

The Great Banquet

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[0 : 00] I just want to say welcome again to Watermark. We're so happy that you're here worshipping with us this morning. We just want to take a couple of minutes and turn around and say good morning to your neighbors and say Jesus loves you.

Thank you. You may be seated.

Good morning, Watermark.

How are you? Hi. My name is Natalie, and I'm the coordinator of children's ministry here at Watermark. And so welcome this morning.

We're excited to have you here. Hi, I'm Melanie Case, and I help with Watermark kids as well. And so we are excited to kick off this fall. We have a new curriculum. It's called the Gospel Project for Kids, and we are excited about it.

[1 : 26] There's a lot of modern media, which we know the kids just love. And so it's visually stimulating, and it's just focused on Jesus Christ, which we believe here at Watermark to be just the fundamentals of our faith.

And so we wanted to give you a sneak preview. So watch now. If this is your first time to Watermark or your third or fourth time, you realize that we do everything with the family engaged because we feel like it is a family, and kids need to be involved with the parents, and they need to see the parents' faith, and they need to see that lived out, and they need to be able to ask a lot of questions.

And so we just feel like that is some of you walking in going, that's crazy. Tim and Huang are looking at me like, where the heck do we sit right now? Come on in, guys. But the kids are engaged, and then they will leave.

But we do crazy things because we feel like we're called to be a family in that sense. And so I'm going to try something very crazy here. I would like to ask all the kids who are going to go to Kids Club, I need your help.

I have a problem. So if you're going to go to Kids Club, will you kids come up here? I have 300 pieces of chocolate candy I can't eat by myself, but that's not my problem.

[2 : 47] Okay, so kids, will you come on up here for me, please? Come on, guys. All the kids, come on up here. Okay, and just kind of sit right there.

Good job. Well, I can tell who's the most eager ones. Hey, Geraldine.

Hey, Aurora. How are you? What a beautiful dress. Be nice to your sister, okay? How are you guys doing?

Good. Ryder, what are you eating? Apple. Apple, okay. Do you have some too, Willow? No? Okay. Okay, guys, I need your help, okay?

Can you help me? Okay, okay. This is what I need. I'm getting old, and this summer, I was able to travel to many different countries. Oh, yeah, and in these countries, we used a lot of different money, and some of the money is better than other money, as your parents can tell you that, but I get confused in how much the money is worth, so can you help me?

[3 : 58] Please? Okay, so I got some Texas money here. Okay? U.S. money, okay? Okay. Okay, so this is, this is, so I walked around, and this is a brand new \$20 bill.

Does anybody know how much this is worth? In Hong Kong dollars. What is it? Approximately, like \$145 to \$160.

That's great. So I, but I forget sometimes, so this is worth like \$160, right? Yeah. So what if I just take it like this, and I fold it, and put all these creases in it, then I pull it out.

How much is it worth now? How much? Same. Same. Okay, so what if I take this dollar bill, and I just, and I rub it all over the carpet here, and I get dirty stuff all over it?

How much is it worth now? Same. Are you telling me the truth? Yeah. Okay, what if I do this? And I just squeeze it up, then I pull it back.

[5 : 18] How much is this worth now? You know the, you know, you know the Bible? The Bible says that you and I are worth a lot of money.

And that God loves you so much, and the Bible says that no matter what happens in your life, no matter how many mistakes you make, no matter how many scars you have on you, no matter how many marks you have on you, that that doesn't change how much you're worth to God.

Because no matter what happens in your life, you're worth everything to God. Did you know that? Sometimes we forget.

Sometimes we make mistakes, and we think God doesn't love us. But the Bible says that God always loves us, no matter how many marks we have on us. Okay.

Who wants this? Me! Adele, I want to give that to you, okay? Okay. Hey, guys, will you pray with me?

[6 : 26] Let's pray. Dear God, thank you for this day. Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you that no matter what we do, you still love us.

You still sent Jesus for us. Father, help us to love you. Help us to love our friends. We love you.

Amen. Thank you so much, guys. And I have some chocolate here. Does anybody want to help me get rid of this? How much is this chocolate worth? Okay, I'm going to give this to a teacher, and the teacher's going to take this chocolate out.

Kids Club, all the kids go to one big room, and then after you spend your time in your big room, you go to your small classrooms, right? And the youth, youth are going to dismiss, and they're going to go with Eric, okay?

