

Banquet for Beggars

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, once again we have gathered because we are a forgetful people.

We need to remember your loss. We need to remember how you have been faithful. We need to remember your grace, remember your love.

So please now speak to us through the reading and preaching of your word. That our lives may be governed by you.

And so we might live in a way that pleases you as humble people who praise your glorious grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Luke 14, 1-24 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

[1 : 14] And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? But they remained silent.

Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on the Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?

And they could not reply to these things. Now he told a parable to those who were invited. When he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor.

Lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him. And he who invited you both will come and say to you, Give your place to this person. And then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.

But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, So that when your host comes, he may say to you, Friend, move up higher. Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

[2 : 25] For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted. 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.

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. But he said to him, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

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 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.

[3 : 46] 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, 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. 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 are invited shall taste my banquet. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

In a New York Times article entitled, Not to Leadership Material. Good. The world needs followers. That's the title of the article. Susan Cain writes and mentions that in 1934 there was a woman, a

young woman named Sarah Pollard, who applied for admission to Vassal College. In those days, parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire about their children who were applying to college. And she, unfortunately, had a very honest dad.

[5 : 05] That's actually a good thing. And he wrote on the questionnaire, she's really more of a follower type than a leader. Which, if you know that virtually every college in the U.S. lists leadership as one of the main qualities that it looks for in admission, of course, is not the kind of thing you want on your application.

But Sarah, surprisingly, was admitted to Vassal, whose admissions officers wrote her a personal note, explaining that they had enough leaders at Vassal.

In fact, they needed more followers. In her article, Cain continues to argue that the popular notion of leadership centers too restrictively on this political or business power.

And it's seen as just ordering people around. That's what people see as leadership. In contrast, she notes that there is actually a growing emphasis nowadays on what organizational psychology calls followership.

And a good follower is defined as someone who is courageous, honest, and credible, and is committed to a purpose or a principle or a person that's outside themselves.

[6 : 18] And Cain continues to argue that a disproportionate glorification of leadership skills has emptied leadership of its meaning so that, quote, she writes, It attracts those who are motivated by the spotlight rather than by the ideas and people they serve.

It teaches students to be a leader for the sake of being in charge rather than in the name of a cause or idea they care about deeply. The admissions officers at Vassal College somehow intuitively understood this back in 1934.

In our passage for today, we see a similar phenomenon. Like the high school students preparing for college admission by padding their resumes with leadership roles, so-called leadership roles that they care nothing about.

The Jewish religious leaders were engaging in religious hypocrisy, padding their resumes for admission to heaven with their legalistic observances of the law when their hearts were actually far from God, when they really didn't care.

And these religious leaders, they believed that surely if anyone is admitted to the kingdom of heaven, we would be. We're the leaders. We're the qualified ones.

[7 : 42] But in this passage, Jesus systematically dismantles their false assurance and makes the point that it's those who humbly acknowledge their unworthiness before God that will be seated at God's banqueting table.

That's the main point of this passage. And Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and denounces them for pursuing legalism rather than love, honor rather than humility, prosperity rather than those who are impoverished, poverty.

So let's look at their pursuit of legalism rather than love. In last week's passage, Jesus taught that the door to enter the kingdom of God is narrow and the time left to enter is short and that many who think that they are entering are mistaken.

And in verses 1 to 6 of our passage, Jesus points out that one reason why the Pharisees are mistaken in their assumption that they will be admitted to the kingdom of God is that their religion is a legalism, not love.

And by contrasting legalism and love, I'm not echoing the popular kind of shallow slogans like love wins or love is all you need. It's popular to criticize Christians who teach people to live according to God's laws as legalistic.

[8 : 58] But a Christian that tries to obey God's laws is not legalistic. They're just law abiding. And they deserve to be commended. A legalist is someone who strictly adheres to the letter of the law while violating the spirit of the law, the heart of the law.

Someone who keeps the law in superficial appearance only and not in actual substance. That's what a true legalist is. And that's what the Pharisees were doing. Which is why Jesus denounced them earlier in Luke 11, 39 to 44 for outwardly washing their cups for the sake of ritual purity, but then inwardly in their hearts being full of greed and wickedness.

