

Welcome To The Banquet!

Inheritance: Unprecedented Opportunity

The Purpose of This Series: God wants us working together in His Kingdom, not just live independently simultaneously. These five messages are to assist us in aligning the believer with God's purpose for our lives in His service as well as the mission of our church. Everyone has a purpose and DNA in Christ. To often we are out to reach a “destiny” when God has a “design” that He has for us in relationship with others.

The Purpose of This Message: Today is our final message in this series. The message reviews four different, what you might say, ways to throw a party! As a church focused on reaching out with the love of God in our community and around the world, it is important to understand how to celebrate what should be celebrated. Too often we are found looking for the next thing when the next thing is looking for you. If there is anyone in our community who should be partying, it should be us, “Look what the Lord has done!”

Into: Over the last four weeks I have been talking about how we as a body of believers are on a mission. Utilizing our key scripture,

“LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.”
Psalm 16:5-6

1. Inheritance: Unprecedented Opportunity
2. Drawing The Line: Boundaries
 1. Pleasant Places Are Inhabited With **Unpleasant** People
 2. Pleasant Places Are Filled With Things That Do Not **Worship** God!
 3. Pleasant Places Are Known For It's **High** Places
 4. Pleasant Places Are Often **Dependant** Of It's Tenants To Be Fruitful
- Our Response: Possess
3. **Great Expectations:** “**We are here to do whatever, whenever, so that others will not get away! We will serve others and show them the hope that can come only from Jesus!**”
4. **The Amazing Force:** God's sovereign plan and our Biblical mandate! God Working through me.
5. **A Miracle In Me:** **Don't let life's situations get too big for God!**
6. **Welcome To The Banquet!**

God has blessed us with a future, an assigned portion and cup. There is a secure journey for us, but we must take it, these pleasant places are often inhabited with “Unpleasant” people, that do not worship God and have high places, but there is a harvest there for us. Surely, what God has to give us is a delightful inheritance.

Iron Chef

I have a confession to make today, I've watched two episodes of “The Next Iron Chef.” Now that I have that off my chest I can move on. The Next Iron Chef is a series on the Food Network which features ten chefs battling to be the newest Iron Chef.



The not so interesting thing about the show to me is that it is all about how these chefs prepare the food task they are give, that probably has something to do with the name of the show. But the point I'm making is, **who cares about the food if nobody can eat it.** Here's one of the competitions, the chef had to **debone a chicken, fillet a salmon, open enough coconuts to produce two cups of coconut milk, shuck six oysters and clams, french a rack of lamb and slice off a 4-inch (100 mm) strip of daikon thin enough to read newsprint through within 15 minutes.** A daikon is a white carrot found in Japan that taste like a mild radish.



Listen, when it comes to food, I think it's all about eating...isn't it?

Hunting: This past week we were fortunate to host a couple of pastors from Tampa Bay, FL. So they could go pheasant hunting. They had great insight about food that I'd like to share with you at this juncture, "**Bacon is the duck tape of all food!**" If there is something that has a strong flavor that you don't really like, wrap bacon around it, cook it for a few minutes and you will enjoy whatever it is. Bacon, that's all you need! Keep a package in your fridge at all times, I'm talking about being an Iron Chef!

Illustration: **Scenario One:** If you were asked to come over to our house to have dinner. The day came, you knock on our door and we bring you into our dinning area, sit you at the table and put the most incredible food on the table, pray over the food, help you get portions on your plate and then we leave you as we go into our den and play WII for about an hour. We come in and notice you are finished. We thank you for coming over as we rush you out the door. Or...

Scenario Two: You come to our house, ring the door bell and we come to the door. We welcome you in and say, "I'm so sorry, our time got away from us, would it be alright if we order pizza? Then we take you do to our basement, we play WII together, tell stories, laugh and eventually get stuffed on pizza and finally have to call it a night.

Which scenario do you think you would like the most?

Banquet #1- Key take-out: Purpose is more important than Process!

¹One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ²There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. ³Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"

⁴But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away."

Luke 14:1-4

⁵Then he asked them, "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?" ⁶And they had nothing to say."