Okay, so we'll see, you guys. Watermark kids are dismissed. Today's scripture comes from the Book of Isaiah and Gospel of Luke. Please follow along in your bulletin. The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all the people on this mountain, a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined aged wine.

[7 : 42] And on this mountain, he will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces.

And he will remove the reproach of his people from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken, and it will be said in that day, Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited, that he might save us.

This is the Lord for whom we have waited. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation. And he was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching and proceeding on his way to Jerusalem.

And someone said to him, Lord, are there just a few who are being saved? And he said to them, Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

And they will come from east and west, and from north and south, and will recline at the table of the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.

[8 : 44] It happened that when he went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees, on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching him closely. When one of those who were reclining at the table with him heard this, he said to him, Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.

But he said to him, A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many. And at the dinner hour, he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is ready now.

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, I have bought a piece of land, and I need to go out and look at it. Please consider me excused. Another one said, I have bought five yokes of oxen, and I am going to try them out.

Please consider me excused. Another one said, I have married a wife, and for that reason, I cannot come. And the slave came back and reported this to the master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

And the slave said, Master, what you have commanded has been done, and still there is room. And the master said to the slave, Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.

[10 : 05] For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner. This is God's word. How's everybody going? It's quiet.

I didn't know how that Texas money comment would go across, but you know, got to try at least once. Okay.

I didn't hear a reply. How's everybody doing? How you guys doing? Good? Good. Okay. You know, I don't know how you feel about the messages we've been listening to and talking about in Luke.

I was talking to a guy this week. I promised that if you and I ever talk and I use you as an example, I will ask you first if I could use you as an example, because I know people don't want to talk to me anymore because they're afraid they're going to be an example.

And we talked about the passages we've been studying. And he said to me, he said, man, this is really, these are really, these are really difficult.

[11 : 13] I said, well, what do you mean? He goes, well, I just feel like I've got my Christian life down and I know how to do what, when, where, and I can have my pattern into my schedule. And if I go this on Sunday and I do this for community group on Friday and I hang out with these people on Wednesday, that's my Christian life.

But the passages we're talking about, they're dealing with our heart. And Jesus is looking at people's heart and he goes, man, I realized really quickly that I can do all the right things, but have the wrong heart.

And it seems to me as we look at the gospels that Jesus is always going after our motives. I mean, he doesn't just look at our actions. He doesn't want us just to have all our ducks in a row, but he's looking at our heart.

And I think that's the killer for me because I realized that I can do things very, very well and on the outside look perfect, but my heart can be a wreck.

I don't know if you struggle with that. The Bible says we all struggle with that. And the passages we've been looking at make it very clear that Jesus wants our heart.

[12 : 26] He wants us. He doesn't just want us to obey. The last several chapters and then this summer when we did the Proverbs study, we've been talking about the kingdom of God.

And today we continue talking about the kingdom of God in this passage. It's very clear. And what you see in this passage is that Jesus says the kingdom of God is going to be this massive party.

It's going to be this incredible party. We see it in the Isaiah passage that you read. It was 700 years before the story happens today. We see it in this story. And we see it throughout all the Bible, banquets and parties and feasts.

Jesus' first miracle was at a banquet. He turned water to wine and he talks about parties over and over and over. And it seems like if we look at heaven, if we take a picture of the Bible, it talks about meals and dinners and parties and banquets hundreds and hundreds of times.

And it's almost as if it's like human history from scripture is one party after another party after another party.

[13 : 40] It starts in the garden and it moves to weddings and Passovers and communions and to the last supper. And we're told that all of these parties that we're going to be a part of, all of these parties pale in comparison to the party that God is going to throw you in heaven when you get there and spend time with him as his children.

I actually started thinking about this sermon this week and I started thinking about maybe I would start off with a white piece of paper in everybody's chair and ask you two questions.

The first question I wanted to ask you is what will heaven be like? And have you write out your thoughts here? The second question I wanted to ask you is will you be there?

Because in this passage today, Jesus is talking about the kingdom and he's talking about people and he's talking to the leaders, the officials, the rich, the wealthy, the powerful.

He's talking to the power brokers of his time and he's looking at their heart. He gets this really deep discussion and all of a sudden somebody shouts out, I don't know if you have an uncle like this in your family.

