

Jesus' Stories: The Great Banquet

Luke 14:15-24

Key Points:

Most of Jesus' Parables had a message for the hearers, which includes us reading them. They often challenged the listener to identify which character they were in the story. The Pharisees were often portrayed in the parables as a way of criticising them. This parable is clearly about invitations to the Kingdom of God, to eternal life with Jesus. It is worth us trying to identify who we think we might be in His parables too.

Three groups of people are invited – the first being those well known to the householder. But they make excuses for not coming, which they hope will be accepted as reasons. When we are asked to do something we would prefer to avoid we often seek an excuse. If it can be portrayed as a reason, we feel better about it, although it is still an excuse. Jesus clearly means this group to represent the Pharisees, who are rejecting Him.

The second group invited are drawn from the general public, maybe the deserving ones. Unlike the Pharisees, when they receive the invitation, they accept enthusiastically. But there is room for more, so a third group who are invited, potentially “undesirables”. And they welcome Jesus' invitation and accept as well. Jesus wants to include them. But when the first group try to change their mind, they are told that they are not welcome.

But we are not like these in any of the groups – we are actually the servant in the story. We have agreed to work for God and there are two messages for us as His servant. We should invite others to the Kingdom of God and we should not exclude anyone. And we should give it priority. Inviting others to meet Jesus is urgent and important.

Questions:

1. Do you find it easy to start up a conversation with strangers? (ignoring the current constraints of lock down). Who do you usually chat to after the Sunday service?
2. Do you leave things until the last minute, or act immediately, when given a task?
3. If you decide not to do something, do you feel more comfortable if have an excuse? What is the difference between an excuse and a reason?
4. Have you any regrets about giving an excuse and not doing something in the past? Why did you decide to make an excuse on that occasion?
5. How urgent and important is it to invite people outside the church's immediate circle to hear about Jesus. Do we have any reason, as opposed to excuse (if there is a difference) for not inviting them? Do we subconsciously exclude any people? Why?
6. *Start Praying:* God, thank you for my faith. Help me to serve You by sharing what it means to me. Help me not to make excuses for not inviting people to meet with you.
7. *Start Doing:* In small groups, or as a whole, spend time praying for one another to have more courage to invite people to learn about and know Jesus.