

Year 1: Session 5 – Kingdom of God Parables

Class 14: Luke 14:12-24 – Parable of the Great Feast

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Offer some definitions regarding how to think about the Kingdom of God
- Define the question that the parable seems to be addressing, which is: *If the kingdom of God is for everyone and is like a great feast, why doesn't everyone want to participate in it?*
- Highlight the answer that the parable gives: "People think they are busy, they don't make time for it, but they do make excuses for not participating."

Materials needed

- Video clip from "Father of the Bride" (can be seen on rfour.org)
- Electronics that show the video clip
- Family Feud questions and answers (located at end of lesson)
- Some sort of way for the up-front contestants to "ring-in" or "buzz-in" before the other contestant – I personally prefer a "big plastic spoon on a stool" between the two contestants – first one to grab it is considered the "buzzed-in" contestant

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today's class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here's this week's question:* What is an event/activity that you have been excited about being invited to, but at the same time felt nervous about it, so much so that maybe you didn't even want to do it/go to it? (*possible answers: standing in line for a rollercoaster ride; a performance of some kind like a concert or important sports game*)

INTRO / Transition to VIDEO

- Last class, we started a new session about the parables that Jesus told about the Kingdom of God.

- In our previous lesson, we talked about how Jesus told parables to help avoid (i.e., circumvent) the people's lack of desire to learn new things including new things about God (the same type of thinking that keeps you from googling a better way to tie your shoelaces, for instance)
- And then we talked a little bit about two parables, where Jesus says the Kingdom of God is like buying a more valuable thing with less valuable things. In other words, to give all of yourself, including all of your possessions to "purchase" the Kingdom of God would give you a net increase in value.
- In today's lesson and parable, we'll talk about some ways to think about the Kingdom of God and who is invited to participate in it.
- To help think about invitations, let's watch the following movie clip from "Father of the Bride."
- In it, the father of the bride (played by Steve Martin) is worried about the cost of the reception after the wedding and is trying to decide with his wife, daughter and son who should *not* be invited.

WATCH VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- Did you catch how much each guest was going to cost at the reception? (\$250 a person)
- How many total people does the dad say can come to the house? (150 people. 1st fun fact: Even with "only" 150 people, that's still a \$37,500 pricetag – for JUST the reception. 2nd fun fact: Earlier in the movie, the number of people they were initially going to invite was over 500 people!)
- What are some of the reasons they come up with for not inviting people? (they haven't seen someone for 15 out of the 20 years they knew them; the son's friend, Cameron, can come over *after* the reception, one of the people, Harry Kirby, probably died somewhat recently; the wedding planner because he's already getting paid)
- Towards the end of the clip, the dad latches on to an idea mentioned by the son – "That's not a bad idea -- who else can we ask not to eat? [pause] My parents and your mother." What do you think, would that be a very fun party where you are not allowed to eat the food that is there?
- Does the daughter (who is getting married) seem to agree with this line of thinking of not asking people to the party and then asking them not to eat? (At first she seems to go along with it, but appears to get increasingly irritated until she eventually leaves the discussion)

TELL

- In the scripture story that we're going to read, Jesus is at a Pharisee's house for dinner.
- A Pharisee was a religious and political leader of the Israelites – so a VIP of sorts (Very Important Person) is wanting to interact with Jesus
- Jesus and company have already had a spirited discussion about seating arrangements / seats of honor
- In that discussion, Jesus makes the point that you shouldn't try to sit in the best seat because then you might get embarrassed by having the host move you down to lower seats. This is the equivalent of trying to sit shotgun in a car just to have the driver move you to the very back.
 - Instead, Jesus says, it is better to sit in a less honorable seat so that when the host suggests you move closer to him/her, then you are honored.
- Today's scripture story starts just after that discussion, but the ideas in what we're going to read are connected to what Jesus has already been talking about.