[14 : 56] I think every family has an uncle like this. He just says something off the tip of his tongue and you're looking at him like, where did that come from? But this guy yells out as his leader after he hears this because there's a lot of tension in this party because Jesus is talking about the heart.

And this leader stands up and he yells out, blessed is everyone who eats bread in the kingdom of God. Now we don't know it when we read it today, but back then that had a lot of assumptions and a lot of meanings.

When he said that and in that people that he was talking to, everybody, everybody in this party would have answered question number two, are you going to be there? A hundred percent yes. The audience that Jesus was talking to today, they knew without a shadow of a doubt that they were going to be in heaven.

I mean, they did everything right. They were worthy. They kept God's word. They kept the commandments perfectly. They did all the right things. They went to church. They tithed.

They did all the studies. They finished the Beth Moore study and a crusade study and a navigator study and they did all those studies. In fact, some of them probably wrote those studies.

[16 : 12] But there was this assumption that we, at this table, for sure, we're the family of God. We're going to be in heaven. And again, Jesus takes what we think and what we assume and he tells a story.

And every time he tells a story, it's like he takes a knife and he cuts open their chest and he shows them their hearts and he shows us our hearts and he shows us about the kingdom of God.

He shows us about this great banquet in heaven. He shows us about heaven. And there's three things I want to look at really briefly here because we could talk about this forever and I usually do talk longer than I need to as I'm reminded constantly by my wife.

I love you, honey. But I want to look at three things this passage tells us today about the kingdom of God, about heaven, about the banquet that we're all going to eat. The first thing I think it tells us is that the kingdom of God is now, but not yet.

The next thing I think it tells us is that there is an invite that goes out and it's freely offered to everybody. And the last thing that I want to look at in this passage today is that the kingdom of God and the invite that goes out demands a response.

[17 : 36] But we all get this invite and we got to do something with it. We just can't stick it aside in our box or we can not look at it, but it demands a response. So let's look in this passage.

Verse 16. And he said to him, a man was giving a big dinner in Greek, a massive, so they use watermark terms, a massive feast. And he invited many.

Now when he did parties in Jesus' day, it took at least two invitations. One would go out hours or days or weeks or months ahead. It depended on how big the party was going to be and how many people were going to be invited.

And the slave or the servant would take that invite to the person. And the person would open it up and they would look at it and immediately they would respond. Of course, I'm going to go. That's incredible.

I'm going to be there. He throws great parties. It's an amazing place. Why would I not want to miss the event of the year? And so this invite goes out. The slaves or the helpers send it out to everybody and everybody says, yes, we'll do it.

[18 : 41] Now the real work happens. The master goes back home and he starts cooking and preparing and putting things together. And I don't know how long does it take. I don't know. It depends on how big the party is. How long is the party going to last?

But it could take a long time. And as he's doing that, people are going, wow, what's this party going to be like? I don't know. I've heard it's great. I heard he throws incredible parties. I wanted to get into his party last year, but I couldn't get into it.

But he throws incredible, incredible parties. How big is it going to be? I don't know, but it's going to be amazing. And as people started to talk and they speculated, there would be a wait.

There would be a period of time when people waited and guessed and asked questions. Today, I forgot to embarrass her, is my daughter Rachel's 13th birthday.

Okay, so we had 13 13-year-olds spend the night at my house. It was out of control. I mean, I just didn't realize how much girls ate.

[19 : 46] I thought that guys ate a lot, but 13-year-old girls, I think I need to take a love offering just to fill up our refrigerator because our house is like a pair of locusts or 13 locusts.

Just went through and just, if it wasn't made out of wood or steel, they got eight, right? And so Rachel had this 13th birthday party and she has been talking about this 13th party for a long time.

And my question for you is, how long do you think she's been talking about it? One day? A year. When I turn 13, this is what I want to do.

When I turn 13, this is who I want to have over. Can I do this? Can I do that? Can I have this type of food? What kind of food should I have? I don't know if I can wait that long because these are the people I want to invite and this is what I want to do and this is what I want to see happen.

Can I do that? And she just talked about it all the time. And it lasted 10 hours, literally. But she was so consumed with that party.

[20 : 52] I was in my room studying and I smelled cake. And I walked into the kitchen and when Christina wasn't looking, I took my finger and I dipped it and ate it.

I'm sorry, honey. And it was good. And I asked her, how much longer until the cake? And she said, tomorrow. And I realized that you and I are terrible, terrible waiters.