Legalism is the mask that hypocrisy wears. The two are intimately related. So with that in mind, let's look at the Pharisees' legalism, what it looked like in verses 1 to 2.

One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. So this is now the fourth Sabbath controversy in the Gospel of Luke.

The command to observe a Sabbath day of rest once a week was an important command for faithful Jews. And the Pharisees objected to the fact that Jesus frequently healed people on the Sabbath because they considered that work and therefore a violation of the Sabbath.

[10:24] And here, as Jesus is dining with the ruler of the Pharisees, all the other religious leaders present were all observing Jesus carefully. Maybe he'll do the same thing again.

They're watching and lurking in the back and ready to pounce in the event that Jesus would take the slightest misstep on the Sabbath. And perfect timing, almost as if this were a setup, behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.

Dropsy is a condition where fluids accumulate abnormally underneath the skin. And sometimes it's so their body literally swells up like this.

And it causes severe pain. And the ancient Jewish rabbis argued that dropsy was caused by sin, that it was a divine judgment for sin, especially sexual sins.

So this man not only had a physical deformity, he also represents for the other guests spiritual uncleanness, an object of divine judgment.

[11:30] What would Jesus do in this situation? A man is clearly in dire need of his compassion and healing, but it's the Sabbath.

And Jesus is dining with the ruler of the Pharisees of all people. Perhaps detecting a trap, Jesus issues a preemptive strike in verse 3.

And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? Notice the word respond. The Pharisees haven't said anything yet, but Jesus already responds to them because he is the Son of God, the ultimate prophet who knows people's hearts, he knows what they're thinking, and he responds to them.

And remember that Jesus already rebuked them for their hypocrisy regarding the Sabbath. It's not unbiblical to heal on the Sabbath. It was only a violation of the human traditions that they have added to it.

And so Jesus has already taught them this, but still they have not learned their lesson because they are silent. This is the silence of defiance, silence of pride, reluctance to admit that they're in the wrong and to submit to Jesus.

[12:47] And so Jesus, it says, took the man with dropsy and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen to a well on the Sabbath, they will not immediately pull him out?

The expected answer is yes. Of course they would immediately rescue their son or their ox that has fallen into a well on the Sabbath. If you see a child drowning in the lake, would you not ignore the sign that says, No swimming, and go in and jump in to rescue the child?

No. Surely that's an emergency for which an exception should be made, that no swimming sign is there for people's sake, and someone's drowning, clearly that something needs to be done about that person.

It's not unlawful to heal on the Sabbath, but even the Pharisees made exception for extenuating circumstances. So even the Pharisees who added all kinds of unnecessary and excessive regulation around the Sabbath, they made allowances for rescuing a person or an ox that had fallen into a well.

It's common sense. It's basic decency. And Jesus says, Likewise, it is lawful and good to heal this man on the Sabbath. In Luke 11, 32, Jesus charged the Pharisees with legalistically observing the minutiae of the law while neglecting the more important parts of the law, neglecting the justice and the love of God.

[14:20] And the same charge applies here, because while trying to observe the Sabbath in their extreme and excessive attention to detail, they were neglecting love for their neighbors, which is part of the greatest commandment.

Their religion was a mere legalism without love, and for that reason, they're disqualified from entry into the kingdom of God. And the Pharisees, after all this, it says in verse 6, could not reply to these things.

They're now silent in shame. Then in verses 7 to 11, Jesus highlights another aspect of the Pharisees' hypocrisy by exposing the way they seek honor rather than humility.

It says in verse 7 that Jesus told this parable when he noticed how those who had been invited chose the places of honor as they arrived. Social status is carefully observed in most human cultures, even in supposedly egalitarian contexts like ours.

But this was especially the case in the ancient world. So for this reason, social status played a big role when it came to formal banquets like this, and the seating arrangement was very important.

[15:32] The most honored seats at the banquet were seats that were next to or near the host of the party. And the seating order was determined by a person's age or rank.

