

Bringing People into the Kingdom

Luke 14:12-24

Series: The Kingdom Project

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We are right in the middle of this seven-week series we're calling *The Kingdom Project*. And today, we're going to talk about one of my favorite subjects as it relates to the Kingdom, and that is evangelism – that is, sharing with others about the kingdom.

I'm calling the message today: **Bringing People into the Kingdom**

Now, I've told you before that I have a massive amount of what is called FOMO – it is the fear of missing out! You can't imagine how hard it is for me to write a sermon here at the church. I have a wonderful study that I can hole myself into...I've got a few places over at the Lanier Library that I can go to and try to get sermons done, but it's really hard for me to concentrate when people are around because if I hear talking, I've got to get up and see who it is talking! They could be planning something that I need to be a part of!

This is FOMO! In the personality types – I had to take these personality assessments back when I was in school.

- You had a lion – the decisive, strong-willed types...
- You had the otter – these are the outgoing, enthusiastic types...
- You had the beaver – these are the organized, analytical types...
- You and the golden retriever – these are the calm, loyal and supportive types.

Well, every time I've ever taken the test, I'm like an otter with a mane. I've got to have my social outlets! I'm outgoing and friendly and don't want to miss a party with just a hint of a lion that shows up every now and then!

I say all this as part of an introduction into our text that shows Jesus teaching that the Kingdom is like a big party! This may be just one of the reasons I like the idea of the Kingdom so much because if there is one thing I do NOT want to miss out on, it's a good party!

Now, before we read our passage of scripture today, I want you to stop and really consider this idea of the Kingdom as a party...a big banquet...a celebratory dinner.

Illus. Super Bowl – We know what this is like. Tonight is the Super Bowl and many of you will be having people over or going over to someone else's house to watch the game. It's a party...it's a celebration!

- We're going to get to count the number of times we see Taylor Swift...

- We're going to watch Usher at halftime...
- We're going to watch Mahomes vs. Purdy...

We know what having a hosting a party is like. Food. Laughter. Fun. And Jesus relates the Kingdom life to being a party. I say all this out the outset of this message to let the reality of what we are talking about set in.

The Kingdom life should be FUN. It should be JOYOUS. It should be in a word, FULL of: LIFE.

Now, remember as we have talked about the Kingdom of God, we have defined it as the realm and rule of God's reign in our life, AND it has an already, not yet element to it.

So, right here and now...when we trust in Jesus and are "born again", we become citizens of his Kingdom and:

- because of the forgiveness we receive...
- because we are reconciled to God and now have a relationship with him...
- because we have a purpose for living...
- because we have God living in us to help us when problems and issues and struggles come along...

We ought to be the most joy-filled, optimistic, full of LIFE kind of people that the world has ever seen!

? – If you are a citizen of the Kingdom, does this describe you?

Listen: Constant negativity...consistent cynicism...a critical and suspect spirit SHOULD not describe a citizen of the Kingdom. You don't have to be up every day, but neither should you be Eeyore either.

The Kingdom life is a JOYFUL life and it's for the "here and now" We should be experiencing the "abundant life" that Jesus talked about when he said, "I've come to give you LIFE and LIFE to its FULLEST!" (John 10:10).

The Kingdom life is joyous and celebratory NOW (at least it should be!) and it has a future element to it, because Jesus teaches in this parable we're looking at today as well as in other places that the future Kingdom to come, it's like a party...a celebration.

And here's the thing, God doesn't want anyone to miss out of this grand celebration! Whether you're a lion, otter, beaver or golden retriever, the Kingdom is for you!

THIS is what this parable is about today. Let's look at it together. We begin in:

Luke 14:12-24 – "He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich

neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” ¹⁵ When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” ¹⁶ But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. ¹⁷ And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ ¹⁹ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ ²⁰ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ ²¹ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ ²² And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ ²³ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’”

Jesus has been invited into the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. It’s a dinner party.

In all likelihood the host of this party would probably have been quite wealthy. This is someone that could afford to not only feed all of the guests that were invited, but to also fit them into his home.

And if you notice the context of this passage, those who are dining with Jesus, **Luke 14:1 – “One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.”**

This host, along with the majority of the guests invited know of Jesus...they know who he is...they have seen what he can do. And they are “watching him carefully” to see if he is he going to break one of their man-made rules. Is he going to do something that would provide them some evidence that maybe they could use against him in the future?