READ Luke 14:12-24 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse, including teachers*)

12 [Jesus] said also to the one who had invited him [a Pharisee], "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." 15 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" 16 Then Jesus said to him, "Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 17 At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now.' 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.' 19 Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.' 20 Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' 22 And the slave said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' 23 Then the master said to the slave, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.' "

ASK

- Verse 12 – who does Jesus tell the Pharisee to not invite to a party? (“do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors”)
- Verse 12 – why does Jesus say to not invite those people? (“in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid”)
- Verse 13 – who does Jesus say the Pharisee SHOULD invite to a party? (invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind)
- Verse 13 – Why? (Because they cannot repay you. And then he says something that sounds a lot like karma in verse 14. **Big Note:** Jews in first century time didn’t have much of a concept of heaven. Instead, they mostly thought that when you were dead, you were dead, but then on the “last day” ALL dead people would be raised up and there would be a judgment from God about who would get to live again *on earth*...which is what they called the “resurrection of the righteous” and that is what Jesus is referring to here.)
- Verse 17 – 20 – who is invited and how do they respond to the invitation? (mostly people who are well-to-do. If you had land and oxen, then you were doing quite alright, financially. But the bigger theme, here, is that the people are too *busy* to come to the party. 21st century translation of the excuses given: I just bought a new house and need to start moving in; I just bought a new car and have to wash it and drive it around; I just got married and will be on my honeymoon)
- Verse 21 – How does the owner respond to these excuses? (he’s angry and then he is determined to still have the party, so he invites other people, people who aren’t too busy, to come to the party)
- Verse 21 – Who are these other people who are invited? (the poor, the lame, the blind)
- Do they attend the party? (Yes)
- Verse 22 – After they say yes, is there still room at the party? (Yes)
- Verse 23 – So what does the owner do since there is still more room at the party? (He sends out even more invitations)
- So what do you think, is this owner like the dad in the movie clip? (nope, just the opposite really. The dad said only 150 people could attend. The owner gets mad when people can’t attend. The dad is worried about the cost of each person that attends, the owner is trying to *compel* people to attend the party)
- Whose party would you rather be at – the owner’s party or the dad’s party?

- So who do you think the owner in the story represents? (God)
- And what do you think the dinner party represents? (The kingdom of God)
- And who do the invited people represent? (us / people in general)

TELL

- Verse 15 – The person talking here might either be overly-enthusiastic ... or, he’s just a suck-up. Either way, Jesus tells the parable “against” the professed excitement about “the kingdom of God.” There’s a number of things to pay attention to about this parable, but let’s remember what prompts it – even though it sounds good, Jesus is offering a story that helps us think about one type of reason why people don’t participate in the Kingdom of God.
- Before we talk about the story, though, let’s talk about the phrase “kingdom of God”
 - What is a kingdom? (a place -- usually defined in geographical terms with a certain amount of land with certain boundaries)
 - Who lives in a kingdom? (people)
 - Who rules the land and people in a kingdom? (a king)
 - What does a king do for a kingdom and its people? (makes rules for them, enforces the boundaries of the kingdom, leads an army, etc.)
 - OK – good.
 - So, when Jesus talks about the “Kingdom of God,” he is using our pre-existing knowledge about kingdoms.
 - But, there are some differences between any ol’ kingdom and the Kingdom of God.
 - One difference: Jesus is not primarily talking about a *place*. Instead, he is talking about a *way* of life (not a geographical place) that is available for us to live (in) right here, right now
 - In other words, Jesus is saying that wherever we let God be king, that is where the Kingdom of God is
 - So to say this more clearly: When Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God, **he is not talking about heaven**; he is NOT talking about a place that we go to when we die. He’s talking about a way of life that is available to us right here, right now
 - Note: This doesn’t mean there isn’t a heaven – instead, what this means is that “heaven” and “kingdom of God” are two different and separate concepts.
 - Another difference between Kingdom of God and an earthly kingdom: The people, then, who live in the Kingdom of God are choosing to do so. They aren’t just born into it or accidentally walk across an invisible border. The people who live in the Kingdom of God are people who choose to recognize God as their king (or sovereign or ruler or authority – pick your word, here)
 - As you start to think about it, you start to realize that such an idea isn’t so easy to visualize. What would such a kingdom *look* like?
 - Which is why Jesus tells stories about the kingdom of God – to give us some visual references that might help us think about what the kingdom of God might look like.
 - So here’s what we’ve learned to visualize about the kingdom of God so far:
 - From last class: It’s an *expensive* place to live – but membership is more valuable than what we put into it.
 - From last class: It’s something that needs to be chosen/chased after. It won’t just *happen* to us. We have to want it.

