the red. Church Bibles. Page 1047. Luke chapter 14. Starting at verse 1. And we're going to read. Down to verse 24.

While you're finding that. Last time. That Joel gave a children's talk. And I preached. People said. How. How did he.

[5 : 56] Get exactly. What you were going to say. And I said. I don't know. I just told him the passage. I was going to preach on. And you'll find that. When I come to the sermon. It'll be. Focusing. Really.

On what. Joel said this morning. And all I did. Was say to him. This is a passage. I'm preaching on. So. It's either great minds think alike. Or it could be. God the Holy Spirit at work. Which I'd like to think it is.

So. We're going to read. From Luke 14. Beginning at verse 1. One Sabbath. When Jesus went to eat. In the house of a prominent Pharisee. He was being carefully watched.

There in front of him. Was a man. Suffering from abnormal swelling. Of his body. He asked the Pharisees. And experts in the law. Is it lawful to heal. On the Sabbath.

Or not. But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man. He healed him. And sent him. On his way. Then he asked him. Or asked them rather.

[6 : 52] If one of you has a child. Or an ox. That falls into a well. On the Sabbath day. Will you not immediately. Pull it out. And they had nothing. To say. When he noticed.

How the guests. Picked the places of honor. At the table. He told them this parable. When someone invites you. To a wedding feast. Do not take the place. Of honor. For a person. More distinguished. Than you. May have been invited. If so. The host are invited. Both of you. Will come and say to you. Give this person. Your seat. And then humiliated. You'll have to take. The least important place.

But when you are invited. Take the lowest place. So that when your host comes. He will say to you. Friend. Move up. To a better place. Then you'll be honored. In the presence. Of all the other guests. For all those. Who exalt themselves. Will be humbled. And those who humble themselves. Will be exalted. Then Jesus said to his host. When you give a luncheon.

[7 : 46] Or dinner. Do not invite your friends. Your brothers. Or sisters. Your relatives. Or your rich neighbors. If you do. They may invite you back. And so you'll be repaid.

When you give a banquet. Invite the poor. The crippled. The lame. The blind. And you'll be blessed. Although they cannot repay you. You will be repaid. At the resurrection. Of the righteous.

When one of those. At the table. With him. He heard this. He said to Jesus. Blessed is the one. Who will eat. At the feast. Of the kingdom of God. Jesus replied.

A certain man. Was preparing. A great banquet. And invited. Many guests. At the time. Of the banquet. He sent his servant. To tell those. Who had been invited. Come. For everything. Is now ready.

They all alike. Began to make excuses. The first said. I've just bought a field. I must go and see it. Please excuse me. Another said. I've just bought.

[8 : 40] Five yoke of oxen. And I'm on my way. To try them out. Please excuse me. Still another said. I've just got married. So I can't come. The servant came back.

And reported this. To his master. Then the owner. Of the house. Became angry. And ordered his servant. Go out quickly. Into the streets. And alleys. Of the town. And bring in the poor. The crippled. The blind.

And the lame. Sir. The servant said. What you ordered. Has been done. But there's still room. And the master told his servant. Go out to the roads. And country lanes. And compel them to come in. So that my house. Will be full. I tell you. Not one of those. Who were invited. Will get a taste. Of my banquet. So let's turn back then.

To Luke. And chapter 14. To this. Event. In the life of our Lord Jesus. Those verses that I read. Verses 1 to 24. Do you own.

[9 : 36] A hostess trolley. Did you ever own one. Back in the 70s and 80s. Yeah. Yeah. See. And then there's a lot of young people going. What on earth is a hostess trolley.

Hostess trolley. Is like a small. Metal. Sideboard. On coasters. Castors. Not coasters. Castors. And had. Usually it had sort of like.

Pretend wood effect. Plastic lining on the top. And you'd pull up. Pull aside. It would open up. Inside would be basically. Where you kept your food warm. And it was an essential.

To all dinner parties. In the 70s and 80s. I remember when my mum. Was able to buy one for herself. She was thrilled. You'd think she'd bought. A new house. Or a car. It was. It was fantastic. And so from that moment. Of course. We had dinner parties. At least once a month. At our house. And people would come in. So the idea is. People would come in. And then chat. And whatever. And have a little. Aperitif.

