

# Parables from Luke 14

## **The Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14.15-24)**

This parable is very similar to one recorded in Matthew 22.1-14 with some important and instructive differences. In Matthew, a 'certain king' makes a 'marriage' for his son (Matthew 22.2) where 'servants' (plural) rather than 'the servant' (singular) are sent forth with the invitation (Matthew 22.3-4). In both parables the host was 'angry' after the invitation's refusal (Matthew 22.7, Luke 14.21) with Matthew emphasising the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 (Matthew 22.7). Finally, Matthew speaks of a guest 'which had not on a wedding garment' (Matthew 22.11). What are the reasons for some of these differences?

In Luke the guests are bidden to come just as they are in their rags and dirt (v.21), however, Matthew reminds us that while man must come as he is to God, he must also be made fit for the presence of God before he partakes of the blessings that have been prepared. This fitness takes the form of a garment suited for the occasion and provided by the Host. It is the robe of the righteousness of God (Romans 3.22, 2 Corinthians 5.21, Philippians 3.9). In Matthew 22.11-13 a man was found without such a wedding garment. He was a false professor. In the presence of the King (God), he was 'speechless' (cf. Romans 3.19).

Why does Matthew speak of this and not Luke? In Matthew 'servants' (plural) are sent out, whereas in Luke it is 'the Servant' (singular). The servants of Matthew represent God's own people who have the privilege of proclaiming the good news of the invitation, however, whenever the preaching of mere men is involved there is ever likely to be false professions. In Luke, it is the work of the Servant (the Holy Spirit) to proclaim the invitation. When He does the bidding it will only result in power, conviction and genuine conversions. Firstly, we should always remember that salvation is God's work (Jonah 2.9). We cannot harass or hurry people into salvation. Our responsibility is to faithfully preach Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1.23). Secondly, our lives should demonstrate the power of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2.4: And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. We should 'live in the Spirit', 'walk in the Spirit', be 'led of the Spirit' and demonstrate the 'fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5).

In Luke 14, the unnamed servant represents the Holy Spirit. There are a number of unnamed servants in the Scriptures, each of which speak of a different aspect of His ministry:

- He compels guests to come in and enjoy the **salvation** of God as He does today in convicting men and women of their sins (**Luke 14**, cf. Genesis 6.3, John 16.8, Revelation 22.17).
- He seeks out a bride for Isaac as He does today calling out a bride for Christ in the furtherance of the **purposes** of God (**Genesis 24**, 2 Corinthians 11.2).
- He leads to a large, furnished upper room to encourage **worship** and **fellowship** (**Mark 14.12-16**, cf. Matthew 18.20, John 4.23-24, Philippians 3.3).
- He is the Servant 'set over' the reapers in order to strengthen them for **service** (**Ruth 2.4-7**, cf. John 16.13, Ephesians 3.16).

The Spirit of God has such a mighty ministry and yet He is likened to a lowly, unnamed servant. Why? *John 16.13-14: Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* God can do great things with unnamed servants, those who are little in their own eyes (cf. 2 Kings 5.2, 2 Samuel 17.18, John 6.9, Acts 23.16). Would we be content to be unnamed servants?

It is worth noting the kinds of characters that accepted God's gracious invitation (v.21). There is no attraction about these people, they are not desirable guests, yet they are those who are called of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 1.27-28). There were the 'poor', those without **spiritual treasure**, those to whom Christ directed much of His ministry (Matthew 11.5, Luke 4.18) and those to whom the gospel is without charge (1 Corinthians 9.8). There were also the 'maimed' (crippled in a limb), those without **spiritual work**, but who instead produced wicked works of the flesh (Acts 7.41, Romans 13.12, Colossians 1.21). There were the 'lame' (crippled in the feet), those without **spiritual walk** who had turned aside to their own paths (Isaiah 53.6, 56.11, Jeremiah 3.21, Hebrews 12.13). Finally, there were the 'blind', those without **spiritual sight**. They were in darkness (Romans 2.19, 2 Corinthians 4.3-4). What a privileged position is now ours in Christ. We are those who are characterised by every spiritual blessing, we are **rich** in Christ (Ephesians 1.3). The scales have fallen from our eyes, we can **see** spiritual truth (cf. Acts 9.18). We now **walk** and **work** in the Spirit. BUT, are we living poor spiritual lives? Are we still living like we are lame (Hebrews 12.13), blind (2 Peter 1.9), poor (Galatians 4.9) and are we still walking according to the course of this world (Ephesians 2.2)?