Luke 14:5-6

The problem with eating in our culture and in Jesus' day is that it is not always about eating. A banquet was for the purpose of gathering others, specifically for personal reasons. Typically, Jews ate two daily meals, but on the Sabbath, after their worship in the synagogue that would last late into the afternoon, they enjoyed special meals with friends and loved

ones. Jesus had no problem showing his differences with the Pharisees but in this situation he accepted an invitation to eat in the home of one of the key leaders of this community of Pharisees.

Obviously in these passages, Jesus was asked to eat chicken after service at one of the CEO's of the Pharisee Spiritual Leaders home. There He noticed that everyone was watching every move He was making, "...*he was being carefully watched*" (VS. 1). I'm not sure about you, but I'm a bit uncomfortable when everyone is looking at me. I know that may sound strange being a pastor, but I never think of being looked at, I think more in the terms of being heard. In this case, all eyes were on Him and He knew it.

Jesus Watched Carefully

This was an important event. It was a time to determine where law would be challenged with grace. What has occurred over the years, like many businesses, "policy" started choking out purpose. For instance, many companies did not make the turn in business that others did in the last 20 years because of something that will become very familiar with in the next month and a half, and that is for this one factor, "**return policy.**"

Many companies over the last 20 years either would not change policy or changed their policy to accommodate returned merchandise. Those that would not accommodate this privilege soon lost out and died away. It was and is a huge factor in American business today. When policy becomes greater than purpose, in this case sell merchandise to stay in business, then the business will not be around long. That's just one area that helped developed operations of many businesses today, and it is somewhat the idea that Jesus was dealing with in His day.

Obviously, Jesus was asked to eat chicken after service at one of the CEO's of the Pharisee Spiritual Department Stores home. There He noticed that everyone was watching every move He was making, "...*he was being carefully watched*" (VS. 1). I'm not sure about you, but I'm a bit uncomfortable when everyone is looking at me. I know that may sound strange being a pastor, but I never think of being looked at, I think more in the terms of being heard. In this case, all eyes were on Him and He knew it.

Questions

Questions are so important, but they can have two affects on you. Questions can keep you focused, developing and on track or they can keep you ever wondering, constantly guessing never confident to help you accomplish anything. Simply, questions can lead you to a better tomorrow or a confused tomorrow. As a believer in Christ, there are many reasons why we would challenge *what* we do as an individual or as a church and *why* we do it, here are a few,

- 1. To Find Out If What We Believe Is The Truth**
- 2. To Find Out If It Lines Up With The Written Word of God**
- 3. To Find Out If We Can Do A Better Job**
- 4. To Find A Greater Understanding of God**

In our search for finding this Truth, to line up with the Word of God, to do a better job and understand God in a better way we ask ourselves some questions,

- God, have we strayed away from the truth of your Word?
- Lord, I know your Word is truth, are we fully lining up with what your Word has to say about you, me and others and life in general?

- Father, as we step out to do a better job, are we avoiding or ignoring any truth or foundational principles of your Word?
- God, as we venture ahead, moving in the direction that we are going, are we leaving you behind?

But there is something to understand while entertaining these questions, “Are these questions assisting me, to move me ahead and grow, or, are they paralyzing me, rendering me inactive in the Kingdom of God?”

Jesus Challenged The Pharisee's With Two Pointed Questions. (14:3,5)

1. *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"* (VS. 3)
2. *"If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?"* (VS. 5) (Some manuscripts say “donkey” rather than “son.”)

It has been thought that the *Pharisees* actually planted the sick man at the entrance of the home to see what Jesus would do. Jesus healed the sick man (14:4) of dropsy. It was on the Sabbath that Jesus no sooner walked in the home that a sick man was directly in front of Him, a man suffering from dropsy. **Dropsy, also called edema, is a swelling of the joints or the whole body, often due to a faulty heart or to diseased kidneys or liver.** Edema is observable swelling from fluid accumulation in body tissues. Edema **most commonly occurs in the feet and legs**, where it is referred to as peripheral edema. The swelling is the result of the **accumulation of excess fluid under the skin** in the spaces within the tissues.

It would have been easier for Jesus to have the man come back later when it wouldn't be such a controversy, “You know we don't want to offend anybody.” But Jesus wasn't afraid to challenge the process head on, especially when the process that existed was not there to advance the Kingdom of God but rather to “control” the Kingdom of God. Jesus didn't mind confronting the situation, and in doing so He challenged them with the two questions, healed the man and verbally confronted His critics. **Jesus did not challenge the proper observance of the Sabbath; but He confronted the Pharisee's grasp on the law who misused it to control the religious progression or in this case the lack of progression.**

Banquet #2- Key take-out: Placement is more important than Position!