[10 : 32] Something to drink. And then. The food. Had already prepared. And cooked. And was warm. And the hostess. And you'd wheel the hostess trolley out. And every time. You know. Oh.

You've got a hostess trolley. It was the thing to have. In the 70s and 80s. For those dinner parties. And we had dinner parties. I was never invited. Of course.

I was far too young. In the 70s. And the 80s. We had to go to a dinner party. But. But we used to have these. Dinner parties. And everyone who hosted a dinner party.

Had to have a hostess trolley. Because it was. You'd have reached. The social. Position. You know. Like Mrs. Bouquet. I'm sure she must have had one. In the 70s and 80s.

You'd got a hostess trolley. Then you were. In. The in crowd. Well the whole of the reading. That we've got in. Chapter 14. Is a dinner party. There's no hostess trolley.

[11 : 26] Of course. Being mentioned here. But it's a dinner party. And it's held by someone important. We're told he's a prominent Pharisee. Possibly. The. The leader of the synagogue.

But somebody who had. Importance. Somebody who. The other Pharisees. Looked up to. Somebody who was considered to be. Religious. Good. Holy. All those sort of things.

And this wasn't the first dinner party. Jesus had been invited to. He was often invited to dinner parties. By the Pharisees. We looked at one in chapter 11. A little while ago.

And then. Back in chapter 7 of Luke. They seemed to be keen to invite him. Round. For meals. And you might think. Well that. That's nice. Isn't it? They obviously like Jesus.

You invite people around to your dinner party. That you like. They must like Jesus company. Want to hear him. But that wasn't the case at all. They did not like Jesus. They did not like what he said.

[12 : 22] And they did not like what he did. And so therefore. They would often seek to gang up on Jesus. Try to get him in a big crowd of Pharisees. So that they could trip him up. Get him to say something wrong.

Something that would prove to them. That he actually wasn't really the son of God. The Messiah.

But he was a false teacher. They got him round only because they wanted to. Hopefully. Catch him out.

And that's why we read here. In verse 1. He. That's Jesus. Was being carefully. Watched. It's obvious. That they were here.

Bringing Jesus. To this meal. To watch out. How can we get Jesus. To say something. To drop himself in it. How can we trip him up. How can we undo.

Jesus' popularity. Amongst the crowd. And so on. And that's the reason why also. There was a very unusual guest. At the party. In verse 2.

[13:17] There in front of him. Was a man suffering from abnormal swelling. To his body. Now no Pharisee. Would ever invite. Somebody who was seriously ill. Or disabled.

To their house. In fact. They would shun. People like that. Because they would consider. Those people. Were being punished by God. For their sin. And so they wouldn't want. Anything to do with him.

So this man being here. Is it's a setup. It. It's. It's an opportunity. For them. They hope. To get Jesus. To do something. Which they. Is wrong.

They bring him here. He's suffering from. What we know nowadays. As edema. This swelling. Of the. Of the limbs. Usually of the legs. But other parts of the body. With fluid. And.

It was. Painful. And debilitating. It. Could be. Because. He had a. A very real heart problem. It's a serious. Serious matter.

[14:12] And. They deliberately. Bring this man. Into Jesus. His company. Into his presence. To see if Jesus. Will. Heal him. Or not. And again. That wasn't because. They cared for this sick man.

It wasn't because. They said. Oh. Here's this poor guy. He's. You know. His whole body. Is blown up. With this fluid retention. Let's bring him to Jesus. To heal him. Because we care about this man. And we.

We hate to see him. In so much discomfort. It was none of that. There was no love. Or concern. Or care for this man. It wasn't even. That they wanted Jesus. To perform a miracle. So they could see. Yes.

Here he is. This must be the Messiah. The son of God. Because. God's word. It said in the old testament. That he would heal the sick. And. And. And. Diseases. And all those sort of things. It wasn't so they could.

