

## PARABLES IN LUKE

Dr. Jack L. Arnold  
Lesson 5

### The Parable of the Willing Father Luke 14:15-24

Can we trust God's Word? I am thinking particularly about God's offer of salvation. When God offers salvation to men, is that a genuine offer? Has God sincerely made the offer, even though in His eternal and hidden counsels He knows who will be saved and who will not be saved? Can we trust God's offer of salvation? Will he ever trick or deceive us if we do commit ourselves to Christ? God's offer of salvation in Christ is real and God stands behind that offer with His sovereign power, eternal immutability, and holy love. God never fails any of His promises.

Even if God's offer of salvation is genuine, how willing is God to save men? Does God sincerely desire to save sinners? Does He long to bring men to the Saviour? The "Parable of the Willing Father", or, as it is sometimes called, "The Parable of the Great Supper", will answer every one of these questions for us and hopefully it will cause some spiritually hungry and needy soul to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

#### THE BACKGROUND

Theme. The theme of this parable is the infinite willingness of God to save men if men are only willing to be saved. God is far more willing to save sinners than sinners are willing to be saved.

#### Symbolism

(1) "Certain man" -- This represents God, the Father who in sovereign love and grace is willing to save men if they will sincerely respond to His offer of salvation.

(2) "Dinner" -- This symbolizes the kingdom of God or heaven and may be a picture of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb which shall occur after the second advent of Christ.

(3) "Servant" -- This speaks of Jesus Christ, the servant of God, who offers Himself to men as Saviour and compels men to believe on Him.

Occasion and Setting (14:15): ***"And when one of those who were reclining at table with Him heard, he said to Him, 'Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.'"***

(1) Our Lord went into the home of one of the leading Pharisees of that day to have supper with him and apparently other Pharisees were there as well (14:1). Christ gave a parable about a wedding feast and warned the Pharisees about trying to take a place of prominence among men. The Pharisees were confident that they were the best and most religious people in all Israel and felt they deserved prominence. Our Lord then spoke frankly to the host of the dinner and told him not to invite just relatives, the rich or prominent to dinner, but also to invite the needy (14:12,13).

(2) The Lord was trying to communicate to these religious Pharisees that the people who have a true humble spirit are those who know they are sinners and have fled

to Christ. These shall be rewarded in the final judgment (14:14). Every Jew was taught that there would be a great and prolonged feast when the Messianic kingdom would be set up on the earth after the resurrection. The Jew conceived of the kingdom as a perpetual banquet and so naturally one of the Pharisee responded by saying, ***“Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God”*** (14:15). This religious man thought every “respectable” Jew would have a part in the celebration at the future Messianic kingdom. This Pharisee just assumed he would be in that kingdom because he was a good, moral and righteous Jew. He complacently accepted the fact that he would be numbered among God’s elect in the future kingdom. He was sincere, but sincerely wrong.

(3) Jesus used this wrong thinking of the Pharisee to give this religious man and the other Pharisees present a right understanding of salvation and how to enter into God’s future kingdom. In this parable, He warns these Pharisees that there is great danger that they may miss the kingdom altogether, for only those who by faith accept the invitation of God will be genuinely saved, numbered among the elect, and partake of the future kingdom.

#### THE FATHER’S GENUINE OFFER OF SALVATION (14:16)

***“But He said to him, ‘A certain man was giving a big dinner and he invited many;...’*** -- To understand this parable, we must grasp the Jewish custom of inviting guests to a dinner. The master of the house would send out invitations to the dinner weeks ahead of time. Then, on the day of the dinner, a servant would go to the homes of the invited guests and remind them of the dinner. It was a great insult to the host to refuse the second summons to the dinner.

The master “invited many”. The “many” refers to the frequent offers of salvation that God offered the Jews in the Old Testament, for they were continually informed about the Messiah who would come. The Jews had unlimited gospel opportunity, but refused God’s compassionate calls to turn to Him. They were a stiff-necked and rebellious people.

Just as God offered salvation to the Jews over and over again, so He offers the general call of salvation to sinners. God knew the Jews would reject, but He genuinely offered them salvation, knowing that only a few would actually respond to Christ. God’s outward call of salvation and invitation to receive Christ is genuine, sincere, and on the level. It is a fact that any sinner who turns to Christ shall be saved. God offers salvation to all men without distinction and He stands behind that offer with His own word.