Finally, it is a shame to note the excuses of God's very own people, the nation of Israel, v.18: *And they all with one consent began to make excuse.* The word 'excuse' literally means 'to ask alongside', i.e. to 'refuse' or 'reject'. It is almost as if these people heard of God's offer of salvation and then 'asked alongside' something else so they had an excuse to refuse! Whenever there is an excuse, it often masks a lack of **desire**. *'The scramblers for the best seats in the Pharisee's house wanted no seat at all where God and His grace were found.'* All refused the call of God in their lives through excuses which were in the context of **possessions** (land, v.18), commerce or **employment** (oxen, v.19) and **family** (wife, v.20). What about us? What excuses do we have in the service of the Lord? It is not that these things are wrong, rather they must not take priority over the things of God. For example, in Haggai's day the people were more occupied with their own houses than the House of God (Haggai 1.2-6). In Nehemiah's day, family affairs disturbed the separation and service of the people (Nehemiah 13.23-26). Which of these excuses is keeping us from serving the Lord as we might?

### **The Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14.25-35)**

As the Lord Jesus steps outside the chief Pharisee's house (cf. v.1) great crowds met and 'journeyed' with Him. They had heard His words, watched His miracles and were attracted by His Person. They showed desire to follow and be associated with Him, but following in a crowd is one thing; true discipleship involves **total devotion** and **cost** without excuse. *'Disciples are persons who, out of love for the Teacher, have determined to **learn** His mind and plans and have resolved to **devote** their person and life to furthering His interests.'*

The Lord states that a person 'cannot be my disciple' unless they meet three criteria:

- Death to **people** (v.26). **Christ must have the highest place of affection above all other persons.** The Lord Jesus is not calling for true disciples to 'hate' family members! *Matthew 10.37: He that loveth father or mother **more than me** is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter **more than me** is not worthy of me. **Campbell Morgan:** 'Nothing is fairer, finer, more beautiful in human life than love of father, love of mother... and yet these fair things may, and often do, challenge our loyalty to our Lord. Thus, if ever an hour strikes when there is a conflict between the call of the highest earthly love and the call of Christ; then there is only one thing to be done, and that is to trample across our own hearts and go after Him, without compromise, without question.'*
- Death to **pride** (vv.27-30). **Christ must have the highest place of affection above myself.** Every true disciple will be willing to carry 'his own' personal cross. This has the idea of self-denial (cf. Matthew 16.24). The cross was an emblem of suffering, shame and condemnation. Via the cross we have died to the old selfish life. We now live for Christ and must be prepared for suffering, shame and condemnation from this world. To illustrate the Lord Jesus speaks of building a tower (vv.28-30). Discipleship is a building project (1 Corinthians 3.10-15). We are seeking to raise a tower of witness and devotedness to Christ, but he who is not willing to sacrifice self for Christ will not complete (or 'fully finish', v.29) the specific building project of their lives. ***FW Grant:*** *'But this is a tower that costs much to build from the point of view from which it is seen by one outside it. It will cost him all that the world holds precious; how much he will gain he is not yet in the place to see. He who attempts it lightly will surely find it beyond his power to accomplish; and he who does not undertake it in strength far greater than his own.'*
- Death to **possessions** (vv.31-33). The phrase 'that he hath' (v.33) is the word for 'possessions' or 'goods'. **Christ must have the highest place of affection above all other things (possessions).** Discipleship involves spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6.12). He who is not willing to sacrifice possessions for Christ will end up having to make concessions and/or allegiances with the god of this world (v.32). Their warfare was not as strong as it might have been. *'He cannot be a follower of Jesus who regards himself as the owner of anything, for Christ renounced everything to become on earth a dependent Man.'*

The illustration of salt is most appropriate (vv.34-35). In the Lord's day, it was possible for salt to waste away (due to various impurities within it) leaving a residue which had no taste or flavour. It was useless. So then is the disciple who is not willing to sacrifice all for Christ. He is considered to be useless (cf. 1 Corinthians 3.15). His witness and testimony will be trampled underfoot as 'men cast it out' (v.35, cf. Revelation 3.16). In Scripture, disciples are often likened to salt (Matthew 5.13). Salt speaks of purity, sanctification and separation from evil as it fights corruption. There can be no compromise between salt and corruption; each must be victorious or defeated. Is it possible that disciples might compromise their high standards of morality and so find their testimony so trampled on by men? ***HA Ironside:*** *'It is possible for a Christian to become so contaminated by the principles of the world that he fails to fulfil the purpose for which God made him.'*

**JOHN CALVIN:** "I GAVE UP ALL FOR CHRIST, AND WHAT HAVE I FOUND? I HAVE FOUND EVERYTHING IN CHRIST."

**HENRY DRUMMOND:** "THE ENTRANCE FEE INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS NOTHING; THE ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION IS EVERYTHING."