I mean, there's something in human nature that we do not like to wait at all. Elevators, lines, escalators, parking places. We just hate waiting.

C.S. Lewis says that we are terrible waiters. He says we live in this shadow time. That we see pieces of heaven.

We see glimpses of glory. And we want it. But we don't get it because we have to wait.

[21 : 59] And he says that we live in this time of now and not yet in this shadow lands. Jesus talks about it often in the scriptures.

I mean, every time he talks about heaven, he does a miracle. And these miracles are called sign miracles. And what he means by sign miracles is it points us to heaven. It points us to God.

It points us to the banquet. It shows us how things are going to be in the end times and what things are supposed to be like. But now we just see a shadow of it.

I mean, we see it truly. But we don't see it fully. We see grace. We see mercy. We see love. It comes into our lives. We see people's lives totally satisfied.

People's lives totally changed by the gospel. But it's like we live in this shadow because we still feel hungry. We still feel anxious.

[23 : 04] We still feel scared. We see sunrises, birth, love, community, redemption. Things that point us to heaven. Things that say, this is what heaven's going to be like.

But we see just a glimpse of it. And we're left waiting. And we're left wondering. And we're left asking questions.

We live in the now and not yet. Have you ever felt that tension? Have you ever felt God enter into the now and not yet and show you a little piece of heaven?

I saw a piece of heaven three years ago in an ICU room. Good friends of ours, Wayne and Alice. Wayne was a doctor in Shanghai.

And Wayne one day went to pick up his child. And as he picked him up and lifted him up, his back snapped, broken too. He fell to the floor in incredible pain.

[24 : 10] They took him to the hospital in Shanghai. They evac'd him here to the ICU at Adventist. We were visiting them and it was terrible.

Cancer throughout his whole body. Spine eaten to pieces. There's no chance he's going to leave that ICU. Systems start to fail one after another.

We visit and he goes, hey, can you do me a favor? I'm like, okay, what is it? He goes, I want you to renew our wedding vows. I want you to come back tomorrow.

And I want you to renew our wedding vows. So it's me and Wayne and Alice, his wife, and Christina and the brother.

And it's ICU room. And as we get there and as Christina, you know, you've never seen me cry, right? So I don't cry, but what am I thinking? Christina, she's a wimp because she's behind the camera.

[25 : 20] So you can't see her crying, but you can tell that she's crying. And we start to talk and Wayne looks at Alice and he goes, you know, I just need to apologize to you.

Because I've been so selfish. I said I've been doing these things for the kids and for you, but it's really been about me. And I've neglected our family.

I've neglected you. Glimpses of heaven coming in. Will you forgive me? Redemption. Forgiveness.

Glimpses of heaven coming in. I mean, I feel like I'm sitting in this place and it's like holy place. Like God is here. In the now and not yet. Christina's just over there filming.

Then he goes, I want to sing a song. And I'm like, oh, dude, you're killing me. Because I'm just thinking I'm biting my lip and I'm pinching myself and I'm trying to do everything I can not to cry. But I'm seeing heaven.

[26 : 22] I'm seeing redemption. I'm seeing forgiveness. I'm seeing renewal. I'm seeing things as they are, but I'm seeing just a glimpse of it. We all do. Sometimes we're just not looking for it.

They do their vows. It's incredible. I'm weeping. He's weeping. The brother's weeping. Alice is weeping. Christina's hiding behind the camera. It looks like she's weeping because the film's going like this.

The evac. Wayne to the States. Emergency. Send him to Cleveland Clinic because it's getting worse and everything's shutting down. And all of a sudden, he starts to heal.

Glimpses. Of heaven. His body starts to reject the cancer. His back strengthens.

He starts to walk. Glimpses. Of heaven. Now he's holding his kids and he's throwing them up. And he's a doctor again in Philadelphia.

[27 : 35] And he's doing all these things. And when that moment I look at it and I think about it, I say God was there. God was doing something. God was changing people's lives.

We're living in the now and not yet. God was changing people's lives. The question is, can we wait? Because what we see is amazing, but it's nothing compared to heaven.

The kingdom points us that it is now and not yet. Verse 17. And at the dinner hour, the slave said to those who had been invited, come, for everything is ready now.

Come, for everything is ready. It's the second invite. The meal is ready. Everybody's supposed to go there. The second invite comes out. And we see in this passage that the invite goes out broadly. It goes out to everybody.