***“Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22).***

***“Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6,7).***

***“Say to them as I live! declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live, Turn back, turn back from you evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezekiel 33:11).***

***“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).***

***“If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37).***

***“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37).***

#### THE FATHER’S PROVISION FOR THE SALVATION OF MEN (14:17)

***“And at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is ready now.’”*** -- When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His servant, Jesus Christ, to the nation of Israel first, for He was the long-awaited Messiah. Christ was the One who fulfilled the Old Testament promises and prophecies concerning the Messiah. Christ offered Himself to the Jews, but He was rejected by the religious leaders and the people in general. They saw no need for a Messiah who would suffer and die for sin. This whole concept of a suffering Messiah was repugnant to the Jew and below his cultured dignity and respectability.

Christ would have saved every Jew if they would have turned to Him, but they refused to do so.

***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Matthew 23:37)***

The Jews were unwilling to come, but Christ was more than willing to save them. Notice carefully, it does not say they “could not” come, but that they “would not”. Christ in Matthew 23 is not stressing a man’s inability to come to Christ, but his responsibility.

All men are responsible to believe on Christ. ***“God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent” (Acts 17:30)***. It is, however, their hardened hearts that keep them from responding to the Saviour. Their own sinfulness causes them to reject Christ.

The servant said, ***“Everything is ready now.”*** When God sent His Son into this world, Christ made a perfect provision for sin and sinners. The death of Christ contains a full supply of everything sinners need to be saved.

Salvation is completed in Christ and there is abundance of pardon in Him. There is no sin He cannot forgive or weary conscience He cannot soothe. Christ invites men to

partake of Him which will bring them into the Father's blessed kingdom. ***"Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).***

THE FATHER'S INVITATION TO SALVATION IS OFTEN REFUSED (14:18-20)

***"But they all began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused!' And another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused!' And another one said, 'I have married a wife and for that reason I cannot come.'"***

Christ offered the Jew a free and gracious salvation, but they found a hundred and one trivial excuses as to why they could not accept Christ. Notice carefully that their excuses were all apparently good ones. There is nothing wrong with buying land or oxen, nor is there anything sinful about getting married. Yet, somehow their materialism and desire for pleasure kept them from accepting Christ. They treated Christ's pleadings for their salvation with scorn and indifference. These Jews were putting the everyday concerns of life before the necessity of spiritual realities. They were taking the normal matters of life and making them more important than Christ and God's kingdom.

In actuality, their excuses were only surface problems and pretexts for far deeper spiritual problems. These Jews would not enter into Christ's kingdom because they really, deep down, hated God and Christ, for they wanted to be their own god. ***"...but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well" (John 15:24).***

We know that men love darkness rather than light and they will often make all kinds of excuses in order to avoid bending their wills to the Sovereign Christ. They beg off and bow out of their responsibility to receive the One True and Living God in Christ. When you ask them to receive Christ, they say, "Not now, but perhaps later!" They go on to say, "As soon as I make a fortune, I will trust Christ! As soon as I pursue all the philosophies of man, then perhaps I will receive Christ! As soon as I have had my fill of pleasure and sex, then perhaps I will turn to the Saviour. As soon as I buy a bigger house, or raise a family, or achieve certain earthly goals, perhaps then I will accept Christ." Excuses, excuses, excuses! The road to hell is paved with multitudes of people who had good excuses but refused to come to Christ. Why? Because under it all they love sin and hate God; they want to be their own god! My friends, infidelity and immorality slay their thousands, but procrastination and excuse-making slay their tens of thousands. Indifference will put a man in hell as quick as adultery or murder!

THE FATHER'S ANGER OVER THE REJECTION OF SALVATION (14:21a)

***"And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry..."*** -- God became angry with Israel when the nation refused to accept Messiah. They rejected all of Christ's pleadings for their salvation. Even God's patience grew short with that stiff-necked and rebellious people.

God is longsuffering with His creatures, but rejection and unbelief of the gospel provokes God's wrath against men. Because of man's rebellion to a holy God, ***"God is angry with the wicked everyday" (Psalms 7:11)***. God is patient with sinners who have heard the gospel up to a point, but then He may decide to turn them over to a reprobate mind if they continue in their rejection.

#### THE FATHER'S EARNEST DESIRE FOR THE SALVATION OF MEN (14:21b-23)

***"And said to the slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'" --*** Notice carefully that this second invitation is to people who were still within the city of Jerusalem, so it must involve some class of Jews other than the respectable religious people. The respectable and religious Jews would have nothing to do with unrespectable, poor and outcast Jews. The Pharisees were haughty and proud. When the religious leaders rejected Christ, Christ turned to the publicans and sinners in Israel and invited them into the Father's kingdom.

Christ offers salvation to all men, but the great majority of people see no need in their lives to be saved. They cannot bring themselves to believe that they are spiritually poor, crippled, blind and lame. They are too proud to admit they are sinners and have need of God in their lives. Social, intellectual and cultural respectability keep many a person away from God's kingdom.