In this case, it seems it was by rank because they chose the places of honor and those who are more prominent. He mentions those who are more prominent. And so guests were arriving, but they were choosing for themselves the seats of honor.

And Jesus' observingness says this to them in verses 8 to 10. When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor. Let someone more distinguished than you be invited by him.

And he who invited you both will come and say to you, give your place to this person. And then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place so that when your host comes, he may say to you, friend, move up higher.

Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. So Jesus is teaching, this is an allusion to Proverbs 25, 67. And it's pretty straightforward, right? At a wedding feast, don't take the seat of honor just in case someone that's more prominent than you have a higher rank than you comes.

[16:42] And then the host will say, well, please, actually, that seat's reserved for someone else. Please get out. And if you have to get out after the party's already begun because all the other seats are already taken, the seats that you could have occupied are all taken, now you have to take the lowest seat.

And this is described very graphically. It says you will have to begin with shame to take the lowest place. You can just picture this person as shamefully getting up from the seat that he was sitting on and then walking down that wall of shame all past all the chairs to the last seat.

But if you sit in the lowest place, from the beginning, Jesus says, your host will ask you, please move up higher. And you will get to move up and be honored in the presence of all the other guests. And from that, Jesus concludes with the general principle in verse 11, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

This is true of human relationships and people who are accustomed to bragging, pulling rank, or seeking prominent positions in society should take note of this command.

[17:59] Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for loving the best seat in the synagogues earlier in Luke 11. They wanted to be highly regarded. They wanted to be seen as important. They wanted to be honored by men rather than seeking the honor from God.

They sought men's approval rather than God's approval. But Jesus is teaching here that it's those who humble themselves will be exalted by God, and so we ought to be humble in our relationship with one another.

It's pride that goes before a fall. Humility comes before honor. But these verses are not dealing merely with the importance of humility in human relationships.

Please look at verse 7 again with me. It says, Now Jesus told a parable to those who were invited. So this is a parable. It's a metaphor or a similitude that uses something that is well known to illustrate something that is less known.

So while it is applicable at the literal level in interpersonal relationships among humans, Jesus shares it in response to people choosing, Jesus is responding to the people who were choosing the honor seats at the party.

[19:09] But this principle applies not only to human banquets but also to the banquet of God. Just as we ought to relate humbly to our human hosts, we ought to relate humbly to our divine host.

And we see this point in several details of the parable. Jesus could have chosen any kind of feast to illustrate his point, but he intentionally chooses a wedding feast.

Why? That's not an accident because throughout the Old Testament, God describes himself as the husband or the bridegroom of his chosen people. For example, it says in Isaiah 54, 5-6, For your

maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth that he is called.

For the Lord has called you like a wife, deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. So God here is described like a husband who redeems and calls to himself an unfaithful wife that has been cast off.

So what's in view here is a marriage supper of God described in Revelation 19. It's a picture of heaven. And we can see this point also in the word invite.

[20 : 26] If you scan verses 7-24 in our passage, you will notice that the word invite is repeated many times. And the Greek word that is translated here as invite is actually the same word that is often translated as call, that God calls us.

Early in Luke 5-32, Jesus said, I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. God calls sinners to repentance and calls sinners into his kingdom. And God calls his chosen people to enter into covenant relationship with him as his bride.

So then the point that Jesus is driving home in this parable is this, only those who humbly acknowledge their unworthiness unworthiness will be seated at God's banqueting table.

If you want to be honored in the kingdom of God, humble yourself before God. Acknowledge your sins. Admit your unworthiness. Don't show off your credentials.

Don't vaunt your service activities. Instead, humble yourself before him and then he will exalt you.

At this point, we might think to ourselves, well, at least, even if prideful people get humiliated in front of all the other guests, hey, they still get to sit at the lowest place at God's marriage supper, right?

[21 : 44] So you might say that. So does that mean that these Pharisees will be saved? That they'll be part of the kingdom of God? If we say that, I think we're pressing the incidental details of the parable a little too far.

