

**Luke 14:12-24**  
**An Invitation of Grace**

Have you ever been in a situation where all of the sudden the reality hits you: "I don't deserve to be here. I don't feel worthy of being invited and belonging."

The truth about God's kingdom is that everyone who makes it in knows they don't deserve to be there. Subjects of God's kingdom know they are not worthy of a seat at the table.

Every member of God's kingdom has one familiar word in their vocabulary: grace.

Last week Pastor Rob walked us through the first part of Luke 14—Jesus is invited to a dinner party and we are invited to listen in on some conversation. The teaching emphasized humility—a "take the last seat" mindset.

Our text for this week picks up with the same dinner party; but there is a different emphasis. It's the emphasis of *grace*.

Grace and Humility are intimate friends.

The most humble people know grace. They have drunk deeply at the fountain of grace.

And the people who know grace are the most humble.

Let's see what we can learn about grace.

**1. The path marked by grace and reward (12-14)**

- The first thing we see is Jesus suggesting to his host what his guest list should look like.
- It was obvious, as Jesus looked around, the type of people they had invited. Who was missing? Outcasts. Broken. Beggars.

Jesus is digging in to his host's heart. Are there any signs of grace there?

- Try to put yourself at the table. It was probably an uncomfortable, awkward, and silent moment—which accounts for the outburst in v15.
- Jesus says: Make an unconventional guest list. One that reflects a heart of grace.

This all comes down to this: do our ordinary actions reflect *extraordinary grace* in our lives?

*People who have encountered grace will be marked by and will look at others in a gracious light.*

Application: This is also placed here for the instruction of the future church. The church is a “blended” community. What I mean is that the church is not segregated racially or socially, by class or age.

Illustration: Steelers church.

*What unites a body of believers is only what they share in Christ.*

There are no social boundaries in kingdom fellowship.

- Jesus also sheds light into the mixed motives that can exist in our hearts (12b)—repayment.
- We often do something that looks kind outwardly, but in our minds we know it *really will benefit us later on down the road.*
- The way to overcome it is by walking the path of grace—specifically investing in people who will not be able to “pay us back”

And the reality is, there is a reward ... just not in this particular age (v14).

Application: So friends, are we following Jesus in the path of grace? Does our relational investment look like what Jesus is talking about here? This does not mean we can’t have meals with friends, relatives, or even the wealthy. But, do our ordinary actions display we are grace-

oriented? Or are the *only* people who make it on our list typically those who we know may benefit us down the road.

Grasping grace means that the walls of the A-B-C list are broken down; we look at people as simply bearing God's image and who we are called to love unconditionally.

Let's not be list-limiters but lovers of God and neighbors.

## **2. The path of excuse making and rejection (15-22,24)**

- This next section is prompted by an outburst (v15) probably referencing the text in Is 25:6-9.
- It may have been said to break awkward silence is an attempt to silence Jesus.
- Jesus uses the comment to re-center on God's sovereign grace...and challenge religious presumption.

The parable: Great Banquet

- In Jesus' day invitations would be done in two stages. A formal invitation would go out (save the date); then on the day the meal was actually hot and ready, servants would physically go and re-invite the guests. To decline the second invitation was highly offensive.
- When the servants are sent, the excuses begin to pour in.

\*\*We make excuses when we want to decline—but we want to do it while looking nice.

Yet what we are really saying is this: *something or someone else is more worthy of my time and energy than your invitation.*

- There are 3 categories of the excuses...all lame and somewhat humorous.

1) Possessions: Just bought a field.

2) Responsibilities (work)—buying five oxen was not a hobby, it was a livelihood.

3) Relationship (marriage)—This guy even tried to tag a verse—Dt. 24:5— that newly married refrained from war for 1 yr.; probably humorous to Pharisees).

Notice these are really essential life commitments .... but they can easily swallow up our heart's affections.

Apply: Excuses are polite ways that we say—*something else is more important than your invitation*. Multitudes of people have their heart affection on stuff, work, some other person...and no room for Jesus. As a result many never want to feast at the table of grace. Some even here are ok turning your back on the invitation because you are happy with other things in life.

- It's clear from v24 that those who make excuses to refuse grace, face a final rejection. This was no doubt directed at Pharisees and Israel's leaders—but applies just as much today.

But the heart of this passage is about the extension of free grace, especially to the outcasts: poor, crippled, blind.

*The table of grace is for those who know they are unworthy to be there.*

### **3. The host moved by free grace (v21-23)**

- The heartbeat of this text is the free grace of God that Jesus offers.
- It's pretty clear that Jesus wants many at the table
- God is a generous host.
- (Is 55:1)—It is a table of grace.

“Come, everyone who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and he who has no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.”

The grace God has is also free. Free in that *no one forces God's hand to extend his grace.*

\*He offers it freely. His hand is not forced...especially by our actions.

Illustration: When I was a young boy, I got an invitation to a birthday party. I was not very close with the kid who invited me. I think we were in the same cub scout group or something. But it was a bowling party and I was happy to be invited. Now to set the stage for what happens next, you need to know I was not on the A list of popular kids at school. I was in the middle. The following day at school after the birthday party, I was sitting at my desk minding my business, when I overheard the boy who had the birthday party say to a friend: “Yeah, my parents made me invite Ryan.”

That's the *opposite* of free grace. This boy's hand was forced by his mom to put me on the list. No so with God. Everyone who makes his list is there by his free grace.

*The Christian faith is rooted in a Kingly host who is moved by free grace alone.*

- Look at v23—the purpose in God's heart is “my house may be filled” - a reference to Gentile inclusion.
- But I want to end with this: *how does God fill his house.*

Illustration: Let me set it up with something I read from the book *Three Years in Afghanistan*. The account is an American who lived there and was trying to make the cultural adjustment. He talks about learning hospitality, and how offensive it is to take the seat of honor.

But he also mentions something I found strikingly beautiful.

[Conversational]

“Will an Afghan really give his life to protect me if I am his guest? Why would he do that, especially if he doesn't even know me?

[Reply] He would. His family honor depends on it.”

\*\*In the gospel, we have a host who is moved entirely by free grace and pity, lays down his life for his guests.

He not only invites us in, *but sheds his blood to save his broken and begging guests.*

### Conclusion/Application:

1. A warning—are you making excuses and refusing the invitation of Christ? Is something more important than his grace? Any of those excuses connect?
2. An Invitation— If you come as a broken beggar, his grace is there and *so is a seat at the table*. Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost. \*\*Consider what it cost Jesus to prepare the feast for you: pain, ridicule, tears, insults, ...and *ultimately a blood saturated cross*.
3. A Mission—for the many Christians, where do we fit? I believe (the church) is represented by the *servant* who goes out to the highways and hedges (e.g. Broad River Rd. — 1-26, overseas) to compel the broken and beggars to come. I would ask: is our witness compelling? There is a real force to the word. One that has been abused historically. But it causes us to think: Is there an urgency in our witness? Do we serve our master with the urgency called for? Can we say our evangelism reflects v22 “Sir, what you command has been done”?

Are we really serious about seeing God’s house filled?

May God give us, his church at TRB the heart of ambassadorship of 2 Cor 5:20

“<sup>20</sup> Therefore, *we* are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through *us*. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”