

# The Privilege of the Gospel

## Luke 14:15-24

This morning we are in the fourth week of a study called “Go Fish!” When I say, “Go fish,” I wonder what comes to mind. Some of us likely think of the childhood card game that we have played with friends or family where we strive to get matching cards. Others of us likely think of the process of going fishing. This is exactly what I think of when I hear the statement. One of my favorite statements to hear from my kids or my friends is, “Let’s go fish.” I enjoy getting outdoors, getting in a boat, going to a river, finding a good pond, and taking a few hours to catch as many fish as I can. Growing up in Alabama this was a way life and I have many fond memories of fishing. While I would love to spend a lot of time telling you fishing stories, that is not why we have gathered today. And, truthfully, I guarantee that my fishing stories may be amusing, but I assure you that they would not be life changing.

The fishing that we are talking about here today is fishing for men. Jesus took the common practice of fishing and radically transformed its meaning when He called His first disciples. According to Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17, and Luke 5:10b, Jesus specifically called them saying, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.” So, Jesus addresses these fishermen where they were in their trade and occupation of exerting effort and energy into catching fish and then says, “Guys, follow Me, and I will give your life greater purpose and meaning. Follow Me, and I will make you to catch men so that your lives and others’ lives are changed forever.” The picture for them and for us is powerful and dramatic. As a follower of Christ, my life is no longer about me. My life belongs to Jesus, so I now live for Him. His calling and purpose for me is to fish for men.

To help us understand and apply this teaching, we have been answering several questions. A few weeks back we started by asking the question, “Who are you fishing for?” I challenged you throughout this study to make a list of friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors in your life who you can be sharing Jesus with. Just like Matthew in the Bible, we should each strive to be intentional about reaching those in our sphere of influence. Last week we answered another question, “What next? What is the key to reaching my sphere of influence for Jesus?” We found that the key to reaching people is the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel is simply that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again from the grave. The word “Gospel” literally means “Good News.” It is amazingly good news that man can be saved and changed because of the work that Christ has done. Because it is good news, it is reasonable to think that we would want to share this news with others. Because it is good news, one would think that this message could never be silenced in our own lives. You can’t contain good news. It comes out. However, when it comes to the Good News of the Gospel there are many Christians who don’t actively share their faith. In fact, a recent study by LifeWay showed that 61% of evangelical Christians had not told a soul about Christ in the previous six months. I believe that **Alvin Reid** was right when he said, “Lost people are more amazed at our silence than offended by our message.” We must refuse to remain silent when it comes to sharing this Good News of Jesus.

I am not suggesting that I know all the reasons why we don't share our faith, but there are some that quickly come to mind. Some are afraid of the consequences. Some fear rejection. Some take it personally when people don't respond well. Some feel they aren't qualified or capable. We assume that we must be good at presentations and public speaking in order to share the Gospel. There are many different thoughts and perspectives that can hinder us from sharing the Good News. Let me ask you, "How do you view sharing the Gospel? How do you feel when you think of sharing the Good News with someone?" I think if we are honest, we all feel some of those concerns or anxieties that I have already mentioned. But, my hope today is to help us see that this isn't how we should view it. The question I hope to answer is, "How should we view sharing the Good News?" The simple answer is that we should see it from God's perspective. My prayer is that we will get to the point where we see sharing the Gospel as a great privilege. It is an honor to know the Lord and to partner with Him in His mission to save souls and change lives.

### Read Text

In this passage of Scripture, once again we see Jesus ministering to the Pharisees. The Pharisees were a group of religious leaders who had basically formed their own religion. It is true that God had established a covenant with the Jewish people and had given them 10 commandments to live by. However, the Pharisees didn't seem so much concerned about the relationship, they were focused on the religious works. And, of course, when you depend upon works for righteousness no work is good enough. So, they continued to add and add to the Law until in Jesus' day they had over 600 laws. Do you see what was happening? They were so caught up on their religion of good works and family heritage that they missed the key point of having a relationship with God.