I don't think that this parable is intended to make that point. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted. That's an echo of what Jesus said earlier in Luke 13, 28-30 where he warns that the Pharisees will see people from east to west and from north and south all enter in the kingdom of God and recline at table with him, but then find themselves excluded and cast off.

And then Jesus says to them, behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last. And there, the last doesn't mean that you're least in the kingdom of God.

It means that you are excluded. You're cast out from the kingdom of God. So I think the same meaning applies here. To be humiliated at the banquet and asked to empty your seat for someone else is a sign of exclusion.

The point of, and this point is confirmed in the last part of our passage. When Jesus saw the Pharisees, their disapproval of Jesus healing a man with dropsy on the Sabbath, he denounced their legalism in contrast to love.

[23 : 11] And then he also denounced their pursuit of honor rather than humility. And now Jesus makes another observation, namely that the ruler of the Pharisees had invited his friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors, prominent members of society, but not the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.

The man with dropsy after he had received healing left. Jesus uses this as an opportunity to teach that the kingdom of God belongs, figuratively speaking, not to the prosperous but to the poor.

So let's read verses 12 to 14 together. I'll read out loud if you would follow along with me. Verses 12 to 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.

As sinful human beings, we are by nature selfish, so our natural inclination is to do favors for people who can return the favor. We call it networking, right?

[24 : 28] We size people up and down to see if they have something that they can offer us. Is this neighbor nice enough, rich enough, successful enough to be worth building a relationship with?

Is this fellow student smart enough to be helpful in my studies? Does this person work at a firm or a company that I might like to work at in the future?

Can this professor help me secure a grant or write a strategic recommendation letter for me? Is this person powerful enough, influential enough?

And once we have determined that the answer is yes, then we lavish them with compliments, show interest in their work, take them out to coffee, invite them over for dinner.

But such social gifts we offer to people are not gifts at all. Rather, they are loans that we expect repaid. They're investments that we expect the return from.

[25 : 35] And Jesus is here teaching us to give without expecting anything in return. To be generous and hospitable, especially toward those who offer no return or payment.

And why does Jesus do that? When you give to those who can return your favor, you have already received your reward here on earth. But if you're generous to those who cannot repay, if you do a favor for those who cannot return the favor, God says, I will see to it that you are repaid at the resurrection of the just.

So then, we don't need to virtue signal to everyone around us about all the good work that we're doing. We could do good deeds even when no one is looking because God sees it and He promises to reward it.

In a world where everyone is selfish and looking out for their own interests, give and take is the natural really only sustainable policy. But as citizens of the kingdom of God, as people who believe that God sees everything, that He will reward every good work that we do in His name, we can give without taking.

We can serve without badges and accolades. We can love without expecting anything back. That's the functional effect of our belief in God and the resurrection of the just.

[27 : 05] And Jesus' previous parable about a wedding feast, as well as His ongoing banquet imagery and what He says here about the resurrection of the just, prompt one of the guests to think about the ultimate banquet that God promises His followers.

In verse 15, He says, Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. God. The underlying assumption of this guest is likely that He and others like Him, the prominent members of society at this banquet, that they will be the ones who eat bread in the kingdom of God.

But then Jesus shatters that expectation again in verses 16 to 17. He gives another parable. He says, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet, he sent the servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is not ready.

So this is a great banquet, much like the wedding feast that preceded this parable. And the host invited many people, and it seems that these people RSVP'd saying, Yes, they'll come.

Because when the party is ready, everything is ready, he sends a servant telling them, Hey, it's ready, so come now. You said you would come, now come, everything is ready. But it says in verse 18, they all alike began to make excuses.

[28 : 20] 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. They all initially told the host that they would come, but when the final date was announced, they had scheduling conflicts, and they informed the host that regrettably they cannot come anymore.

And we've all done this before, and all three of these people have seemingly reasonable objections. They have legitimate reasons.

The first person just purchased a field, which back then was a source of livelihood for most families. It's probably as significant as choosing or as closing on a house nowadays.

It's a significant purchase. And after such a significant purchase, usually there's plenty of things to do. Inspection, cleanup, planning, etc. And the second person just bought five yoke of oxen.