We see it in verse 16 and verse 17 and verse 21 and verse 23. The invite goes out to everyone. Now remember, Jesus is only talking to guys who thought that they were going to only be the people in heaven.

[28 : 41] The Pharisees thought they were the only ones in heaven. And Jesus is talking to them about this invite that goes out. You ever walk down the street and you see somebody?

Maybe somebody in your office. And you go, you know, there's no way they're going to come to Christ. They're just too mean. They're just too rich.

There's no way they're going to ever hear about Christ. These are the verses, or these are the people in verses 21 and 23.

Maybe we're walking down the street. We see a Muslim. He's dressed in his Muslim garb. And we want to share with him. But we go, no way, no way. Maybe we see a politician or a lawyer or a banker or someone who's driving a really cool, fast car, and they're really into themselves.

And we say, there's no way he needs the gospel. There's no reason why I should share with him. There's nothing that he needs that the gospel has to offer. Maybe it's a girl holding the hand of her female lover, and you see them walking down, and there's something inside of you that says, I should share the gospel with her.

[29 : 56] But then you realize there's no way. She hates Christians. But the passage says that the minute we do this, the minute we take away the power of the invite, we de-gospel ourselves.

I know it's a word we made up here, but we basically detach ourselves from the power of the gospel. The minute we look at somebody and we say, you know, there's no way that the gospel has anything they need, there's no way that we could talk to them.

There's no way that the gospel can change them. The minute we do that, we forget the power of the invite, and we forget that the invite is for everybody, and we forget that the master has asked you and I to take the invite to everybody.

I mean, we're called to share this message everywhere. You know, in Jesus' day, the guys he's talking to right now, they thought of you and me is firewood for hell.

The only reason that God would create Gentiles was because hell was a fire and it needed firewood. But we see in the book of Acts that the invite goes out.

[31 : 16] And it changes everything. It's why you and I are here right now, because the message won out.

Verse 17, at the dinner hour, he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, come, for everything is ready now. The party, the kingdom, it requires nothing. Did you hear that?

I mean, I know that is a strange concept for us, because we're doers and movers and type A people, but the passage says that the party requires nothing from us. It says that God has provided everything.

It's only for us to be received. We can't do anything. He wants to give this thing to us. He offers us salvation because he's the only one who will take the credit.

And I have a hard time with this, guys, because when I get invited to a party, what do I say? What do you say? If you get invited to a party, what do you say?

[32 : 24] After you say thank you, what's the next thing you say? Can I bring anything? Joe got it right down. Joe said, yeah, can I bring anything? That's the first thing you say. You say, hey, can I bring anything? Because it's in our nature.

We want to bring stuff. We feel like we have to provide. And in the middle of a deep meal, you're eating with a friend, and you look at him and you go, hey, how's the wine? And the guy goes, that's real.

Wine is really good. He goes, I brought it. But the passage says here that in God's kingdom, in God's party, that everything is given to us, that God pays for everything.

And we bring nothing. I think this is foreign to us. I mean, it's why the leaders and the powerful and the educated and the movers and shakers in Jesus' time, they had a really hard time with Christianity.

I mean, Christianity was very difficult for people who have it together. Because, and listen to my heart here, because I'm going to offend you because it offends me.

[33 : 28] Because Christianity is for wicked sinners. Christianity is for people who can bring nothing. Christianity is for people who can do nothing to save themselves.

Christianity says that Jesus died to save you and me. That he gave his life to pay for our sins. That he died so that God could adopt you and me.

I know there's been a lot of talk about adoption in the news, especially in Christian circles. But, you know, the Bible says very clearly that every one of us in here is adopted. That we're adopted by God's grace and God's love.

Let's face it. Judaism and Buddhism and Islam and all the other religions, they're so much easier to swallow, aren't they?

Because in those religions, it says something like this. All you need to do to get right with God is this. All you need to do to make God happy is this. All you need to do to get to paradise is this.

[34 : 41] Live a good life. Be kind. Be gentle. Don't hurt people. If you have to hurt somebody, don't hurt them too bad. And if you do all those things, God is going to be happy and you're going to be important and God's going to like you.

But the passage says, come because everything's ready. Heaven can't be earned by us.

God gives us this. I think sometimes we forget that, don't we? It'd be like you and me going and you come to me one day.