It is in this context that we pick up the passage of Scripture. As Jesus was sitting at the table enjoying a meal in the house of this leader of the Pharisees there were many Pharisees around. As Jesus eats the bread and enjoys the meal, He was teaching about the resurrection that will take place in the future. Suddenly, one of the Pharisees says out loud, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God." This was a super spiritual comment to shout out in the moment. I imagine the other Pharisees said, "Well Amen, brother!" This special dinner seems to have reminded him of the banquet that would one day take place in God's Kingdom. There is no doubt that this guest was excited. His words were good and even true. Everyone who is a part of the kingdom of God is indeed blessed. Everyone who has a relationship with God and fellowships with Him is blessed. The man's words were true, but they also revealed a serious flaw. His words show that he assumed, because of his Jewish heritage and religion, that he was guaranteed to be a part of the Kingdom of God. The Jewish people in that day lived under Roman authority but they envisioned and longed for a day when God would set up a new kingdom, one in which they would be restored to fellowship with their fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets.

It is on the heels of this false assumption that Jesus gives us this incredible parable. A parable was a word picture. It was a visual illustration that Jesus used to teach spiritual truths. So, picture the scene. Jesus is sitting at a dinner with a religious crowd. One of them speaks up and basically says, "I am so excited that I will enjoy a meal in the Kingdom of God!" Then Jesus uses that

backdrop and the very statement about a “feast” to paint a picture of the truth. There are three main people or peoples that I want us to study and learn from today.

### **I. The Desire of the Master (vs. 16-17)**

In this parable, each of the main characters represent someone. In this case the “man” or the “master” is referring to God. Jesus is saying to the Pharisees, “I know that you think that you are already a part of the Kingdom of God, but let me show you how God is working, what He is like, and what He is doing.” God is like a Master who gave a big dinner and invited many to attend. Not only did He plan the dinner, but He has also made sure that everything was prepared and ready. This picture would have had special meaning to the Jews of Jesus’ day. In that culture when you invited guests to a special dinner, you would typically tell them the day, but you would not tell them the exact hour that everything would occur. Once the host determined how many people would attend, he would make sure that the correct amount of food was prepared. Once everything was ready, the Master of the house would send out his workers to tell the guests, “Come; for everything is ready now.” This call to come was the signal that the banquet was beginning.

Please understand what Jesus is saying. He is giving us a picture of the new life that we have when we believe in Him and commit to follow Him. This is the Christian life. It is like a celebration and feast. So often people view the Christian life as something that is boring or restricting. Oftentimes people feel that Christians just simply can’t enjoy life. But here Jesus is comparing the Christian life to a wonderful feast that we enjoy. It is a celebration of epic proportions! And it is a celebration that never ends. This is what God is calling us to. The question to be answered is “Why?” Why does God call us to this wonderful feast? Let me ask you, “Why do you invite people over to your home for a meal? What about special occasions? Why do you invite the people that you do?” It is because you care about them, want to know them, want to share with them, etc. You want to enjoy a relationship with them. The reality is that God invites all to be a part of His Kingdom because He loves and cares for all of us. In spite of our sins and failures and mess-ups, He desires to have a relationship with us. He wants us to come to Him. He even pleads with us to come to Him. God has done everything possible to invite us to His banquet. He has sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross. Jesus has risen from the grave and has done everything possible to make a way for us to be saved so God still invites, “Come! Everything is ready!”

It is amazing to consider that the very God of heaven wants to have fellowship with us. This picture of fellowship with God is seen very clearly in **Revelation 3:20** and interestingly it also describes this relationship in terms of a feast. In this passage Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will DINE with him, and he with Me.” Notice from this passage that it is the Lord Who is knocking and seeking and pursuing a relationship with us. He stands patiently knocking at our heart’s door, continually seeking for us to know Him. But, please also notice from this passage that this appeal is to all. Jesus didn’t come only for some or for the few. He came for anyone and everyone who would respond to His invitation. The Scripture says, “If ANYONE hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me.” It is powerful to realize