Now, I think it’s important that we pause here and make sure we take note of the fact, that Jesus never refused an opportunity to dine with anyone that invited him!

Whether it was tax collectors and sinners or wealthy Pharisees, Jesus was no respecter of persons! We never see in the Scripture where Jesus was invited to someone’s house and he refuse the invitation!

Jesus is the Savior to ALL people and therefore he went to ALL people regardless of their social standing or pedigree.

And so, he is at this dinner and as the people (mostly pharisees and scribes) “watch him closely”, they begin to take their seats at the dinner table, and taking advantage of the setting of a meal...this party...Jesus sees an opportunity to talk about the Kingdom.

Luke 14:12-14 – “He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Jesus begins his teaching by exposing the hypocrisy of the host in a subtle but direct kind of way. There is a suggestion here on the part of Jesus that this host has invited those to his dinner party that will only serve to promote his standing in the community.

He invites those that are “like him” and that “like him”. He invites those that will speak very well of him in future public settings. And Jesus is just revealing the true motive of what is going on and exposing the man hosting this party for only inviting certain kind of people over that can provide a personal, reciprocal return.

He is inviting only those to his party that can do something for him...speak well of him...and Jesus is rebuking what is taking place.

Remember, this banquet that Jesus is about to teach about serves as a picture of the Kingdom. God is the ultimate host. He did not act in the way of this host. God did not invite us into his Kingdom party for what he could get out of it. We offered him nothing! It was all by grace that we are “invited in”.

In reality, we are the poor, crippled, lame and blind mentioned here in (v. 13) and because God has shown us such great hospitality, we too are to extend this same hospitality and grace to others.

Notice who Jesus is saying invite to the party! There is this emphasis on the broken...the humble...the lowly...there’s especially a place for them!

Now, at this point in the dinner you could cut the tension in the room with a knife because NONE of these type of people are in the room! So, you have Jesus lovingly rebuking the host, calling out those in attendance who would be guilty of the exact same thing AFTER he already in (v. 7-11) lovingly rebuked the guests at the dinner for their lack of humility.

Jesus is a bit bolder than I would be! I’d be the disciple in the room thinking we need to sign Jesus up for an etiquette course! I’d be saying, “Jesus, they are not going to invite us back...you’re kind of being a party pooper!” I’d be trying to teach Jesus manners...see if there was a local cotillion class we can sign him up for!

Now, we get to (v. 15) and here is someone that I can identify with! I tend to try to be a peacemaker...don’t like a lot of tension in the room and conflict. Some nervous guest here at the table doesn’t either and blurts out:

Luke 14:15 – “When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

I love this guy! He is NOT going to allow awkward silence! He feels the tension...sees the tension...and tries to put a stop to it.

Essentially what this person is saying is, "Let's just all get along here...let's move along. Blessed is everyone that will eat bread in the kingdom! Let's just enjoy the meal!"

And the insinuation of this man while he didn't come out and say it is that he and all his friends was going to be in the kingdom! After all, this is the Pharisee's house...and who did he have over at the party? Other Pharisees and scribes (v. 3).

If anyone was going to be in the kingdom these guys figured they were a FOR SURE a lock in.

But, Jesus in hearing this man's statement, tells a parable where he explains just the opposite. Some people who expect to be there won't! And some people you don't expect to be there, WILL.

Let's look at it. **Luke 14:16** – **"But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many."**

This is a big party...God is in the process of hosting a big party – eventually it's going to be an earthly eternal kingdom party (that's what heaven is – the rule and reign of God with his people here on earth forever and ever), and "many" have been invited!

Illus. Motown – CF Connect – Hitsville, USA. Barry Gordy Jr, founded the record label Motown – The Temptations, Diana Ross and the Supremes, Smokey Robinson, The Jackson Five, Stevie Wonder – I sang "My Girl" in the studio where it was recorded! He never locked the studio!

I went by Barry Gordy's old house...they said he had massive parties there...he was always inviting people over.

Now, in that day, much like in ours today, typically a host having a party would send out a "save the date" if you will, and people would make their reservations for the party.

Once the actual date of the party arrived and the host had everything set, he would send his servant back into the community to let everyone know who was invited that arrangements are ready and the party is set to begin. This is what is taking place here!