I like spending other people's money because, you know. Anyway, you come to me and say, hey, I can go buy a new car. Can you help me? I say, oh, dude, that's great. I'd love to go help you go buy a new car. And we go to the car lot or to the store or whatever it is.

And we're looking around. And I ask you, well, how much money you got to spend? He goes, I got \$480 U.S. So \$480 U.S. to buy a new car. He said, yeah, yeah, let's look around.

[35 : 43] And we look around the lot and I'm like, dude, we don't, there's nothing here for \$480 U.S. And finally we get kind of discouraged and we're walking out.

And the salesperson runs over to us. He said, hey, are you looking for a new car? He said, yeah, yeah, we kind of are. He goes, well, come back here.

I want to show you something. And he takes you around the corner and there's the car of your dreams. I don't know what your dream car is. You know, I don't know if you're a Porsche person or a Ferrari person or a minivan person.

You know, I like to have a Land Rover and drive it around occasionally. Whatever it is. And you look at that and the guy hands you the keys. And he says, it's yours. The manager saw you looking around the lot.

And he wanted to give you this car. What would you think? Some of you are laughing.

[36 : 46] What's the catch? What's wrong with it? What do I have to do to get it? The guy said, you have to do nothing. You just have to take it.

The manager wants to give it to you. And you look at him and he goes, no one would do that. That makes no sense whatsoever.

And you're like, you're right. That's grace. It makes no sense whatsoever.

No one would do that. But that's what God did. It'd be funny if you walked back to the manager and said, hey, I want to help you pay a little of the cost here.

Here's \$480. On the Ferrari. What did the manager do? He kind of looked at you like, what? What? Really? No. But that's what we do sometimes when it comes to salvation.

[37 : 57] No one would do that. It doesn't make any sense. But that's what God does. Verse 17. In a dinner, our sent and a slave said to those who have been invited, come, for everything is ready.

And mark the word everything. It means everything. It means everything. Everything you need in heaven. Everything you desire. Everything you long for. Everything that you want. Everything will be there. There's nothing that's missing.

The master provided for the party in incredible ways. Everything is there. Your salvation is there. Love is there. Abundant salvation. Abundant grace.

Abundant hope. Abundant everything. Everything is there. Abundant. Is this going to be there? Everything you need. What about this? Everything you're going to need. Are dogs going to be there?

Yes. But not cats. I'm teasing. I love cats too. Kind of. But everything. Everything is going to be there. And so we see that the kingdom is now but not yet.

[39 : 01] We see that the kingdom is given in abundance. And it's given freely. And it makes no sense whatsoever. But it's how God works.

And finally in verses 21 through 23. We see the last thing we got to realize. That the invite to the banquet.

The invite to the kingdom. The invite to heaven. Demands a response. The first invitation went out.

The second invitation comes. And something unheard of happened in Jesus' day. The people said no. I mean people listening to Jesus tell the story.

They would have laughed. When he said that. Because no one would say no. I mean it would be a massive loss of face to the host. I mean in some Arab cultures.

[40 : 01] It would be a case for war. You could go to war. You could kill the people for saying no. No one would say no. No. But in verse 18. One guy says this. I bought a piece of land.

I need to go out and look at it. Please consider me excused. And when the people heard that. They would have started laughing. Because no one just buys land. It takes years in the Middle East.

Most of the land is desert. And by the time you know the land. You know everything about it. Is it arable? Where the water hits? Where the water runs off? Where the sun hits? What season does it produce the best crops in?

You would know everything about that piece of land. You would never just buy it. And then go check it out afterwards. And everybody would have been laughing.

When they heard this excuse. And everybody would have thought. You know. That guy doesn't really care about the master. What he cares about is his possessions.

[41 : 00] That his stuff. Is more important. Than the master. In verse 19. The next excuse comes.

I bought five yoke of oxen. I'm going to try. Test them out. Please consider me excused. Again. People would have been laughing. The minute they heard that. Because before you bought an animal.

There was a trial area. You watched them work together. And you wanted to make sure. As a team. That they pulled well together. You wanted to make sure. That they pulled. A straight line. You wanted to make sure. That they tired well together. You wanted to make sure.

They worked well together. And animals were expensive. This guy's a rich guy. He has ten ox. Most people only had one or two.

When people heard this. They would have laughed. It would have been like me saying. To Christina. Okay. Next week is our. Anniversary.