that in every other major religion in the world (i.e. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc.) we continually see man seeking after God. But, it is only in Christianity that we see that God actually seeks man. In fact, every other religion's answer to our need is "Do. Do this act, this deed, this good work." But God says, "Done. I've already done everything for you. The meal is prepared, by faith come and enjoy." God invites us to fellowship with Him and, through Christ, He stands knocking on the door waiting for us to receive Him. When Jesus said, "I will come in and dine with him," the word used was specifically a reference to dinner. In the culture of that day there were three meals. Breakfast was very simple, lunch was a small morsel, but supper was a big meal. Dinner was the main meal of the day. This was a meal to be lingered over and enjoyed. This was the meal where you took your time, enjoyed the food, and enjoyed the presence of those around you. Hours would be spent together at the dinner. This is the meal that Christ speaks of when He said, "I will dine with you." This is a clear picture of our need for a relationship with the Lord. Won't you open your heart to Him today? But, furthermore for those of us who already have, the truth of Christ knocking on the door should give us confidence when talking with others about this Gospel. We don't have to wonder if we are alone. We don't have to wonder if it's God's will for someone to be saved. With confidence we can share the Good News knowing that God desires all to be saved and that Jesus is knocking on the doors of people's hearts. **2 Peter 3:9** says plainly, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." **1 Timothy 2:3-6** also explains, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time." The Master's desire is that all would come to fellowship with Him.

## **II. The Distractions of the Many (vs. 18-20)**

There is a second group of people and a second important truth that we see here. We see that there were many who were invited to join in the feast, but not all were willing to come. Those who made excuses represent those who hear the Gospel message yet do not respond to it by faith. No matter how badly we want it for someone, the truth is that each person must respond individually to the invitation. **\*\*ILL:** Years ago, Holman Hunt painted a picture from the scene described in Revelation 3:20. He painted a famous picture of Jesus wearing a crown of thorns, standing outside the locked door of the human heart. In the picture, Jesus was patiently knocking and calling for admittance. A copy of the painting now hangs in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. When it was first displayed, critics came to comment on the work. One of them turned to the painter and said, "Mr. Hunt, you have painted a masterpiece, but you have made one very serious mistake. You have painted a door without a handle." "That is no mistake," replied the artist, "The handle is on the inside." The same is true with us. Jesus knocks, invites, and pleads, but man must respond. Man has to open the door. In the case of this parable the same was true. The Master had invited these guests to come. The various people knew that they had been invited. They knew that the time was drawing near. They knew that this was a special opportunity. The Master had gone to great lengths to prepare and provide for this feast. He greatly wanted to relate to these people. So, he sends his messengers out to let them know it was time. However, he

quickly discovered that they really didn't want to come. In fact, they gave one excuse after another. The bottom line is that their lives were filled with distractions. They had allowed other things to be more important than the wonderful fellowship and meal that they had been invited to experience.

Such is the case still today. Jesus even warned of this in **Matthew 7:13-14** saying, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

The responses of the three men reveal several distractions that often hinder people from receiving Jesus. They were pursuing the broad path that leads to destruction. Notice these things alone weren't bad, but they so greatly valued them that they allowed them to become priority and used them to make excuses for their absence at the Master's table.

### **A. The Distraction of Riches**

The first man said, "I have bought a piece of land and I need to go look at it." This man allowed his possessions to get in the way of experiencing the wonderful feast that had been prepared. He was basically saying, "I have bought something that is far more important than attending the feast. I have a more important investment that I have made." I'm not picking on the man here, but in that culture the purchasing of land was a long and complicated process. He would have had many opportunities to examine the land before and after the celebration. And this feast was taking place at dinner time, which means that it was evening time. How much daylight was he really going to have to examine the land? The point is simply that his possessions and riches prevented him from realizing his need to be at the dinner and hindered him from seeing the urgency of the moment.