Jesus Enters And Addresses The Room

Jesus enters the room and “*notices,*” He looks around and make an observation, everyone was fighting for the best seat in the house, not so they can see better, or get closer to the food, but it was for the purpose of positioning themselves in places of honor. Ancient Middle Eastern people were very distinct about the “pecking order” at mealtime, and these folks desired the best places.

“⁷When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸“When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. ¹¹For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles

himself will be exalted."

Luke 14:7-11

Five Results In Positioning Yourself

- 1. If you are busy trying to position yourself you will miss those who are more distinguished than you.** In other words, a way to miss the opportunity of raising up others up who are incredibly distinguished by God is being busy finding your own worth in some position.

"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited."

Luke 14:8

I cannot get the man at the door off my mind. It is easy to read this parable and think that the one more "distinguished" would be a reference to Himself, and logic would lead us to that thinking. But is it possible that the man at the door, the sick man, the one with a disease, who Jesus healed just moments before and sent away could be the one of great distinction?

I think it might be quite revealing who this man turned out to be. Notice that his position wasn't hardly in the room. Everyone was fighting for the head table and he was put in the back with the losers. It's possible that his physical ailments limited him to compete for higher position and the constant jockeying of musical chairs or he had resolved himself to actually be who he was. At one time he probably used to be in the middle of all the positioning fanfare, but now, he sees it for what it is. He's not impressed, but he has nothing else in life. But Jesus came into the room.

When we are busy trying to position ourselves we are not looking at all the potential leaders around us. Actually, when we are trying to position ourselves, any potential leader around us threatens us and we have to find reasons why they are not as fit a candidate as we are. I believe that at all times there are those we are to call forward and sometime to call beyond ourselves. If you have been in the role of a pastor or elder, it is easy to say, "If someone could do this better than me, PLEASE take it!" There is no fear on our part to limit people from growing, but there is concern for those who want to control, force their agenda and jockey for un-delegated positions.

I find it so incredibly shallow that there might be some in our church who cannot sit next to someone else. It is an insult to God. There is no doubt that there are differences that we have, but there are Biblical directives at resolving and confronting issues. Break the silence and resolve the issues, time is running out!

- 2. If you are busy trying to position yourself you make it difficult for the host to properly seat his guests.**

"...the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place."

Luke 14:9

It cannot happen without humiliation! I think that is why so many positions are filled with non-functioning, ineffective people. Because pastors, who typically have a heart of grace and mercy realize the "humility" of transitioning that person out more than the

“damage” that individual is having on the whole process. The host cannot be the host and those who should be exalted cannot be exalted because it would offend someone or make someone mad, or threaten someone. This is a very difficult thing that happens in churches today, people are attempting to position themselves and those who deserve the honored position are being kept out...sent away, because the host are afraid to confront them.

There are so many churches today that will not confront positioned people because they don't want to “shame” them. It would embarrass them so much to do so and, the one who needs to be seated is the one in the back, the one who doesn't look like they have it all together, the quiet one back there. So in an effort to deal with the matter, the host can't help but humiliating the one who is self-positioned. Help us God to do what we need to do to advance your Kingdom.

Then, in a huff, people fly out of their position, angered and vengeful, pointing out your shortsightedness, weakness as a leader and your inability to hear God. Instead of taking another seat, they fly out the door, dragging as many people with them as they can, and it's all because it was humiliating.

I am so impressed with the elders we have in our church. Each one of them has come to me and said, “If I ever get in the way, please tell me! I never want to hinder our church from moving to the next level and being as affective as it can be. Tell me when my time is over, I'll happily give my chair to another.” You have to love guys like that. You have to realize that if an important moment like that happened, your guys would step out of the way so God could position someone else. I love it! But many times people won't be humble, but they have become prideful in their position. They hold on to it with both hands or they will dump it if there is any threat. They just don't want to be “humiliated.” See, the ministry they are involved in is “their” ministry, it's all a reflection about them personally. This is not my attempt nor is it God's.

3. If you are busy trying to position yourself you miss the opportunity of being raised up in the sight of everyone else.

