

VOTC Feb. 12, 2017

“You Cannot Come”?

Luke 14:16-18a

How are you dear listeners?

Humility is not a popular, household, word. It is not something many people are eager to practice and delight in. The Latin word *humus* means ‘ground’ and the humble person is one who lives, so to speak, ‘on the ground floor’.

To speak of someone as being ‘humble’ certainly means one’s moral as well as spiritual condition. The humble person is not one who is self-important, haughty, insisting on his or her own way. Nor does such a person put on show of false modesty to impress people. Rather, one who is humble has a quiet, sober and honest estimate of oneself in relation to God as well as his/her neighbor,

In the days when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth he taught His and His Father’s requirements for entry into his kingdom, that spiritual realm called *The Kingdom of God* or *The Kingdom of Heaven*. Jesus put humility at the top of the list of his prerequisites for entering the kingdom of heaven when he said "*Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God*" ([Matthew 5:3](#)). "*Poor in spirit* ‘was Jesus’ definition for humility.

The Gospel writer Luke, tells us that one day (which was a Sabbath), Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee. (Luke 14:1) There he was carefully watched for the Pharisees and scribes were

always seeing if they could catch Jesus doing something they considered to be unlawful to do on the Sabbath.

It was in that house of that prominent leader of the Jews that Jesus healed a man who was suffering from dropsy, (An old English term for the swelling of soft tissues due to the accumulation of excess water in some part of the body.) Today we'd be more likely to use the term *edema*.

This time the Lord didn't wait for the Pharisees present to accuse him. He asked them as well as the other experts in the law present whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? (v. 3) However no one answered him a word

Later Jesus noticed how the guests invited to dine at this Pharisee's home picked the places of honor at the table. Such places were usually the centre seats at the tables. Jesus, teaching the blessings associated with humility told them to choose the least important places for then, if the host asked you to move to a better place, you would be honoured before all your fellow guests.

In this and everything Jesus taught he was out to curb the haughtiness and self- importance of those leaders of the Jews. At the same time he laboured to show the wondrous blessings of honoring Christ's invitation to eat at His table and enjoy fellowship with Him.

That's why he continued to teach in what follows in Luke 14: 15-24 what often is called *The Parable of the Great Banquet*.

It is the story of a man who made a great dinner and invited many people. When the dinner was ready he sent out his servant to contact the people who had been invited saying, "Come for everything is now ready!"

But all of them were quick to offer their excuses! The first said "I've just bought a piece of property and I must go and see it. Please have me excused". Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them out. Please do excuse me". A third said "I just got married so I can't come".

Lots of excuses but really, just a whole bundle of pretence. None of their excuses could be said to trump the invitation to what amounted to a magnificent dinner party. Imagine you and I receiving such an invitation, which would have been already, previously, accepted. Yet now when everything is in a state of readiness and your place is reserved at the banquet you turn the invitation down at the last moment because: your need to go and see a car dealer; check on the layout of that acreage or because of some obligation to the family. Perhaps the third excuse might warrant some understanding but the others....?

However, Jesus was not finished yet for he told of the servant returning with these blatant refusals to his master who became fiercely angry at being rebuffed. In turn that master ordered the servant to go into the streets and back alleys of town and when that was done there was still room and he was ordered to go out in the country and invite those poor and miserable people staggering along the sides of the ditches to persuade them with forceful words, to come. For, as the master said, "I want a full house and will not be deterred." "This

while not one of those who had received the original invitations will get one taste of my banquet.”

It is a parable, one of those stories Jesus told that has a deeper, more essential meaning. It reminds us that even long before the day when Jesus told this story God had told the Jews of what amounted to an invitation to a glorious dinner. It was His sure promise (Genesis 15, 17), that those Jews would be His special family who would be favored with sitting at the table with Jesus Christ. In the way of responding in humble faith and obedience to his call to come!

It was an invitation which for a long time was exclusively given to Israel. Although, even when God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob went out (read about it in the book of Genesis) God had said that all the nations would be blessed. Even many Gentiles to whom the message of salvation would come would be favored to enter the banqueting hall.

But what was happening right there in the days when Jesus broadcast the message of God’s kingdom got those Jews? Even their leaders, like those Pharisees, rejected the Master, Jesus Christ. They denied his validity as the Savior of the world and the king of his spiritual realm, his kingdom. In fact, he was despised and rejected by his fellow Jews. They had different expectations about the Messiah who they knew was coming into the world. They were not looking for a spiritual kingdom but a physical. material one whose leader could deal with Roman armies and who would be instrumental in the revival of king David’s kingdom. They were looking for a Hercules on a white charger. That’s why they didn’t mind seeing the miracles Jesus did.

Surely these could be very effective in dealing with Roman armies and centurions.

But Jesus came as the “Bread of life.” We could say, He himself was and is the Banquet! That partaking of him, believing in him, and answering his call for repentance and faith and humility in love those who hear the invitation might have life!

That’s why the message even of *this broadcast* goes out today. That’s why Christ Jesus is still proclaimed by faithful messengers in many places in this world. Yet it also meets with a host of excuses of: ” Too busy to hear that gospel” and, “ Got more important things to do!” or, A good game of golf on Sunday or the hockey rink has a whole lot more attraction for me, thank you”

Dear listeners, are you one of those who for one reason or another won’t come through the door of a church, even a faithful, God-honoring church today? Yet the grace of God, his mercy in forgiving even deep-seated sin of many people is still very real today.

But it must meet with a response of faith. Christ’s banquet in his house and with him is not just the amazing food, the best he has to offer, that is, his Word. It is also fellowship, communion, a relationship of love in which he provides comfort and joy for your journey in life today and tomorrow.

Well then, don’t keep Jesus out of your life. Don’t be afraid of getting close to him. The hour of the banquet is here. Now is the time. He is determined that his house will be full. He says to you and to me, “ Come, for all is ready. I’m on my way to complete my kingdom.

Come to the banquet and do not refuse.” For Christ’s sake, Amen