- From this class: God is a very very very generous king/ruler
 - From this class: Everyone is invited to the Kingdom of God and it's a big ol' party with room for everyone
 - From this class: Not everyone wants to participate.
 - From this class: Reasons why people might not participate: They like their own land/kingdom, they are too busy with their own tasks, they have other relationships that they think are more important.
 - This is what verse 24 is trying to say – At face-value, that verse doesn't make much sense because there ARE people who were invited who get to taste the dinner. What's really being said, though, is that *everyone* is invited, but the people with too many excuses – the people who are too busy to show up – won't get to eat any of the dinner. Which seems like common sense, right?
- So if God's Kingdom is so great, like a great feast, why don't we all just say yes to attending God's party?
 - In the parable we just read, the answer to this question seems to be: Because people think they are too busy and/or they don't make time for the party because they think they have more important things to do
 - Note that the excuses in the story that people gave were very similar to excuses that people like the Pharisees would've given.

TRANSITION to *Family Feud Excuse Activity*

- But Very Important People aren't the only folks who make excuses to get out of invitations.
- We ALL do
- To help us think about how often and prevalent excuses are to invitations and events, we're going to play a Family Feud game of excuses.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

1. We'll have two teams.
2. A contestant from each team will come to the front of class
3. A question about excuses will be asked
4. First person to grab the plastic spoon gets to give the first answer.
5. You want to give the same excuse that the most people in a survey of 100 people gave.
6. After first person answers, we'll do the "surVEY SAYS..." part and reveal/say how many people (if any) gave the same answer. The number of people who gave the same answer as the contestant are also how many points the answer is worth.
7. The other contestant will then give another answer. We'll do the "surVEY SAYS..." part and then say/reveal how many people (if any) gave the same answer.
8. "Control" of the board goes to the team whose contestant had the most people agree with their answer (i.e., the answer with the most points).
9. The team that has control must then try to reveal all of the correct answers to the question before getting three wrong guess (aka "strikes")
 - a. NOTE: How the team comes up with the correct answers is up to you – probably letting them decide as a team is the best approach – or you can do like the game show and give each person on the team a chance to answer

10. If the team receives three strikes without clearing (giving all the answers on) the board, control is passed to the other team.
11. The other team that now has control of the board has to give *one* answer and one answer only. If that one answer is on the board (and has not yet been answered), then all the points that are showing on the board go to that team.
12. If the team's one answer is not on the board, then the other (original) team gets the points that are showing on the board.
13. Continue the game repeating steps 2 through 12.
14. We'll play three or four rounds. The team with the most points wins the game!

DO ACTIVITY (see questions and answers at end of lesson)

NOTE to TEACHERS: Unless you can think of a fancy software way of doing this, most likely what needs to happen is that one teacher asks the questions and the other teacher acts like the scoreboard – calling out answers and scores and then keeping track of the scores and then making buzzer sounds for when an answer is given that doesn't match any of the scoreboard answers.

TELL

- As you can see, we're pretty good at coming up with excuses, both as individuals and as humans in general.
- There's something about events and invitations that make us go, "Uh...no thanks...because my dog needs a shampoo."
- Even if it's a fun thing that we're doing, like being at a party, or something important that we're supposed to do, like going to work / doing homework, or something easy to do like *answer our phone* – we often have plenty of excuses to decline the invitation / event.
- One of the reasons Jesus tells this story, then, about the Kingdom of God being like a feast, is to remind us that even though the Kingdom of God sounds great, that doesn't mean all of us will just say, "Yes, we want to be part of it" and then actually be part of it.
- Instead, people might make excuses – or might say one thing but then do the opposite.
- In our next lesson, we'll talk about another type of reason why we might not accept the invitation to live in the Kingdom of God.

CLOSING PRAYER

FAMILY FEUD Questions and Answers

What excuse do people use when they do not return phone calls?

1	BUSY	53
2	DIDN'T GET MESSAGE	29
3	FORGOT	13
4	TURNED OFF / NO POWER	4
5	SLEEPING	3

Name an excuse people give for leaving a party early

1	TIRED	48
2	SICK	30
3	GET HOME TO KIDS	11
4	GET UP EARLY	8

What excuses would a kid give their teacher for not turning in their homework?

1	DOG ATE IT	54
2	FORGOT	19
3	WAS SICK	11
4	LOST IT	7
5	DIDN'T HAVE BOOKS	3
6	COMPUTER BROKE	3

Tell Me An Excuse You'd Use To Avoid Singing At A Karaoke Club.

1	SORE THROAT/SICK	49
2	CAN'T SING	24
3	LOST VOICE	13
4	STAGE FRIGHT	12

Name an excuse for lateness that bosses get sick of hearing

1	OVERSLEPT/ALARM	27
2	TRAFFIC JAM	26
3	CAR TROUBLE	20
4	MISSED BUS/TRAIN	17
5	SICK KIDS	4
6	NOT FEELING WELL	3