“But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests.”

Luke 14:10

See, by positioning yourself, you may end up at the right spot, but you will not be honored in the way that only a host could honor you, “*you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests.*” This is the mistake so many people make, they are self-appointed and have a personal agenda that does not serve the desire of the host. They disregard the necessary steps or relationships to be considered a distinguished guest. It is so exciting to be honored in the presence of many of your peers and friends.

4. If you are busy trying to position yourself you don't realize that you WILL BE humbled.

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled...”

Luke 14:11a

Many people don't recognize being humbled. They so embrace anger and even revenge on those who confront them or reposition them that they can't see that the role they had was a role that will be judged some day. To leave a person in a leadership role who leads out of their own need to "be somebody" or the "territorial mindset" that says, "This is MINE!" is to leave that person there, one day to be judged for that role. And if that role was self-serving, then there are people, day after day, Sabbath after Sabbath standing in the doorway, meeting Jesus and then being set away. Oh please grab a hold of this! Wake up! Listen! Do not fail here!

5. If you are busy trying to position yourself you will never be exalted.

"...he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 14:11b

This is such a hard lesson to learn. It seems that, by saying this, then you must just fall into some position. This is so far from the truth and the horrible and painful failure of church leaders today, and that is providing a clear path for truly humble people to be placed and positioned with their gifts and abilities in services for the united glory of God.

I've had incredibly talented people only be able to serve a slither of their giftedness because only that much was humbled. The rest of all their giftings and talents were self-serving and not submitted in any form or fashion. A gift positioning itself outside the recognition of the host is painful to all. To the host because he or she has to confront it, the crowd because they have to observe it, the individual because they have to suffer it and the one in the back, the one who doesn't know who they are right yet who hesitates at the honor. This is quite a crazy situation and painful at times.

Banquet #1- Key take-out: Purpose is more important than Process!

Banquet #2- Key take-out: Placement is more important than Position!

Banquet #3- Key take-out: People are more important than Payment!

Jesus Speaks Directly To The Host

*"¹²Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a **luncheon** or **dinner**, do not invite your **friends**, your **brothers** or **relatives**, or your **rich neighbors**; if you do, **they may invite you back and so you will be repaid**. ¹³But when you give a **banquet**, invite the **poor**, the **crippled**, the **lame**, the **blind**, ¹⁴and **you will be blessed**. Although they cannot repay you, **you will be repaid** at the resurrection of the righteous."*

Luke 14:12-14

Jesus gives instruction to the Pharisee leader who was hosting the dinner. He instructed him how to host a banquet that would be greater than he ever imagined. He gives him advice in two areas, who not to invite and who to invite and the reasons for it.

Don't Invite 4 Kinds of People (Luke 14:12)

1. Friends

This is the first on the list who not to ask for a banquet. It was amazing, because the man who stood at the door with dropsy did not fit in any of these categories. Friends, the connection between one or more people who have deep trust and loyalty. One

dictionary puts it this way, “A person whom one knows, likes, and trusts.” Of course you would like to have these people there, and they are there for all the “good” reasons.

2. Your Brothers

Here is a blood relative, your brother. This is the person that you have in your home for “blood” reasons. You've heard it said, “Blood is thicker than brains.” And it is true, if we can't have the favorite, (friends), we will take the familiar, (immediate family).

3. Relatives

There's nothing like extended family. They always show up at the “party.” When there is “getting” to be “got” you can be assured you will have more relatives than you ever imagined when you hit the jack pot. Relatives always get the inside blessing, it's not because they are a friend or a close brother, but again, it's blood. There is a since of “owing” them that makes them get the free pass in. A relative is a person that you have in your life for “heritage” reasons. They are your connection to your past, your mothers brothers kids, your fathers side of the family. Relatives keeps you connected to the clan.

4. Rich Neighbors

What can I say? Inviting rich neighbors only assists you in your attempts to impress others. Notice that they are rich, and they live near your house! By association that must make you rich too, right? Beside name dropping it becomes a party where the not so fortunate get to rub elbows with the upper elite. With this kind of invitation, everyone is bound to come. This person is invited for “prestigious” reasons. They may never be talked to but being in the same room with them gives others the privilege of a lifetime.

