

## Why Is It That So Many People Do Not Become Partakers Of The Joys Of The Kingdom Of Christ And Enter Heaven?

Text: Luke 14:16-24

1) The fault is not God's

Suggested Hymns:

2) The fault is there own

303, 355, 305, 340, 304

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 14:16–24, <sup>16</sup> *Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, <sup>17</sup> and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’*

<sup>18</sup> *But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ <sup>19</sup> And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ <sup>20</sup> Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’*

<sup>21</sup> *So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ <sup>22</sup> And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’*

<sup>23</sup> *Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. <sup>24</sup> For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.’”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

On a certain occasion a man asked Jesus the question: *“Lord, are there few who are saved?”*<sup>1</sup> The Lord did not answer directly, for He did not want His disciples to engage in religious conversation merely for the sake of speculating about sacred things.

Rather, Jesus gave to His reply a practical turn, couching it in the form of an admonition, saying: *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”* Jesus says here in effect: Yes, there are but few that will be saved, but make sure that you do not merely treat this as a theoretical matter, but let it be a question of deep personal concern to you.

Strive that you will not belong to the number of those who will be lost. While we must be very careful lest this subject be one of mere speculation with us, the fact stands out boldly that salvation will not be reached by all, but by a few only.

It is a sad, startling truth, confirmed by Jesus in the words of Matthew 22:14, <sup>14</sup> *“For many are called, but few are chosen.”* We ask at once: *Where does the fault lie? Who is to blame for this woeful state of affairs?*

This is this question which we shall consider today. *Why is it that so many people do not become partakers of the joys of the Kingdom of Christ and enter Heaven?* Our text gives us the answers. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Fault Is Not God’s**

Firstly, it might be thought that people themselves have to prepare the joys which we possess in Christ’s kingdom, and from which we pass into heaven. That is the reason why so many people do not enjoy these things is because they fail to provide them for themselves. Does not the person who wishes to have a house have to build the house, as a rule? If the farmer wishes to reap, he must sow.

This is indeed what our reason tells us. It insists that man’s destiny lies in his own hands. Its answer to the question, *How can I become a child of God?* human reason says, Do good, do right. What you wish to possess you yourself have to achieve.

This idea, however, is totally contradicted by our text. The parable before us speaks of a certain man, a wealthy man, who made a great supper and who afterwards invited people to partake of it.

The guests had not moved a finger. It would be folly to say that they were invited to come to a meal which they themselves had provided or paid for.

The application is evident. It is God Himself who has prepared a wonderful banquet, namely, the forgiveness of sins, peace, joy, the Holy Spirit, a new heart, and a place in heaven.

Man does not have to call into existence, or buy, these things. They have been made ready by the love of God.

The Scriptures tell us much about the preparation of God's gracious banquet, supplying our highest needs. In eternity it was planned.<sup>2</sup> ***“When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son”***<sup>3</sup> to make this banquet an actuality.

Christ suffered and died as our Substitute and thus paid our debts, reconciling us to God and procuring for us all the great blessings which are here comprehensively and beautifully described as a great supper. Hence, as far as the preparation of the blessings offered in Christ's kingdom is concerned, no one can say that it is God's fault if certain people do not attain them.

Secondly, it might be held that God, having prepared a great feast, failed to inform people and that this failure of His, to supply the needed information about the existence of these treasures, accounts for the many vacant seats in Christ's banquet hall.

One must admit that such a situation is conceivable. How frequently have we not heard of people who have perished from want of food or water, when they were within easy reach of these necessities of life, but were ignorant of the fact that help was so near. However, to make such a situation responsible for the loss of so many souls is branded as false by our text.

The servant of the wealthy man in the parable is sent to the people who had been called with a message: ***‘Come, for all things are now ready.’*** It is true that this information was needed, and we see it was given.

This part of the parable reminds us that God has broadcast a message into the world, telling of His great love and of what He has done for mankind and inviting all to come and to partake of the blessings which He is offering. ***‘Come, for all things are now ready’*** is His invitation.

***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”***<sup>4</sup> ***“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.”***<sup>5</sup> The whole Gospel, from beginning to

end, is God's invitation, bringing us the needed information about the help God has provided for us.

It was an invitation that was first proclaimed among the Jews. There is no mistaking that Jesus in this parable, in speaking of the guests who have been invited, is referring to the respectable men and women of the house of Israel.

Among the Jews, Jesus laboured as Prophet, Himself proclaiming God's invitation for more than three years. In fact, they were the only ones among whom the Saviour worked in person. What a glorious manner of inviting these people God had — having God's own Son move in their midst as His Herald!

Next the Gospel was preached to the lowly in Israel, the scum, the outcasts; for these are the people Jesus has in mind when the wealthy man of the parable says to his servant, *'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'* To these people Jesus Himself proclaimed the great Gospel tidings in spite of the sneers of the Pharisees and scribes.

By and by the Gospel was proclaimed to the heathen also; for the Lord refers to them in verse 23. *<sup>23</sup> Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. <sup>24</sup> For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'*

We see that those people, too, are invited who are living at a distance — quite an apt description of the heathen. Hence, we see that God did not keep people in ignorance as to the existence of His great blessings, accomplished for mankind through the work of Christ.