Luke 14:17-21a – **"And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master..."**

Commentator, Leon Morris called this the Parable of Excuses! All of these people who said they would be there now have excuses for why they can't make the party and all of the excuses have one major thing in common: They are all pathetic excuses!

The first man can't come because he has made a real estate investment and needs to go see it. That doesn't make sense! Nobody buys a field without seeing it and this party is at dinner time...are you going to examine the land at night? That's pathetic excuse #1.

Pathetic excuse #2: A man has bought a bunch of oxen and he wants to examine them. PLEASE! That many oxen (five yoke worth) would have cost him the equivalent of 2.5 years salary. He would have had them examined before he bought them if he'd paid that much! This is the same lame and pathetic reasoning of the first guy.

Ultimately what both these men are saying is, "I'm too busy to come to your party right now...I've got too much other stuff going on...I just don't have the time...bottom line: It's not important to me!"

What about the third guy?! I have to be honest...his gives to me the most pathetic excuse. He said, (v.20) "I have a wife, therefore I cannot come."

He blames his wife! You know he hasn't been married long if he is using her as an excuse...he'll learn! You can't use your wife as an excuse...your kids, absolutely! "We have to go, our kids need to go to bed", but you can't use your wife! NOT good!

One pastor I read that preached on this passage noted on this third man's excuse. He says rather sarcastically, "of course, we know wives hate to get dressed up and they hate to go to free parties and they hate to eat lots of great food and they hate to interact with lots of other people." HA!

I know it's true in my house! My wife loves weddings...and especially loves the receptions! She doesn't leave until she has had at least some of the cake! This guy wins the award for the most pathetic excuse for not coming to the party.

Now, practical application question here: What excuse are you using for not wanting to come into the Kingdom of God?

Some of you have never trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins...you've never been born again and you don't have "excuses", you have your "reasons".

Billy Sunday, a former evangelist in the early 1930's was fond of saying, **"an excuse is the skin of a reason, stuffed with a lie."**

What's your...let's call it what it is...it's not a reason...it's an excuse. What is it? What's stopping you from taking God up on his invitation?

There is an urgency coming to Christ! (v. 17) - “Come” now – present tense...everything is ready!”

- Are you too tied up with business like person number one and two? Got too many things going on in your life to make this all-important decision?
- Is your preoccupation with possessions preventing you from coming to Christ...it’s excuses! (Matt. 13 – weeds – life worries and riches and pleasures are choking the seed of the Kingdom!)
- Do you just need more evidence? Listen, you have a beating heart and oxygen in your lungs – what more evidence do you need? You are NEVER going to have all of the answers you are looking for – taking God up on his invitation always involves a step of faith!

We can’t get caught up in ANYTHING - business, pleasure, even marriage and family (person #3)...we can’t get caught up in anything that would distract and keep us from accepting Christ’s invitation to his party!

Any excuse is a lame, pathetic excuse and while you may not think it now, you certainly will when you realize on THAT day in the future all you’re missing out on!

Illus. Super Bowl party – will be like you’re on the outside looking in...and you will see the smiles and the laughter and fellowship and food – “bread” – no carb-free diets in heaven!

- Everything that seems so important now...
- Everything that seems so consequential in your life right now...
- Everything that is taking a priority now OVER the kingdom life will fade away...

And the only thing that will matter is, “What did you do with Jesus’s invitation to his party? Have you RSVP’d?”

Let me just pause here: Christians...citizens of the Kingdom we should be living life in such a way NOW that we are giving people a foretaste of that future kingdom to come. They should see our lives and the joy and life we are experiencing now, and say, “I want that!” What is that?! I can’t miss out on this party...it’s too good!”

Look at the response of the host though when these people that have been issued an invitation, have said they would be there and then are too busy...have too many things going on...have competing priorities and say ‘NO’ to the host. Look at host’s response:

Luke 14:21b-22 – “**Then the master of the house became angry** (This is justified anger here! The host has made the preparations...he has opened up his home...footed the bill...and all he is given is lame excuses...it’s a trampling on of his mercy and grace!) **and said to his servant, ‘Go**

out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’

The master’s house is going to be full! Those that were invited and had an opportunity to come, said, “No!” They had other more important things to do!