Do Invite 4 Kinds of People

We often say that we are not perfect people, but the truth is, we are people that possibly wouldn't get invited to this party. Think about the statement that Jesus made, don't invite a friend, brother, relative or rich neighbor. Is it possible that your friend, brother or relative could be poor? How about crippled? Or could your friend be lame or even blind? Of course they could, but, because they are close to them, you don't see their ailment any longer, you just see them as they are and you don't have them in your home out of a sense of compassion but out of one of the four connections already mentioned. Listen, you cannot see people realistically until you look at the and make some “judgement” about them. That is such a word that is under scrutiny today, because “tolerance” has become such a huge word “judgement” has become a bad word. Listen, to equalize the hurting by making laws as a means to ignore their or “our” differences will eventually rob the whole societies mental ability to be moved with compassion, mercy and heartfelt care. Christ was constantly moving people to a heartfelt compassion toward others, but it is a cold, hard society that has dissolved the responsibility of human integrity and morals that would care for such a people. And the ramification of it all is a legalistic framework that socializes our society to treat others “equally” but not compassionately. No matter how much you *demand* your “rights” it will never grant you “respect!” This is a powerful statement and it is a truth that is quickly fading away.

Another thing, since I'm on a roll, because of our laws, to treat someone less fortunate is almost discrimination. The laws are changing tremendously how we can treat each other out of "respect" rather than "rights." Christianity is awkwardly losing a means of blessing and impact because it will soon be against the law to serve others out of a caring heart but it will be out of a "regulated" heart, out of "fear of being sued" rather than a true caring. Many changes today in the ADA regulations are "forced" caring. Eventually it is accepted that these changes are a good idea and necessary, but like all groups who feel discriminated against, that is not enough, there must be another reason why they are not happy or feel different. My experience is that many of the ADA regulations are forced compliance and I guess they should be, but what could happen if our actions toward the less fortunate were based out of a truly sincere heart? I know when I was growing up, those less fortunate had everyones heart, but today they are getting everyones fear.

Should we take care of or help the less fortunate and poor? The difference in the statement is "take care of," and "help." Yes we have a responsibility to help and it is a no brainer, it is demanded of us to help the poor and less fortunate. We should constantly be moved by our relationship with God to enforce and even create more solutions for those less fortunate. We must be careful, in this society of ours that we don't stop caring because we know we are being regulated. In other words, the only time to care is when we are forced to. This is a dangerous time for the church and our society, where caring and mercy is ridiculously managed and not expected to come from the heart. What kind of people will we be raising in the future on both sides of the coin? Those who will only help when convicted by law to and those who expect others to change for their benefit. Enough said, but what a mess we are in!

This is important to understand as well, that Christ is talking to this particular Pharisee about when you have a "banquet" or "feast." Jesus wasn't saying that every meal in your home should be shared in this way, but when you put on the big meal, call these four kinds of people in.

1. **Poor** 4434 *ptōchos*- reduced to beggary, begging, asking alms, destitute of wealth, influence, position, honor. In other words, there is nothing attractive about you. Outside the inroads of family relationships, you would never see the inside of this guys house. But Jesus challenges that, he says, you invite them.
2. **Crippled** 376 *anapēros*- disabled in the limbs, maimed, crippled, injured in, or bereft of, some member of the body. These are those people who have been injured in one for or another. There were no ER's or hospitals that could do the simplest task of setting a bone. Back then there was poor hope for a person with broken bones or injuries. The crippled could be in the form of all kinds of ailments, particularly in muscle or bone.
3. **Lame** 5560 *chōlos*- deprived of a foot, maimed. There is no doubt that this is a birth defect that keeps them from walking. The lame.
4. **Blind** 5185 *typhlos*- "darkened by smoke" It is in reference to being unable to see clearly which many of any age would possibly have that condition. Today, with the help of corrective eye-glasses, surgery and many other helps, people can see better and are not "as" blind.

What's The Payoff?

Actually it is more about “when” rather than “what.” What we know is that there will be those who cannot pay you back in this life, but you will be repaid, at the resurrection. Resurrection day will be an incredible time to receive blessing from all that you have sown and suffered in this life.

“Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Luke 14:14b

“Opportunities are often things you haven't noticed the first time around. ”

~Catherine Deneuve

“Big jobs usually go to the men who prove their ability to outgrow small ones.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Banquet #1- Key take-out: Purpose is more important than Process!