Better believe in Jesus. And it wasn't because. They cared for this man. They only wanted to see. If Jesus would heal this man. On a Sabbath day. And for them.

[15:05] A Sabbath day. Was a day. That if you healed. Or did anything. It showed that you. Were not keeping God's law. They'd made rules. About the Sabbath day. They'd made rules. About how far you could walk.

They'd made rules. About every single thing. About on the Sabbath. And one thing. That you couldn't do. One of the things. That infuriated them. Was that Jesus healed people. On the Sabbath day. But.

Before Jesus does nothing. He puts them on the spot. He asks them a question. He knows what's in their mind. He knows what they're thinking. And so he says to them. Is it lawful. To heal them the Sabbath or not.

I'm putting myself. In your hands. In one sense. I'm giving you the opportunity. To tell me. Whether I should heal him. Or not. Now that put the Pharisees. In a very difficult position.

You see. If they said no. You shouldn't heal him. Then of course. They would say. They're cruel. How cruel. And heartless. How unloving. How unkind. But if they did say to Jesus.

[16:03] Yes. Go ahead and heal them. Well. They would then be. Going against their own rules. That they've set up. And insist upon. So they are stuck in the middle. And like so many cowards.

They would not say anything. Either for or against. So what does Jesus do? Well he heals the man. Doesn't he? In front of them. They aren't going to give him an answer.

Well he's going to do what he knows is the right thing to do. He heals this man immediately in front of them. And sends him on his way. So he asks them another question.

Now in one sense. You've seen me heal this man. On the Sabbath day. Let me ask you another question. If one of you as a child. Or an ox. Falls in a well on the Sabbath day. Won't you pull them out immediately?

Won't you help them? Won't you rescue them? And you notice again. The response. They had nothing to say. The same problem you see. They can't answer that question.

[17:00] Without either showing themselves to be hypocrites. Which they were. Or showing themselves to be merciless. Of course they would pull a child out the well. Of course if an animal fell into the well. They would get it out before it drowned.

Nobody would think otherwise. But they were stubborn. They were unwilling. To say what they knew to be right. To be true.

How could these men be so stubborn? How could these men be so unmoved? Here they'd seen a man. As I said. Whose body would have been disfigured. Because of the illness that he had.

Healed. So that immediately. Miraculously. This fluid build up in his body is gone. And they see him transformed. And changed. And the pain gone. And the joy. And the relief. That must have taken place in his life.

They are so blind. At this miracle of Jesus. That they still could not. Would not. Acknowledge that he is. The son of God. And that he was doing God's will.

[17:57] Well they're blinded aren't they? And they're blinded by pride. They're blinded by pride. See. They would not acknowledge.

Not only the rightness of what Jesus did. But the clear evidence. That was set before them. And there's only one reason. Why they wouldn't do that. They were proud. They were right. In spite of all the evidence. To the contrary. In spite of everything that Jesus was doing. In spite of it clearly being a work of God. They were right. And they would not move on that. And be budged by that. Pride blinded them.

And so they said nothing. What about you and me dear friends? What do you have to say about Jesus? What do you have to say to Jesus?

Is it your pride that's keeping you. From committing to who he is. As the son of God. The Messiah. Do you hope that by saying nothing at all. That you can somehow sit on the fence.

[18:59] With Jesus. By saying nothing. You can sort of just. Well not commit yourself. One way or the other. Keep your options open. You see that's not the case at all.

The silence of the Pharisees. Was not a sign that they were undecided about Jesus. Their silence about Jesus. Was proof that they still rejected him. For who he was. Remember what Jesus said back in Luke chapter 11.

Whoever is not with me is against me. And so that's true of you and I as well. If we are not with Jesus. For Jesus. If we're not committed to Jesus. If we're not on his side.

And saying yes you are the son of God. Yes you are the savior that I need. Yes you are the one that I will follow and trust. Then it's not. That you are. Then you are. Not simply undecided.

You've got enough evidence before you. You've seen enough evidence in the life of Christian believers. You've seen enough evidence in the word of God that you've heard. To decide. Either for or against.

[19:59] And I would put it to you dear friends. That the reason that you. Will not speak. The name of Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Is because of pride. Because you think you're right.