[29 : 28] This too is a significant purchase. To a farmer back then, oxen were the primary tools of the trade. And five is a large number. Usually farmers in this day and age only had one or two oxen.

So it's kind of like a modern day Uber driver buying an expensive new car that he intends to use for his work. And when you buy something that's significant, you have to test drive it.

You have to make sure that everything is set up. It requires time. It's a busy season for this person as well. And the third person I think has the best excuse of them all.

I have married a wife. There are a few things in life that are as momentous and life altering as getting married.

So this man thinks his excuse is so good he doesn't even bother to ask formally to be excused. He just says, I've married a wife and therefore I cannot come. And these three reasons together represent the essential preoccupations of life.

[30 : 35] property, job, family. But even these concerns are not valid reasons to stay away from the kingdom of God and refuse to partake in the banquet.

And this should be an important warning for all of us because what keeps people away from the heavenly banquet here in this passage is not some shocking scandal or heinous crime but the normal and socially acceptable commitments of life.

Sure, being an unrepentant thief can keep you out of the banquet, that's true. But you can also be too distracted tempted by building honest wealth and enjoying the security and luxury that it can buy, that you dismiss the invitation to the great banquet of God.

Sure, yes, being an unrepentant, lazy, glutton that doesn't do any work but lives off of other people's hard-earned money or taxpayers' dollars, yes, that can keep you out of the banquet if you don't repent.

but you can also be so busy being a hard worker trying to provide for yourself and for your family that you miss out on the great eternal banquet.

[32 : 10] Sure, being an unrepentant, chauvinistic wife abuser can keep you out of the banquet. but you can also be a devoted husband that spends all his available time trying to please his wife and raise his kids that he neglects the pursuit of God and misses out on the kingdom of God.

Think about it this way, imagine two drivers, both get into a fatal car accident. One of them got into a car accident because he was texting while driving and he was texting his dying mother on her death bed.

It's like the last thing he could send to her. He got into a car accident and died. The other driver also was texting while driving but he was texting LOL to some recent acquaintance that he doesn't care anything about.

Maybe one is more justifiable than the other. it's more acceptable than any other. But they both ended up dying. In a life or death situation, it doesn't matter what the excuse is.

It's an excuse. And when it comes to the matter of the kingdom of God, when it comes to your eternal fate, it doesn't matter how good your excuse is.

[33 : 39] It's an excuse. And you must make a decision to follow Christ. there is no alternative. We can be socially accepted.

We can be praised by the whole world. Yet because of the cares and the riches and the pleasures of life, fail to enter the kingdom of God and the banquet God has prepared for us.

So that's what happened to these people. But the master of the house is not going to reschedule to accommodate these guests. The time has been set and the decisions have been made.

But this master will also not have an empty banquet. So it says in verse 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.

The first round of guests, the genteel people, the noble people, the prominent people, they've all received their invitations, have declined to come. Despite the fact that they had previously indicated they were coming.

[34 : 53] And so the host sends a servant to the streets and lanes of the city. So now he's going, inviting people, not just from their homes, he's going out into the city streets and to the back alleys, to the shady places.

The riffraff of the city. The poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. And this is a radical statement that Jesus is making that deviates from this traditional Jewish teaching during his time.

For example, a Jewish sect at Qumran, they taught that the Messiah will bless the righteous who participate in God's great banquet, but only after excluding the Gentiles, the ritually unclean, and the physically disabled.

But Jesus here says, those who come to the kingdom, but the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. And this is not merely a reference to the physically poor, crippled, blind, and lame, but to a general category of people who are of humble estate.

At the beginning of his ministry in Luke 4, Jesus cited several passages from prophet Isaiah to declare that his mission on earth is to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the

captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the ear of the Lord's favor.

[36 : 14] That's Jesus' mission. And throughout the gospel of Luke, Jesus has ministered to several demoniacs, demon-possessed people, a woman with a high fever, about to die, a leper, a paralytic, a man with a withered hand, a notoriously sinful woman that people refused to associate with, a woman with the discharge of blood that made her ceremony unclean, a dead girl that had raised to life, he ministered to a mute man, a woman who was disabled and was a hunchback, and finally here, a man with dropsy.