Banquet #2- Key take away: Placement is more important than Position!

Banquet #3- Key take-out: People are more important than Payment!

Banquet #4- Key take-out: Participation is more important than Possibilities!

*“¹⁵When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “**Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.**”*

Luke 14:15

Obviously Jesus was overheard when a man nearby heard and responded, “It's going to be great when we eat together in heaven!” By his words he was saying, “Hey, we've got it made, isn't it nice that we've made it? Let's make a toast. Let's party on!” But the “enough attitude” deserved a response, and Jesus gave one.

When Jesus told this, this story would have been considered ridiculous and laughable. To have a great feast prepared by a wealthy man where many were invited, would be the pinnacle of social life. No one would ever turn down such an opportunity, for many it would be the event of a lifetime. For people who had accepted an invitation and then to refuse to come would be absurd. But to fill the banquet with the riffraff and the scum of society, that is preposterous.

The Jews knew about the resurrection of the righteous. They believed that they, being Pharisees and the scribes were righteous, just because of who they were. In their eyes, they were the righteous and the resurrection was a secure by product. Because of their over dominate legalistic and traditional life, the resurrection was looking really good.

Often we look at the Pharisees and see them as the excessive self-imposed elite. But in reality, they were burdened with the painful regulations of their religion. Their life was filled with constant self-sacrifice and endless rituals. There was not a minute in their day that they were not under some sort of regulation. All this because they believed these works achieved for them the resurrection of the righteous.

What causes most people to live with such restriction, restraint, limitation and burdens of morality in their external conduct is the promise of a future good life in eternity. The Jews were no different, looking forward to the resurrection of the righteous, a lavished

celebration, actually a banquet in the presence of God. This comes from Isaiah 25:6, when it says,

“On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.”

Isaiah 25:6

There is no doubt, we will get to go to heaven. All the burdens will be eliminated and we'll sit down to a lavish banquet. The banquet is an analogy or a metaphor for the heavenly celebration. And you can see that this thought is carried over into the New Testament where we see heaven in Revelation as the marriage supper of the lamb. We all will one day sit around the banquet table of God in the glory of the new heaven and the new earth.

These Jews were confident that they were secure in the resurrection of the righteous by their Abrahamic ancestry and by their adherence to the tradition. They would not only be there, **but they would be in the prominent seats there**. That was so much a part of Jewish thinking that even the disciples were caught up in it that's why James and John sent their mother to ask Jesus if they could sit on the right and the left hand of the kingdom. They had that same mentality. It was in the fabric of how they thought. You were all raised to work-up the system. You tried to achieve the highest place of prominence. They were sure they would be in the chief seats in the heavenly banquet.

*“¹⁶Jesus replied: “A certain man was **preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.** ¹⁷**At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’**”*

Luke 14:16-17

*“¹⁸**But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’** ¹⁹**Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’**”*

*²⁰**“Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can't come.’”***

Luke 14:18-20

When the invitation comes we get excuses. Everybody said I can't come. All of them. Now the Pharisees would say that this is ridiculous, nobody would do that. What a joke. In fact, some ancient near eastern traditions equate with a declaration of war, because when you are invited to a meal with someone that was an extension of friendship and when you refused that, that was a statement that you wanted no friendship with that individual. It was essentially a declaration of war. Nobody would do this, but they all alike did it.

We have a massive banquet prepared and nobody to come. So the slave comes back, verse 21, reports,

*“²¹**The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’”***

Luke 14:21

The truth is, neither the first group wouldn't turn down the invitation and the second group would never ever be invited. The Jews prided themselves on never touching the outcasts on

scorning Jesus for associating with prostitutes and tax collectors and sinners.

The verb “bring in,” in verse 21, is important. **They would have to be brought in because they would resist it.** The elite stayed together and scratched each other's back. And these people would have said look, I can't repay anything. There's no...I don't want to come to a dinner there because I'm going to be obligated to provide one in reciprocation. I can't do that. I have no capability to do that. Plus I'm not worthy to come into that place.