[41 : 57] It's not. But on the day of our anniversary. I call her up and say. Honey. I really. I really want to be at the anniversary. But I bought five used cars.

I need to go check. And see if they start. Would that be a good excuse? It would be a terrible excuse. I mean.

Everyone listening would have thought. You know. He. He. He doesn't really. He's not really saying no. To the banquet. He's saying no.

To the relationship. Again. He's saying. You know. My stuff is more important. Than my relationship with God. Verse 20.

Which is probably the worst excuse of all. He says. I have married a wife. And for that reason. I cannot come. And in the Middle Eastern culture. No one would talk about women. In public. No man would ever talk about his wife like that.

[42 : 53] No one would ever say those words. In fact. In Hebrew. In an Aramaic. For people to hear this. What they would have heard. Is this. Hey. I got a woman. In the back of my house.

I gotta go take care of her. I can't come to the party. You know. And everyone. Listening to this guy's excuse. Would have gone. Dude. You really caused serious loss of face there.

You must really hate the master. Everyone would have heard. Well this guy. He just likes his pleasures. he likes his pleasures and his experiences more than he likes knowing God I've been thinking about this passage for a long time and I have to do that you guys just need to hear it and forget it after lunch but I've been trying to figure out what's going on here because every one of these guys was in the family of God I mean there's no outsiders here they're all family members they all would have been in the in club why didn't they want to go to the party because all of their excuses maybe they were feeble but maybe they were real but all of those excuses all those things would have been there after the party they could have taken care of the sheep later they could have taken care of the oxen later they could have taken care of their wife later or their mistress or their prostitute whoever that person was they could have taken care of all those things later why didn't they do it now?

and it seems to me this is what's going on it seems to me that these people in the family of God they wanted the kingdom they wanted the party they wanted heaven as long as it could be on their terms as long as being in church or going to the party didn't interfere with their schedules or interfere with their time or if it didn't take too long or if it didn't make them feel uncomfortable then they were okay with it but the moment it started disrupting their schedule or their free time the moment it started disrupting how they did business or how they could make money the moment it started disrupting their families the time they spend with them the moment it started disrupting their ego and what people thought of them the moment the invite messed with those things they said I'm out of there

I don't need it it's too difficult it's too hard you see in verse 24 he says for I tell you none of these men who were invited shall taste of my dinner Jesus is coming back and he stopped telling the story and he's telling personally he's talking about himself and he's saying these guys think that they can come back later they think well after I've made a lot of money I'll come back to the family or maybe after I've done a lot of business or had a lot of women or men or I've graduated or there's a billion excuses you hear people use for not following God those people thought that the minute they did that the moment they did that the moment they retired then they could come back to walk with God and Jesus says no I mean Jesus is making a very pointed statement and he's talking about our choices and he's talking about coming to the banquet and what's interesting to me is that all of those people and all of those excuses that the banquet that walking with God the being in the family that would help them deal with all those things it would help them deal with their family it would help them deal with relationships it would help them be a better dad a mother a business person it would help them do all that but the people in the story couldn't see that all they saw was this is what I like this is what God's demanding of me

[47 : 09] I don't want to do it I think it's a struggle sometimes in a church right as a pastor you want to make the gospel seem sexy and cool you want it to seem like a Rolex you want a Rolex right everybody wants a Rolex yeah sure I want a Rolex give me a Rolex I want that but the gospel is really like a parachute because the airplane is going down and so we give this person a parachute and they wear it around but after a while the parachute is uncomfortable I mean I can't really do all my moves and win Kui Fung with the parachute on my back or I can't enter into that business deal that I know I shouldn't enter into because that parachute is on my back and it's preventing me from doing those things or I can't be the dad that I want to be because I really just want to be selfish and go hang out and do something by myself like work on my sermon but my kids really need time with me and they need me to be present with them and that parachute becomes uncomfortable sometimes

Jesus is saying hey guys make a choice and realize that what you're choosing has eternal significance verse 21 the message comes back the slave reported to his master then the head of the household became angry in Greek very angry he's furious and he said to that slave he turns his anger into grace he says to that slave go out at once into the streets and the lanes and the city and bring them in bring the poor the cripple the needy bring them all in see what's happening here the master gets angry it turns to grace and he sends out this urgent plea for you and I to the banquet and he invites us to come the words there are incredible between the hedges means homeless people on the highways means foreigners who have no place to live the power of the invite goes out to everyone and it's so amazing that people can't believe that the master would invite them and he says impel them tell them that it's true and the master's good and he wants you here and in this story everybody who accepted they could have also made excuses couldn't they have they could have right well I'm poor