All people who were rejected by society, people whose physical infirmities were viewed as evidence of God's rejection, of spiritual defilement, sinners who are unworthy of the kingdom of God, and that's exactly Jesus' point.

Only sinners who humbly acknowledge their unworthiness will be seated at God's banqueting table. Jesus said early in Luke 5 to the Pharisees who criticized him for associating with these sinners, he told them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I have not come to call the righteous, sinners, but sinners to repentance. Ironically, it's the Pharisees who think that they have no need of a physician, who think that they are righteous, who see themselves as spiritual superiors.

They are those who are unworthy of acceptance by God, and they find themselves on the outside looking in at the banquet. have you come to church today as a self-righteous person?

[38 : 08] Do you think that you have earned entry to the kingdom of God? Do you imagine yourself worthy of heaven? If you do, you will miss Jesus' invitation to the kingdom of God.

Because those who get to sit at the banquet are sinners who acknowledge their unworthiness. this trend continues with the third round of invitations in verses 22 to 24.

And the servant said, Sir, what you have commanded has been done, and still there is room. 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 are invited shall taste my banquet. I love how this reveals God's heart. Sometimes people imagine that God's this exclusivist, stingy person.

Let's see how high, like how difficult I can make it for these people to come in. God's heart is to fill his house. He says there's not enough people. He wants to fill the house.

[39 : 14] His arms are open. He wants you to come. Come. After having gone through the city streets and back alleys, the servant is now ordered to go out to the highways and the hedges.

He's now going outside the city walls, even to the highways, and bringing in the homeless beggars who frequent the hedges and fences around vineyards and houses located outside the city.

This is probably a reference to inviting to the kingdom, not just the needy people among the Jews, but also the Gentiles. And the master says, compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. And the word compel does not refer to kind of angrily forcing people to come against their will. It's referring to the fact that people who are invited to banquets like this unexpectedly are, you know, and they recognize their unworthiness and they're hesitant to go.

And this reflects an ancient Near Eastern practice when a resolute host insists, I insist you come, and takes the reluctant and hesitant guest by the hand, by his hand, and takes him, shows him the way and takes him to the banquet.

[40 : 37] Compel them to come. Tell them the host insists. God insists. Tell them that they are invited. You can imagine, it's the gesture of a host that refuses to take a polite no as an answer.

And it's a wonderful picture of God's gracious and generous hospitality towards sinners like us. God's grace. And this is the most important point to take away from this entire passage.

All of humanity has sinned against God. We have all lived for our own purposes and priorities rather than seeking God and glorifying Him. We have all violated His laws, some more egregiously than others, but we have all violated His laws and we are disqualified from entry.

But God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to preach good news to the poor. He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins.

We are the ones that should have been the castoffs. Barred, bounced from the party with no access, but Jesus instead in our place was cast off and died on the cross.

[41 : 53] So that by believing in Him, we might be forgiven of our sins and we might be received into the kingdom of God. And so Jesus comes and He sends His followers.

He searches the city streets and the back alleys. He roams the highways and the hedges on the outskirts of the city. He looks for sinners unworthy of acceptance.

The poor, the crippled, the blind and lame, the Gentile heathens to compel them to come. It doesn't matter what kind of sinner you are.

It doesn't matter how sordid your history is. You might look upon your own sinful rags and then shake your head mournfully at Jesus. Sir, I can't go like this.

Sir, that's not my part. It's not for people like me. You might say, Lord, I'm blinded by my sin.

[43 : 01] I'm crippled by my sins. I'm poor. But Jesus, the servant of the Lord, looks on you. He looks you in the eye and He says, I have been sent by the King.

I have made a way. If only you are willing to leave your life of sin, then I will take you by the hand, lead you into the back of it God.

A poet, English poet from the 17th century puts it this way. Humble we must be if to heaven we go. High is the roof there, but the gate is low.

Will you humble yourself before God and receive His lavish grace?