Because you think you've got the answer. Because you think that you don't need. To humble yourself. Before him. Their pride. Their pride blinded their eyes.

And it will blind your eyes and thine. Not only dear friends. When we are unbelievers. But even as Christians. Our pride can blind us to what God is doing. Our pride about the importance of being right.

Can stop us seeing. That the Lord is at work. And it's because we don't happen to like the way. That God is working. It's not quite in keeping with what we want.

Or what we think is right. Then we will reject it. But in doing so. Dear friends. As Christians. We've got to be so careful. That we're not rejecting God. God. So this dinner party has not started very well.

[20:58] For the host. The host had brought along this man who is ill. Hoping that through that he could somehow trip Jesus up. And get him to say something he shouldn't say. Or speak against the law. Or whatever it may be. And he's fallen flat on his face.

But it's going to get worse yet. They brought Jesus along to the meal. So they could keep an eye on him. So they could carefully watch him. But verse 7 tells us he was actually watching them. When he noticed.

Jesus was watching them. He was looking at them. And seeing them. And not only the outward. But the inward as well. And he was noticing particularly how they seated themselves.

Around the dining table. Now again it's not like a dining table. That we would have. As I'm sure you're aware. It would be a big long table. Long thin narrow table. People would recline at the table. In other words they'd lean on their elbow.

To eat at the table. But nonetheless. They were. If you could sit by the host. If you could sit by the person. The prominent Pharisee. It showed that you were one of his close bosom buddies.

[22:00] He favored you. That you were important and special and so on. And so when the dining takes place. Instead of there being the usual seating plan.

Like we have at a wedding. And you're put by whoever you're put by. Whether you want to sit by them or not. And the head table of course. Is the prestigious people. The bride and the groom and so on. In this case. There was no seating arrangement. And the Pharisees it seems to me. From what Jesus remarks on here. Almost had a scramble for the best seats.

I don't know if you have ever used to fly. Budget airlines. I won't mention any names. Budget airlines. There was a time when they didn't give you any seat allocation. and basically you just basically boarded the plane and you just tried to get as good a seat as you possibly could. And there was a lot of jostling and elbows and people all wanted to be near the front so they can get off at the front and near the loos and so on. Well, I can imagine it was a little bit like that, except in a more dignified way. The Pharisees wouldn't have run, but they'd walk really quickly to get to the really good seat next to the host.

[23 : 04] And Jesus picks up on this. And he tells them that not only is it a bad idea because it might backfire, and he gives them the illustration.

He says, you know, you've been invited and you go and take this seat up by the distinguished people, as it were. And he says, verse 8, a person more distinguished than you may be invited and the host may come and say to you, give up your seat, and then you've got to go right to the bottom of the table where perhaps the people who didn't wash as often as they should do would sit, and you'd be humiliated.

But it's not for that reason that Jesus tells this parable. He's not trying to give them etiquette lessons about where you should sit and how you should seat and how you should eat. Jesus isn't concerned about that.

He's concerned about something much more important, a much more important truth is at stake, and it's there in verse 11. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Notice it's a pride matter, isn't it? It's a pride matter. I want to sit next to the host because I want to look important. I want people to see me as important. And what Jesus is teaching here is this.

[24 : 18] What motivates us, whether it's at a dinner party or whatever we do, must not be pride. We're not to be moved and motivated by pride. Pride will be men and women of humility.

And so these both, the healing and the seating arrangements are connected by this same truth. Pride is your downfall. Pride is that which, in one sense, appears to be seeking the best for yourself, but actually it's the very opposite.

Because if you live a life which is motivated by pride, which is putting yourself forward and making yourself look good or feel good or whatever it is, it will do you great harm.

It may do you the harm of being humiliated in a dinner party, but it will do you much greater harm because Jesus is talking about God's attitude to the proud and to the humble.

All those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Humbled by who? Humbled by God. James tells us in chapter 4, and he repeats from one of the Proverbs, God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble.

[25 : 30] God opposes the proud. Now, of course, in our day and age, there's been a great deal of talk, even about the whole butter of Brexit. We want to put pride back in Britain. We want to feel proud about our nation.