Christ will not be defeated! When one group of people reject Him and God's kingdom, He turns to another group, inviting them to salvation.

***"And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'" --*** Christ offered Himself to the whole of Israel, but only a few responded to Christ. There were just one hundred twenty Jews in the Upper Room waiting for the Day of Pentecost, so we can conclude that only a handful of Jews out of multitudes in that nation truly responded to Christ.

God wants the sinner to know that there is plenty of room in heaven for everyone who truly desires to know the Saviour. God has great love and compassion towards sinners. His longsuffering is inexhaustible. His pity for the lost is not faked or an imaginary thing. God is infinitely willing to save souls and desires the salvation of men. ***"(God) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4)***. However, if men refuse the gospel, God will invite others in their place.

Millions daily hear the gospel of Christ but reject it, and the scripture is true that "narrow is the gate and few there be that find it."

***"And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways along the hedges, and compel them to come in that my house may be filled.'" --*** The servant was told "to compel" them to come to the master's house for the feast. The word "compel" should be translated "constrain," even though they mean the same thing. God commands Christ to compel or constrain men to come to the Saviour. It is obvious that our Lord is not talking about the use of physical force or violence to bring men to Himself, for the gospel of Christ is a gospel of love. This verse does not sanction intolerance or persecution of men who are not Christians or who have difference of religious opinion. The word "compel"

refers to logical and moral constraint as Christ urges men to come to Himself through the preaching of the gospel. Christ does constrain men to come to Himself, but this is through His drawing work whereby men are made willing to come to Christ. ***“No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44).***

As Christ’s servants, we also, through the preaching of the gospel, are to invite, urge, exhort and even threaten men with damnation to come to Christ.

***“And when they had set a day for him, the came to him (Paul) at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening” (Acts 28:23).***

***“Therefore knowing the fear (terror) of the Lord, we persuade men...” (II Corinthians 5:11).***

We must do battle with the unsaved so as to win them to Christ. Let us always deal with the non-Christian world in love but let us also show them the urgency of their commitment to Christ. We must say, “I cannot; I will not; I dare not let you go on in your life without inviting you to Christ and warning you of the consequences if you reject the Savior!” If a person dies without having come to Christ, it had been better that he had never been born!

God will find men to fill up His house. If one person or group rejects His invitation to salvation, He will go to another person or group, for God in His sovereignty will have a full heaven. The invitation to salvation is open to all men now, but one day God’s banquet room of heaven will be filled. God knows the number of His elect and the offer of salvation will be made until that elect number is reached. Then there will be no more gospel opportunity for anyone. There will be no more invitation given to receive Christ; therefore, the Bible is true when it says, “Today is the day of salvation!” My friends, there may be no tomorrow!

THE FATHER’S STERN WARNING TO THOSE WHO REJECT SALVATION  
(14:24)

***“For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.”*** -- Those Jews who were invited to receive Christ by the Father refused this gracious invitation and God clearly says they shall have no part in His heaven. Heaven is for those who have responded positively to God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Those who have not the Son shall be excluded from heaven’s banquet.

Why do men perish? Is it because God will not save men? No! It is because men will not come to Christ. Men are sinners and have a million reasons and excuses why they do not need the Saviour. Their own rebellion, indifference and foolish actions keep them from God’s kingdom. If men are not saved, it is not because God will not save

them. The Father is ready to receive all who come to Him by Christ. Heaven is open to all who believe in Christ and follow Him. However, the vast majority of people do not want to be saved because they have no need and do not will to come to Christ. Man is lost because he is a sinner and willfully chooses against Christ, but he is saved purely by God's grace. The scriptures are clear that "***many are called but few are chosen***" (*Matthew 22:14*).

## CONCLUSION

There are three basic observations that you should make about this parable if you are a sinsick and spiritually needy sinner.

First, salvation and entrance into God's kingdom is represented as an invitation to a feast. A dinner party is a joyful occasion marked by gladness, music and laughter. The gospel is not an invitation to a funeral (even though some people act as though becoming a Christian is equivalent to being soaked for a week in formaldehyde), but it is an invitation to joy. It is an invitation to experience real life. God does not invite people to drudgery and darkness, but to an exciting, challenging and wonderful life in Christ.

Second, salvation is always preceded by an invitation to receive Christ. A person may accept or reject the invitation of Christ to enter God's kingdom. Somehow the divine plan and man's responsibility work together so that salvation is all of God and rejection of Christ is all of man. Nevertheless, a sinner must make a decision in his life if he is to be saved.

Third, salvation is always of God, and the Father is ready and willing to save sinners. He will not turn away one sinner who truly turns to Jesus Christ. He is far more willing to save you than you are to be saved; therefore, taste and see that the Lord is good!