

# “Fill the House! Crowd the Kingdom!”

At the Table Sermon Series | Week Four | Newbreak Church

March 19th, 2023

Newbreak's Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week's study, we look at a time Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a party in which everyone is invited—even the rejected and dejected!

## Icebreakers for Life Groups

- What makes for a great party?
- Have you ever considered God's kingdom to be likened to a party? Why or why not?

## Going Deeper Into the Message

*God is throwing the best party and you are invited!*

### Read Luke 14:15–20

#### **Point 1 – Receive and respond to God's invitation.**

The blessing is not simply in the invitation but in the experience at the table after we have responded to the invite. The first truth we must grasp is that we have been invited, the next action we take is clearing our schedule so we can enjoy the feast and the blessing.

The banquet is already prepared and ready and so the invitation is not likened to a “save the date” (to use a contemporary analogy) but demands an immediate response. Guests cannot simply drop by when it suits them. Now is the time for a decision: now or never.

Jesus is painting a picture of what is known as the “messianic banquet.” This is not something Jesus invented as a theme but one he draws on, especially from Isaiah 25:6–12, which might be worth reading real quick!

6 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. 7 On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; 8 he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. 9 In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” (Isaiah 25:6–12, NIV)

God’s heart is portrayed in this passage as eager to throw a lavish feast and fill his house with people to enjoy it!

The theme of the “messianic banquet” is derived from Isaiah 25:6–12 and became an important picture of God’s coming kingdom and reign. In Isaiah 25:8, the prophet prophesies about the day when God would “swallow up death forever.” It is quite ironic that death is “swallowed up” in this passage since the Hebrew word translated “death” means “to swallow.” Just two verses earlier (Isaiah 25:6–7), Isaiah sets the stage—or should I say, set’s the table—with a vision of a banquet. The passage prophesies an eschatological banquet where Yahweh feasts with those who have trusted in his salvation. Guess what is on the menu? Death. The very entity that was epitomized in the Hebrew mind as swallowing people up is now the object of the end times feast. Death is *not only* destroyed, but also *feasted on and swallowed up*—forever! That’s a cause for celebration.

Banquet invitations became common allegories to talk about the coming kingdom. Like most parables of Christ, there is a “surprise twist” that makes the truth confounding to the audience. In this case, the shocking twist is that those who would be considered ruled out from the messianic banquet are actually the kind of people (the poor and the powerless) who will experience the eschatological banquet!

Luke 14:17 has the master of the banquet (*i.e. Jesus*) sending a servant as a messenger to invite guests to come and feast with him. The banquet is already prepared and ready and so the invitation is not likened to a “save the date” (to use a contemporary analogy) but demands an immediate response. Guests cannot simply drop by when it suits them. Now is the time of a decision: now or never.

The three invited guests (symbolizing many more guests) give three different excuses. Each seems to be living an advantageous life and denotes people of wealth, status, and

comfort. They are the kind of guests who would feel entitled to such an invitation. And yet, their entitlement is precisely what led them to not give the banquet invitation the urgent precedence it deserved. They put their own priorities ahead of the invitation. Unfortunately, the three excuses showcase how preoccupations with mundane matters will cause them to miss the banquet. Each of which harkens back to Luke 8:14 where Jesus warns: “The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.” But nothing in life should hold us back from receiving the invitation and coming to the banquet in the kingdom of God!

Jesus reminds us that the invitation to the kingdom banquet extends to those who cannot repay his generosity. It recalls the words of Mary (Luke 1:52–53) where God is praised as the one who exalts the humble and fills the hungry with good.

God graciously invites everyone to his table, but not everyone takes him up on the invitation to redemption and celebration! The “excuses” vary, as portrayed by the parable. Many will reject the invitation to the great feast in the kingdom of God. The tragedy stems from a combination of materialism and misguided priorities that prevent them from seeing that nothing else is worth tending to over and against responding to the greatest invitation one could ever receive!

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How does God’s kingdom being compared to a great feast (party) impact how you view it?
- How does Isaiah 25 provide helpful context for Christ’s parable?
- What excuses are common in our world that cause people that get in the way of God’s invitation?

*God is throwing the best party and you are invited!*

**Read Luke 14:21–23**

**Point 2 – Become a host of God’s party, not just a guest.**

It’s a party for the ages, literally! It was planned *from* eternity and *for* eternity! And yet, we are not just going to *show up*, we are helping put it on!

The mission of the Church takes note of this parable. The mission: *Crowd the kingdom*. No one can enter the kingdom of God without an invitation, yet all are invited! And also, no one can remain outside the kingdom of God except by his own deliberate choice. We cannot save ourselves but we can condemn ourselves by rejecting the invitation. The parable also encourages the Church today to not be discouraged by those who reject the invitation to Christ's banquet, but also the reminder that there is plenty of room, as it says in the parable: "Master,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room'" (Luke 14:22).

### *Party Guests Become Party Hosts*

Jesus has been going around Galilee summoning people to God's great supper. This is the moment Israel has been waiting for! At last the time has arrived; those who were invited long ago must hurry up now and come! But most of them have refused, giving all kinds of reasons; we are reminded of the parable of the seeds and soils, in which various things caused most of the seeds to remain unfruitful. But some people have been delighted to be included: the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled. They have come in and celebrated with Jesus.

Christians, reading this anywhere in the world, must work out in their own churches and families what it would mean to celebrate God's kingdom so that the people at the bottom of the pile, at the end of the line, would find it to be good news. It isn't enough to say that we ourselves are the people dragged in from the country lanes, to our surprise, to enjoy God's party. That may be true; **but party guests are then expected to become party hosts in their turn.**

N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2004), 178–79.

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Why does it matter to see ourselves as not simply "attendees" to God's kingdom party but also "hosts"?
- Who is God putting on your heart to invite to Sunday church gatherings or to your Life Group?

- What does creating a culture of invitation look like? How will I intentionally create a culture of invitation?

**—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—**

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week's message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

**BONUS:** For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?