We want to have a sense of pride in the things that we do and make and so on and so forth. But pride is bad. And why is pride bad? Well, pride is bad because it stops us admitting that we're wrong.

It stops us from acknowledging what is truth. Pride makes us determined to do what we think is right, even if it's contrary to God's word, even if it's contrary to what is good for us.

See, the very beginning of the Christian life and the whole ongoing of the Christian life is one of humility, acknowledging and admitting that we are sinful and that God is holy, that we are wrong and that God is right.

Pride prevents us acknowledging our sin and receiving the forgiveness that God wants to give us. because pride says, actually, I'm not that bad. In fact, I think I'm pretty good and I'm better than that person next to me and I'm better than that person who sits on the bus and I'm better than that person in class because I go to church or whatever it may be.

[26 : 43] Pride damns us to hell. That's how serious pride is. God opposes the pride. It's not just that he looks on pride and says, that's not really good, is it?

God opposes it. God is against it. God counts it to be a wicked and evil thing. And dear Christians, we cannot allow pride in our hearts to stay there and to remain there.

Humility. Humility. Seeing ourselves for who we are in God's grace. Seeing ourselves, yes, as sinners saved by his grace. Seeing ourselves as those who constantly need to learn at the feet of Jesus and from his word.

Constantly being those who seek to exalt others and build others up rather than seeking for others to look to us and say how good we are.

We're not to be like little Jack Horner sat in the corner, are we? You know that one? Little Jack Horner sat in the corner eating his Christmas pie, stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plum and said, what a good boy am I.

[27 : 50] We can be like that though, can't we? And I think even as Christians we can be like that. Towards the world around about us. Towards those who are needy, those who are struggling, those who have not come to know or hear the wonderful love of Christ.

We can look at ourselves and pat ourselves to the back and think, well I made a really good decision when I chose to follow Jesus all those years ago and therefore everything I've done since then is right. No, it's not. Humility.

And the rest of Jesus' teaching in this dinner party really lays hold of that and shows us that the very different motivation of God to the motivation of the Pharisees and the motivation to many of us. God's heart drives what he does. So Jesus begins to talk about how we should have a heart like the heart of the Father.

And so we have this teaching of Jesus in verses 12 and 14 about when we have a dinner party, but he's not just talking about a dinner party with your hostess trolley. He's talking about when you invite people, when you spend time with people, when you give, give to those who cannot always give back.

[29 : 03] You know, sometimes hospitality may seem to be wonderfully good and hospitality is good, but underlying is the reason we invite people to our house from here because we want them to invite us back.

Are we a bit like we are at Christmas? We gave you a present and we expect a present in return. It's you scrub my back and I'll scratch yours. Jesus isn't forbidding us to invite our family and friends.

He isn't saying, no, you mustn't have family and friends around for dinner. Of course not. But he's applying that principle which runs all the way through the Bible that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

Luke chapter 12 where Jesus spoke about the rich man who had all that stuff, didn't he? And he built his bigger barns. And Jesus went on to talk about giving and sharing what we have.

You see, if we only live a life that gives to get, in other words, we say nice things to people because we want them to say nice things about us or we invite people to our house for a meal because we want them to invite us or whatever it may be, if we live that life of only giving to get, then we are living a substandard life according to Jesus.

[30 : 18] Substandard because we miss out on the blessing. Notice what Jesus says in verse 13. When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you'll be blessed. There's a blessing in giving, isn't it?

Paul picks up on that later on in 1 Corinthians. It's more blessed to give than to receive. I'm sure all of us have experienced that. The joy of being able to give to somebody, to share with somebody. Not because you think, well, they're going to give to me or reward me. But also there's something else.

Jesus says, not only are we blessed in the immediate, but we are blessed in the future. Verse 14, although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. In other words, at the end of time, when we stand before God, every single one of us, there is a reward and a blessing to be had for generosity, for serving, for humility, for giving.

Jesus isn't, as it were, teaching us some kind of perverse greed. He's not saying, well, if you give these things and do these things, you're going to get a bigger reward at the end.

