

During the dinner conversation while Jesus was eating a Sabbath day meal in a Pharisee's home, one of the religious leaders who had also had been invited brought up the subject of the kingdom of God. Jesus proceeded to deliver a parable that illustrated one of the reasons that many Jews would not enter the kingdom while many Gentiles would, the exact opposite of their expectation.

Verses 1-14: Jesus had been invited to dine at a chief Pharisee's home on the Sabbath. The invitation had been made so that they could watch Jesus in order to find a reason to accuse and discredit Him, and, knowing Jesus' habit of healing on the Sabbath, they apparently had arranged for a man with dropsy (fluid retention) to be present. Jesus healed the man, despite knowing that they would not approve. He defended His actions by pointing out that if a family member or animal they owned had fallen into a well, they would rescue them even if it was the Sabbath. When Jesus noticed that these religious leaders sought to sit at places of honor around the table, He talked about the importance of humility when invited to wedding feasts and of inviting to your meals those who cannot return the favor. These statements likely had overtones pertaining to the kingdom of God, which may have prompted one man to speak up.

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things” – Many who were attending the meal were concerned with being able to sit in a place of honor around the table (v. 7). After hearing what Jesus had to say about sitting in a humble place so that the host could honor you by asking you to move to a more honorable seat, this man decided to speak up.

“he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” – This man's intent may have been to say that it was just an honor to be able to sit at the table in the kingdom of God. Implied in the statement was the belief that everyone there at the table would be included in the kingdom of God. The popular belief at the time was that most Jews (except for the “wicked” ones) would automatically be welcomed into the kingdom of God.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many” – Jesus responds with a parable illustrating that the assumption that most Jews would enter the kingdom of God was untrue. The parable was centered on a man who was planning a great feast and had invited many people ahead of time, which parallels how God had invited the Jews to His “great supper” that would eventually be held in His kingdom.

“And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready” – When the time for the feast had arrived, the man sent his servant to notify all who had been invited. The kingdom of God had “come nigh” with the arrival of Jesus Christ, Who is represented by the servant in this parable. Christ's message was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

18 And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

Even though they knew that the great feast was being prepared, none of those who were invited to the feast were prepared to go. They were all involved in the matters of their own life that they considered to be higher priority than attending this man's feast. Jesus obviously gives a sample of the types of inadequate excuses that were made for not attending. It's unlikely that someone had bought a piece of ground without seeing it first. The oxen would still be there the next day after the feast. The one who had married apparently believed that the pleasures of his honeymoon were more important than attending the feast. When Christ came preaching the kingdom of God, most Jews were more interested in their own lives than in God's kingdom.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. 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 hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

When the servant reported back that none of those invited were coming to the supper, the master became angry. In order to get replacements for those that he had originally chosen to invite, he sends the servant to bring in the less desirable guests to eat at the supper. These included the poor (who would be unable to repay the kindness of the master), the maimed (those with injured or missing limbs), the “halt” (lame because of a missing foot or leg), and the blind. These guests offered no benefit to the master except for their presence. They represented those in Jewish society that were the very social outcasts that the Pharisees considered to be inferior. The Pharisees believed themselves to be the ones that God most desired to include in His kingdom while others would be less so.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.

“And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room” – Like God, this man had a large house that could accommodate many guests. God has plenty of room for all those who will accept His invitation to come. These less desirable Jews that had accepted God’s invitation were still not enough to fill His house.

“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled” – The man removes all restrictions on who is to be invited to come. The invitation is extended to “whosoever will” and goes beyond just the Jews. Gentiles are also invited into the kingdom of God in order to fill His house.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

The Jewish religious leaders had rejected Christ’s invitation and God would honor their decision by forever excluding them from the kingdom. The gospel invitation would primarily be to the Jews until the apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, began his focus on evangelizing the Gentiles due to Jewish opposition (**Acts 13:44-46** “*And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*”). Up until that point, the church had been primarily composed of Jewish believers. After that, the number of Gentiles began to grow quickly and soon the church became primarily filled with Gentile believers. This trend will continue until God’s appointed time at which He will focus His attention back on the salvation of Israel (**Rom. 11:25** “*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*”).

Verses 25-35: As Jesus continued to travel toward Jerusalem, there were great multitudes following Him. Knowing that most of these people were not genuine believers and would eventually abandon Him, He turned to them and declared the type of complete commitment that was required of those that wanted to be His disciple. They had to be willing to leave everything behind, even prioritizing Him above their family. He warned them to count the cost of following Him so that they would know that they were willing to pay that cost for His sake.