The difficult question arises: *Is it not true, after all, that God has permitted many heathen to remain in the dark about His great supper?* Many of them have never heard the Gospel. It has been answered that, if people did not get the Gospel, it was due to this, that God foresaw they would not accept it, even if they did receive it.

For another thing, the blame for the spiritual blindness of the millions of heathen lies with us Christians, who are so slow and selfish when the Gospel is to be spread. But here we must stop.

We cannot look into the council-chamber of God and see why He in every particular is ordering the course of the nations as He does. One thing is certain, it is not God's fault if anybody is lost. This is confirmed by several other considerations.

Thirdly, it might be thought that some people are too unworthy and that on this account they are barred from joining in the enjoyment of God's blessings as provided in Christ's kingdom. Some people are too great sinners, it may be charged, and their vileness keeps them out.

This is the favourite answer of many people to the question we are considering. Sinners are invited and asked to enter God's banquet hall so long as you are not too great a sinner. If your hands are too black, you will not be admitted.

How wrong this is we can see from v. 21 and v. 23 of our text. As we heard before, the people in Judea who ranked lowest in the social scale, the tax-collectors and the harlots were invited. Likewise the invitation reached the heathen, who wallowed in pools of wickedness. Therefore it is not the magnitude of any sin that is keeping people out of association with God and Christ.

We are all sinners, and in the eyes of God there is no difference. We read in Romans 3:22–23, *For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Let no one get the notion that he is less of a sinner than others and that on that account he is accepted, while his brother is rejected.

If anybody has such an opinion of himself, then he is ascribing some merit, some goodness, to himself, and through relying on his own virtue and righteousness he would be closing to himself the doors of heaven.

The examples from history bear out the statement that it is not the heinousness, the blackness, the magnitude of certain sins that exclude people from the Kingdom of Grace and Glory. David was accepted. Paul entered that kingdom. Ever so many vile sinners repented and entered the kingdom.

To the Corinthians Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, *<sup>9</sup> Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor*

*extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

Fourthly, it might be thought that God quite arbitrarily has decreed that certain people are not to join in the bliss of salvation and of heaven.

This very idea, in fact, has been proclaimed by men who bore the title of Christian ministers and teachers. It was one of the great tenets of Calvin that God has predestined certain people to damnation.

But this notion is contradicted by the whole Bible, including our text. We read in John 3:16, *<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* And in 2 Corinthians 5:19, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

Our text indicates that the wealthy man who made a great supper did not exclude anybody from coming to his banquet. He had provided room at his tables for all. *'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'*

Hence we see that in no way can the blame for the fact that so many people do not get to enjoy the glorious things that Christ has earned be placed on God. He has provided the banquet of salvation. He invites people to come and partake of it. God does not let the unworthiness of sinners induce Him to refuse them admission.

God did not foreordain that certain people should not be received into the hall where the great supper is served. But if we have to absolve God of all blame in this respect, where does the fault lie for the damnation of so many people? We reply, With man himself.

## **2. The Fault Is Their Own**

The people who had been invited to attend the supper would not come. *They all with one accord began to make excuses.*

*The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'* <sup>19</sup> *And another said, 'I have bought five*

*yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’* <sup>20</sup>  
*Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’*

If we make the application that Jesus wishes us to make, His words say that many people who hear the Gospel invitation will not accept it. We see this before our eyes every day, living in a land where the precious message of redemption is proclaimed far and wide and where, nevertheless, many people refuse the invitation.

The words of the text in question were true especially of the Jews. When Jesus spoke this parable, His work among Israel was drawing to a close. For almost three years He had laboured in their midst, but the great majority refused to accept His message. The fault was entirely theirs.

We may ask, *What is the reason why people refuse to accept the invitation of God?* The guests in the parable mention their reasons. *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I have married a wife.* Here we can see that other things appeared more attractive and alluring to them.

So it is in the spiritual realm. For many the glamour of this world’s riches, activities, and amusements is too great. They prefer earthly possessions and pleasures.

The blessings of the kingdom of Jesus are spiritual. They are invisible. You cannot see the forgiveness of sins, you cannot weigh on your scales the Holy Spirit and the peace that He provides. Hence people turn their backs on the Gospel invitation. They wish to give their attention to things that eye can see and ear can hear. One thing is clear, their doom is of their own choosing.

Their attitude is dreadful in its consequences. <sup>24</sup>*For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.*

The application is clear. If a person will not accept the invitation of God, he will not taste the sweetness of the gifts that are offered to him by the Saviour.

It might be thought that God will force people to enter the kingdom of His Son. However, such a method is altogether foreign to God’s way of dealing with mankind. Those people who refuse God’s grace and persist in that attitude will not receive it. God does not force His mercies on people.

Sinner, do not despise the Gospel invitation. It comes to you now. It comes in this Gospel lesson. Hear the call, ***‘Come, for all things are now ready.*** Do not reject this invitation. Open your heart and let Jesus be your Saviour.

If you do reject Him and you die in that state, then this word will apply to you, <sup>24</sup>***For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper*** and throughout eternity you will lament: *“It is my own fault.”*

Therefore diligently use the means of grace, whereby faith is produced and strengthened, and pray to God to keep you in the true faith until the end. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 13:23

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2:23

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 4:4

<sup>4</sup> Acts 16:31

<sup>5</sup> John 3:36