[31 : 30] You're going to be given much more. There's a type of teaching that says that even of today, a prosperity teaching it's called, where people say, send in this money and God will send you 10 times the amount.

And there's an attitude that the world has as well and we've got to be careful of it. There's an attitude that if I give and do good things, somehow I'll earn God's blessing or I'll earn good things. It goes beyond God. People talk about karma. In other words, if you do good things, good things will happen to you. There's no such thing as that. And Jesus isn't saying that and he isn't saying, you know, this is like saving up money so that when you get to heaven, you're going to have wonderful riches.

He's not talking about that. What he's saying is this. He's reinforcing that principle through the Bible. What we sow is what we reap. What we give is what we get. If we live our lives selfishly, if we live our lives for what we can have now, if we live our lives for what is for us, whether it be our pride, whether it be our own possessions, whatever, then we will live a substandard life here because we'll never be satisfied with what we have, but we will have nothing to show for it in the life to come. The generosity of the Christian, the generosity that we show is to be, because of who we are, the children of God. We are to be like our Heavenly Father who has given us every good thing, who loves us, who gives and gives and gives and why does God give and give and give?

[33 : 04] Because he wants something back. That's what people see in religion at times, isn't it? Oh yes, God will give you forgiveness and give you eternal life, but he wants your money and he wants you to do this and he wants you to do that.

God gave freely generously knowing that there's nothing that we can give God in return. We can't give him anything. He has everything that he needs.

He has everything that he wants. We are to give because we are his children and that's where we get to this very last parable, verses 15 and following. Because it's talking about God, he's the host of the banquet, he's the host of the dinner party.

Jesus has talked about being repaid at the resurrection of the righteous and a man responds, one of the Pharisees responds in this way, blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. What's he saying?

He's saying this, I'm going to be there in the kingdom of God eating this feast. I'm looking forward to that day. I presume that I will be there because I'm a good law-abiding Jew, because I've kept God's rules, because in my eyes I am right.

[34 : 26] Jesus doesn't reply with that man and say, yes, that's great, you're going to be there. There's a presumption, isn't there, on his part. That feast, that banquet that he's talking about that Jesus has been referring to is that wonderful picture that Revelation gives us and in fact, it's all the way through the Psalms as well.

Psalms 23 ends, doesn't it, with you will lay before me a table before my enemies. There's this wonderful picture of heaven as a great dinner party, a great banquet, a great feast and some of us, I'm sure, some of our most joyful and enjoyable times have been when we've been together with those that we love, eating and sharing and talking.

It's a good thing to do. Heaven is that picture of a feast of God's good gifts. And this man says, blessed is the one who's going to be there.

There's a presumption in his heart that he's going to be there. But Jesus' parable is a pinprick to his balloon. He pops his confidence as it were. And this parable is aimed precisely at good, law-abiding, religious Jews.

Yes, God has a party in heaven, a great banquet that he wants to share with many guests, verse 16. And he has sent out a wonderful invitation.

[35 : 47] He sent out an invitation to come, all is ready. He sent his servant. His servant is the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah speaks about that over and over again, the servant of the Lord. This is Jesus.

Jesus is the one who's come to call men and women to the banquet of God, call men and women, to enter in with humility and repentance and to eat and feast and enjoy the blessings and the good things that God has for them.

But when Jesus came to those invited guests, the Jewish people of his own day, when he came to them with God's invitation, how did they respond? Remember his words just in the last chapter? We looked at them the other week. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and here's the word.

You were not willing. So we see this parable. The invitation goes out. Jesus goes to the Jews and then suddenly we find and to people there's these excuses, these seemingly reasonable excuses.

[36 : 56] Oh, I've bought a field. I must go and see it. Don't tell me you bought a field without looking at it. Has anybody bought a house without looking at it? Of course he's been to see it. Oh, I've just bought five oxen and I'm not going to try them out.

Don't tell me you bought them out. You know, nobody buys a car without having a test drive. It's just a feeble, pathetic excuse. And then, I don't know why this man says it, it may be because, I'll be careful what I say, I've just got married.