Now, in the context of this passage, Jesus is calling out the Jewish leaders...the Pharisees...the scribes...they were God’s chosen people. They had the law and the prophets. The kingdom was FOR them and God, the master has sent his servant Jesus to say, “NOW is the time for the party – the Kingdom of God is here!”

And yet these people reject him! He came to his own (John 1:11) and his own received him not.

So, what does God do? “Okay, go into the city...go into the streets...and get as many people as you can to come! And look at how the servant responds. It’s my favorite verse in this entire passage...at least second favorite!

Luke 14:22 – “And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’”

I LOVE that sentence! To me, this is one of the most beautiful verses in the whole Bible BECAUSE it speaks to me – there was still room for me when I heard the gospel.

And if you are here today and never entered into the Kingdom, I’m telling you, “There is still room for you!”

Illus. “Room at the Cross For You” - I read this verse and I am reminded of that old hymn we used to sing at the invitation,

“The cross upon which Jesus died, Is a shelter in which we can hide; And its grace so free is sufficient for me, And deep is its fountain as wide as the sea.

There's room at the cross for you, There's room at the cross for you, Tho millions have come, There's still room for one Yes, there's room at the cross for you.”

There is still room for you! There’s so much room...it’s a “big big house” in the words of the great Christian band from the 90’s Audio Adrenaline!

In the words of Scottish theologian, **Thomas Boston** – **“This is a comfortable word for those who have not yet complied with the invitations of the gospel; the doors are not yet shut, and such sinners may yet have access to Christ.”**

Listen to what the master says here next– it’s truly AMAZING!

Luke 14:23-24 – “And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’”

The master says, “Go to the highways and hedges...compel people to come in!” Get the “poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame” – that’s me and you! That’s outsiders...that’s Gentiles and really all those that didn’t think the Kingdom was FOR them!

Go out into the country...into the alleys...into the pockets of places where you will have to compel people to come because they are looking for good news and this is so good, they won’t believe it’s for them – you are going to have to compel them to come!

This is why the gospel and good news of the kingdom is so readily received in places where there is poverty and brokenness. Because that’s where people live who are in need of good news!

Many here and around us...those who have everything! The word of the kingdom, why do they need that?!

Many lose out on their opportunity for the Kingdom NOT because they are not invited, but because they have other stuff going on and refuse the invitation.

J.C. Ryle (Anglican Bishop in the late 1800’s) – “There is nothing wanting on God’s part for the salvation of man. If man is not saved, the fault is not on God’s side. The Father is ready to receive all who come to Him by Christ. The Son is ready to cleanse all from their sins who apply to Him by faith. The Spirit is ready to come to all who ask for Him. There is an infinite willingness in God to save man, if man is only willing to be saved.”

Darrel Bock – “The two essential points in His teaching are that no man can enter the Kingdom without the invitation of God, and that no man can remain outside it but by his deliberate choice.”

Have you RSVP’d to the Kingdom? This is where the party is, all you have to do is “Come”.

Champion Forest, this is what we HAVE to be about! We ADVANCE the Kingdom. Our goal is to populate the Kingdom of Light and depopulate the kingdom of darkness.
And so, the application today is two-fold:

1. Accept God’s Invitation

If you are here today and saying “no” or “wait” or have competing priorities. The invitation goes out and you MUST respond. You say “yes” to the party now so that you can experience the ultimate party (the future kingdom) when it takes place...and here’s the deal, it could begin at ANY moment!

So you have to accept the invitation God is extending to you now! TODAY is the day of salvation! Come, now! Don’t miss out on this party! Accept God’s invitation to life!

2. Extend God's Invitation

In a very real way, we are now the servants in the passage. And we are to go into the highways and hedges and compel people to come into God's party. This is our mission.

We're going to talk in the next few weeks about HOW we are to extend this invitation – it's going to be through praying kingdom prayers and using our kingdom gifts, living with a kingdom purpose.

But, let me just say this. There's no invitation like this one...and there is for sure no party like this one! We've got to extend it to as many people as we can (Rev. 19).

Isaiah 25:6-9 – “**On this mountain** (Zion, but represents where the presence of God is! This is heaven on earth) **the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.** ⁷ **And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.** (The veil of the curse of sin and death!)⁸ **He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.**⁹ **It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”**”

What a party! Talk about FOMO! This is why we give...this is why we go...Let's get the invitation out to as many people as possible so that this party is as packed as can be.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.