*“²²Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’
²³“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’ ”*

Luke 14:22-24

But There Is Still Room

As long as there are those who do not know God, there is still room! Listen to this! Listen to the words of the servant. He understands that as long as there are people, there is room. He could have easily told His master, “But there is no more room. This is not the time. Let someone else do it.” But he didn't do it, even though it would cost him more work. See, this is a true servant. This is a servant who would only let his master know what would make it easier on himself. The master was going to put that servant to work even harder and he knew it, but he didn't care because he was his masters servant. He was loud and clear, “What you've asked me to do, but there is more room!” What a great servant, because he knew the heart of his masters heart. He knew that the master wanted a full house. What an incredible servant.

Go Out

Look at the masters words, “**Go out!**” Go out and find the people who are spiritually destitute. Go out and find the people who are broken and hungry. God out and find the sinners who know they're unworthy. Go out and find those who know they don't belong at the banquet of God because of their wickedness. Go find the beggars, the untouchables, those who are spiritually aware of their other uselessness, hopelessness and unworthiness. The banquet will include the outcasts. These are those who are not allowed in the city. They live outside the city. They are the highway people who can't enter the city because of the poor, cripple, lame and blind condition that makes them unable to associate with the general population . They live in the brothels, the inns, the roadhouses and along the road and in the trees and in the bushes.

Make Them Come In

People of every tongue and tribe and people and nation and compel them, *anakatso*, to **persuade strongly, to urge, to constrain**. Persuade them to “get in”, here in the NIV the words are to “make” them get in.

This is our mission, that all men might come to know God! If we are going to be a **true servant of God**, we need to reflect the three things of this last servant in this passage:

1. A true servant **finishes the last task before he attempts the next one**. Do the task at hand! (“...*what you ordered has been done*,” Luke 14:22b)
2. A true servant **determines the job is finished when the master says it is so**. A

servant serves his master even though it will cost more, make him work harder and cause him to do things you are not familiar with. (*“...but there is still room.”* Luke 14:22c)

3. A true servant **will receive the next task at hand because he is a servant.** (*“Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.”* Luke 14:23)

Banquet #1- Key take-out: Purpose is more important than Process!

Banquet #2- Key take-out: Placement is more important than Position!

Banquet #3- Key take-out: People are more important than Payment!

Banquet #4- Key take-out: Participation is more important than Possibilities!

What we are determining is what God can do with us in the next three years. We need to understand that the purpose is more important than the process that limits us to do the work of the Lord. Too often people look at the process and say, “That’s not my way.” and therefore close the door on what could happen. People limit God because they are stuck to a certain process that is not really a process, it is a safe, controlled journey under the cloak of spirituality.

As we extend our faith over the next three years we will see God do incredible things through people who we never thought would speak a single word. The bottom line is, “Will you serve?” Will you allow yourself to be placed where we need you rather than where you want to be? So many wonderful people with incredible giftings have one dimension as to how they want to serve God and therefore limit what God can do through all of us. They can’t see their “gift” is nothing but a position. There is plenty to do, but can you serve? Can you give of yourself in areas where you may not feel so competent? Could you give your excellence to areas that may not give you a bright platform but I promise it will be life changing!

As we focus on God’s purpose for us we have to understand that it will cost us. It will always cost us and at the moment it will never seem like it’s is a proper exchange. People are so important to God He asks us to extend our faith in daring and extravagant request. The payment of our obedience will always seem to be bigger at the time than the people we are sacrificing for. There is not a church in this world that will be worth more than the soul of one individual.

We have to look out at God’s possibilities not ours. We cannot judge God’s will in our life by our budget. Our budget must reflect God’s desire for our life. When we look at what we want, what we are going to get, where we are going to go, these are secondary to the Banquet that God has planned for us. There is a banquet and we are asked to join it, but there is still room! All the possibilities, the things that we need to tend to in our life will take us away from the banquet, the party that God is throwing and we don’t realize that we are exchanging the party for a cow or dirt. We are so easily persuaded to miss the greatest opportunity that we can have on this earth and that is to participate in the heart of God. To give all that we have for His Glory. Oh, come to the banquet, come to the party. There is still plenty of room, plenty of room, in pleasant places! I want you to be a part of it. I’m asking you to give of yourself and let God use you in the most unusual way. Are you ready to be a part of this next step? Would you join with me in seeing God bring many into His banquet? As we expand our banquet hall I am asking you to help us fill it with the most unlikely candidates. God is good and I can’t wait to see what He is going to do with us all! Praise God!