Jesus also dealt with this in **Matthew 19:16-22** in the account of the rich young ruler. Perhaps you remember that he came to Jesus. He had wealth, possessions, and influence, but something was still missing. He asked Jesus what good deed he needed to do to have eternal life. Jesus said that he needed to keep the commandments. The young man was confident and said, "I've kept them all since I was a kid." Then Jesus spoke directly to his need. He said in **verse 21**, "If you wish to be complete (whole), go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Do you remember what Jesus had said was the greatest commandment? It was to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And what was the second? It was to love your neighbor as yourself. The point is that this man had an outward form of religion, but Jesus knew that he neither loved God supremely or his neighbor as himself, and the greatest evidence was his cling to wealth and possessions. **Verse 22** summarized, "But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property." In other words, he chose to pursue his wealth and possessions and missed the opportunity to feast.

### **B. The Distraction of Responsibilities**

The servant continued to the next man who had been invited. He shared the good news that the banquet was ready. Everything was prepared. It was time to celebrate and enjoy the feast, but he quickly found that this second man, too, was distracted. This second man said, "I have bought 5 yoke of oxen, and I am going to go try them out." This was a total of 10 oxen that had been purchased. What was the purpose of oxen? It was primarily for plowing and working in the fields. This second man was a farmer. We all know that farmers are hard workers and they have great responsibilities. They typically have more work than can ever be accomplished in just a day. It appears that he had purchased these oxen because he had a lot of work to get done. That was the only reason that he would have bought so many. I am not criticizing his responsibilities or his work, but it is clear that he had allowed his responsibilities to hinder him from enjoying the feast with the Master. He was basically saying, "I am too busy. I've got work that I have to do now." Please understand clearly this morning that busyness is a powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal. It has been said well that, "If Satan can't make you bad, he'll make you busy." In this case, this man was so caught up in his work that he missed out on the banquet. But again think about it, how much work was he really going to accomplish out in the fields as dark was drawing near? The point is that his priorities were all out of whack and he felt the needs of his oxen were greater than the needs of his own soul. **Matthew 16:26** causes us to stop and consider, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" I assure you that neither oxen in a field nor any other responsibility in this world is worthy of you losing your own soul.

### **C. The Distraction of Relationships**

Here's a big one. "Well, I would come to the banquet, but I have married a wife and I am now unable to attend." Now, I don't know if he is saying, "Hey, we're in our honeymoon phase and I can't be at the dinner." Or if he's saying, "She's my boss and won't let me come." All we know is that this man was proving that there was another relationship in his life that was more important than his relationship with the Master. Of course, it is obvious once again that this was only an excuse. Weddings in that day weren't surprises. This man knew well in advance that he was getting married, but the point is that he allowed his relationship to distract him from the opportunity that was in front of him. We see this all the time in our culture and even in the church as we allow relationships with others to sometimes take precedence over our relationship with God. In fact, without realizing some model this for their kids as a way of life. They are so caught up in their pursuits they end up reflecting a lifestyle that says, "I'll focus on God when it's convenient, but if I have another commitment, option, or sporting event, well God will just have to wait." My point is simply that we must not allow any relationship to be more important than our relationship with the Lord.

My point in sharing these distractions this morning is to help us see that these distractions still hinder many today from coming to know the Lord. We see many different distractions and hear many different excuses, but the bottom line is that these men simply didn't want to participate in

the banquet. Perhaps they thought they would receive another invitation at a later date. Perhaps they hoped for a time and opportunity that was more convenient. We don't know their true motivation, but we do know that they made the same mistake that so many still make today. They delayed in responding and settled for far less than what the Master had in store. Please understand that there is nothing wrong with owning a farm, examining the things you buy, fulfilling your many responsibilities, or spending an evening with your spouse. But, we must be careful that these good things don't hinder us from the things that are eternal. In the case of those who rejected the Master's invitation, Jesus said in **verse 24**, "For I tell you, none of these men who were invited shall taste of my dinner." Those are sobering words. They were never again to have an opportunity.

In the same way that many allow these distractions to hinder them from saying "Yes" to follow the Lord and to fellowship with Him, as believers today we must also not allow these same distractions to hinder us from sharing the Good News. We've got to get our priorities back in order and realize the urgency of the Master's invitation.