So I can't come. Domineering wife? Not saying, not saying. Could be any reason. But anyway, there's no excuse. These are just feeble, thinly veiled excuses for a rejection of God's invitation, a rejection of God's love and kindness to them in Jesus.

No wonder he's angry with them, verse 21. The owner of the house became angry. God gets angry. Angry at pride.

Angry at this arrogance that says, I can reject God. I don't need God. I don't need this banquet. I don't need these good things.

[38 : 02] I don't need him. It's unreasonable, dear friends, to reject the invitation that God sends to us in Jesus. But that's exactly what Jesus did as he came to that house of that Pharisee.

When he spoke to them and questioned them, they would not give a response. Their pride was their downfall. And so God, in his mercy and grace, sends his servant to the ends of the world, as it were.

Go into the streets and the alleys, the town, bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. Remember, they are the ones that the Pharisees did not like. They are the ones that the Pharisees, they thought they were better than them.

They were the ones that the Pharisees looked down upon from their proud and haughty positions. But God says, I'm going to bring them in. And even then, we see, doesn't it, it goes further beyond that, verse 23, go to the roads and country lanes, compel them to go in.

That's a challenge to us, dear friends. That's what we're called to do as Christ's servants. We're to take this message, this wonderful invitation of God to come in and taste of the good things that he is.

[39 : 10] We're to compel them if we can. Yes, you must be saved. You must trust Jesus. You must turn to him. Because God will not have an empty heaven.

Though we know spare seats, as it were, around the feast, the wedding feast of the Lamb, I must have a full house and he will have a full house because every single one for whom Christ died, every single one for whom Christ came into the world to save will be there.

But the question is this, again, isn't it, dear friends, will you be there? Will you be there? If you don't humble yourself, if you don't respond to the call of God to come, then you will never enter the kingdom of God.

If your pride continues to keep you out, if your pride continues to be more important to you than knowing the forgiveness and mercy of God, then you shall never enter in.

Remember again those words of Jesus and I'll close with them from just the previous chapter. But Jesus said this, make every effort to enter through the narrow door because many, I tell you, will try to enter it and will not be able to.

[40 : 23] Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, sir, open the door for us. But he will answer, I don't know you or where you come from.

He will reply, I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers. There will be weeping there and gnashing in teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God.

But you yourselves thrown out. People will come from the east and west and north and south. Will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Will you be there by God's grace and mercy and goodness?

Or will you be locked out? You cannot be sure, dear friend, when the door will be shut. You cannot be sure when the invitation will be revoked. But at this moment, it's there.

Let me urge you to come in. Let me urge you to put aside your pride. Let me urge you to clothe yourself with humility before the God who is the Lord of the feast.

[41 : 31] Let's pray together, shall we? Thank you, Lord Jesus, that just as you looked around that dinner party those years ago and saw the actions and the hearts of everyone there, so you see us.

You see our pride. Lord, you see our self-righteousness. You see, Lord, that we are living substandard lives as men and women who think that the only way to live is to get, to give, so to get. We thank you that you are not like us. We thank you that you are so generous, so kind, so giving. Thank you that it is your great love and mercy that means that the door is open.

The way into your dinner party is there. and we can come whoever we are, crippled, blind, lame, needy, sinful. Only our pride keeps us out.

Lord, we pray that we might enter in even today for the first time. We pray for those of us, Lord, who have known that wonderful grace in our lives, who have already tasted of the good things of Jesus.

[42 : 52] We pray for ourselves, oh Lord, that you would deal with us, for we confess that we allow pride to blind us, to blind us to the work that you're doing, to blind us because it's not our way.

And oh Lord, we pray that you would deal with us and humble our hearts, that we might, Lord, give you the glory and the honour you deserve, that we might not be a stumbling block, but rather we might see, see, oh Lord, our great need of you.

Continue to work in us, Lord, continue that work of your spirit in us, that we might be conformed more to the likeness of Jesus, who is himself the one and only humble, humble servant that we might serve.

So Lord, hear us then and apply your word to our lives through this day and the days to come. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.