### **III. The Delight of the Messengers (vs. 21-24)**

Finally, we see the servants or the messengers in the text. The servants represent all who have believed in Jesus and belong to Him. Everyone who trusts in Christ as Savior and Lord is called to be a servant of Christ. This is truly a privileged place to be. It is an honor to belong to the Master and an even greater honor to be invited to partner with Him in His work. Notice what these servants delighted in.

#### **A. The Messengers Delight in the Compassion of the Master**

Watch the scene unfold. The servants have been sent out by the Master to go announce that everything has been prepared and the feast is ready. But, their message has been rejected by those who were first invited. So, what did they do? Before they even returned back home they went to those they could find, anybody they could find, and invited them to come to the dinner. Specifically, they went to the poor, the crippled, and the lame. These were the kind of people that were considered outcasts among the Jews. They were despised by society. These were the weak, the homeless, the sick and forgotten. These were those who had nothing to lose. In having a banquet most people would think to invite those who are famous and those who are close, but the point is clear. These servants knew that the Master had compassion for all. He was willing for all to come to the banquet. He wanted nobody left out or left behind. These were the very people that Jesus came to save. **Luke 19:10** declares, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Aren't you thankful that God has compassion for all? Aren't you thankful that He reaches out to the broken, wounded, forgotten, sick, and outcast. Friend, this was us. We were poor and broken in our sin. We are sick and blind, hopelessly lost. But God invited us to be a part of this amazing feast. We are the messengers. We must delight in God's compassion for all. We have first-hand experience of how far His love goes, how deeply His grace flows, and how wide His arms reach.

This should give us confidence as we meet and interact with people. There isn't a single person that we can meet that He isn't willing to save. There isn't a single person that we can talk to that God doesn't have compassion for. There isn't a single life that Jesus didn't lay down His own life for. We must delight in the amazing compassion of the Lord.

### **B. The Messengers Delight in the Calling of the Master**

The servant explained, "Master, we have searched and found many and have brought them here. Your house is full of people who have come to feast, but there is still room." Was the Master content with the work? Was he content with who was present? No. The Master then commanded the servant, "Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled." The Master still longs for His house to be filled. He still longs for all to come fellowship and feast with Him. Yes, many through the centuries have come by faith to believe in Christ, but the message is still clear today, "There is still room." The old song said it this way, "There's room at the cross for you. Though millions have come, there's still room for one. Yes, there's room at the cross for you." Friend, this is our invitation. We must accept it and then we simply share it with others. Sometimes we make the sharing of the Gospel so difficult. We think we have to know all the right answers, have the perfect outline, and the convincing argument. But, I am convinced that sharing the Gospel can be as easy as having a conversation and offering an invitation. **Alvin Reid** said it simply, "We need to stop putting evangelism in a different category than just talking to people." Let me ask you, how would you go about inviting your neighbors over for a meal? Or how would you go about inviting friends to a party? Would you have a formal presentation? No. Would you have a 5-point outline? Probably not. I imagine that you would just have a simple conversation where you invited them. By doing so, you would show that you cared and that you genuinely desired their presence. That care and concern would speak volumes to them. The privilege of the Gospel is that God has offered us the amazing honor of partnering with Him to be His messengers to simply invite others to be a part of His celebration. We don't have to be afraid. We don't have to worry. We just need to be faithful to invite people to know the Master. Church, let's go to the highways and hedges and meet people where they are, care for them as they are, and invite them to know the Lord. **\*\*ILL:** Think of this for a moment. The data from 2014 shows that the Harrisonburg Metro Area Population was over 131,000 people. That is likely over 150,000 today. There is not a single person here that God doesn't care for. There isn't a single person here that Jesus didn't die for. There isn't a single person here that God wants us to ignore. He has called us to go to all and to invite them to come to Him. Let's realize the privilege it is to be called and move forward in obedience.

**Warren Wiersbe** summarized this whole passage well, "The Christian life is a feast, not a funeral, and all are invited to come. Each of us as believers must herald the message, 'Come, for all things are now ready!' God wants to see His house filled and yet there is room. He wants us

to go home, go into the streets and lanes, go into the highways and hedges, and go into all the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”