I don't have enough money to buy clothes to come into the banquet the master's not going to be pleased with me well I'm lame I can't get there I'm blind what good is it for me to come to the banquet I'm hurt I have a bad past my reputation is tarnished the master wouldn't want me in the banquet and it's interesting to me in verse 21 and verse 23 that the invites go out to everybody and they're not based on anything about the person who's getting them did you hear that this month or next month every one of you in here is probably going to get an invite to some kind of party some kind of gathering some type of event and you're going to get that invite because you're connected you know people you're powerful you have a lot of money you have a lot of influence someone has invited you or you invited somebody else and they want to pay you back you're going to get that invite because of those things now I'm not saying that is bad but what I am saying is this the invite to heaven the invite to the kingdom of God the invite to that last banquet depends on none of those things

God gives you that invite because he loves you not because of what you can do for not because of who you are what you have what you haven't done what you have done God gives it to you just because he's good and one of the things we have to do as a family with ourselves and speak the gospel to ourselves over and over and to the people around us is we got to keep reminding people that the invite is real and that the host is good and true because sometimes we forget that sometimes we forget that what does your response look like to the kingdom of God today you have an invite you don't know that but you have an invite what are you doing with the master's invitation do you really desire to be at the banquet do you really desire to be in the kingdom or is there something else that's more important to you is there someplace else you would rather be is there something else you need more than you need

God my prayer for us as a church as individuals is that we would understand that God's offer is true and that it's amazing and the only question is are we going to accept that offer accept it by grace allow it to change us share that offer with those around us the kingdom is now but not yet the invite for the kingdom goes out broadly and freely and it includes everything and the invite for the kingdom demands a response from us how are we going to respond father I thank you for this day

[54 : 30] I thank you for your goodness in our life and for your mercy and for this passage that speaks to us in ways I pray we'll never stop as we walk around here father I think of my friends as we talk about the gospel and how it guts us and it changes us and it points to our heart and we realize after 20 years that you really don't just want us to be obedient and to do the right things but you want you want us you want our hearts and our motives and Lord we realize that that's that's that's so hard sometimes and we fail so often on this journey and we're so thankful that it is a journey that we take step by step by step and that you're there cheering us on and so Lord we just come to you now help us to see the now but not yet help us to realize that it's full and abundant and free and that we have a responsibility to share it with those around us and help us not to fool ourselves

Lord we realize that everyone that Jesus was talking to would have been in the church in Jesus day and this passage says that none of them none of them in that church would have been in your kingdom because they saw the invitation wrong Lord we just we fall on your mercy and your grace and we ask you to help us see it correctly help us to see your son who hands us the invite help us to realize that it was all because of you help us just to have a moment of seeing heaven right now as we come to you father we love you and we need you desperately we pray all these things your son

Jesus holy name amen amen can you be pleased we see just for one second okay so we are about to go to a family wide meal so that doors are locked over there so you can't get out that door you have to go through this door so you're at least going to see the food and smell the food and so we do this about once every month or so just people get no chance to each other maybe have the kids in the corners because I think we're going to be packed out with capacity over there also when you came in today and before you do that if you have a youth high school or junior high kid Eric wants to meet with all the parents in the theater room he sent out an announcement but if you didn't get that announcement in the theater room for about 10 minutes and he wants to talk to you about what's going to be going on with the youth in high school and junior high kids also when you came in there was this little thing called a life map on your chair you hear us talk about the journey a lot and our journey that we're on with Christ and this is just a tool it's a tool that I've used for about 18 years and it helps us think through our journey and where

God has us and the high points and the low points and so we want to give that to you just as a gift and as you think about going on the journey with the church thinking through what your journey is and what that looks like also on Wednesdays starting this Wednesday at the community center the women of Watermark have a book study going on it starts this Wednesday at 930 to 1130 it's called Grace Based Parenting it's an excellent study there's probably 30 women already in this group so if you're not in this group please join them it's from children from 0 to 18 and it's an excellent book and a great chance for you to meet and develop community also one of the ways that we communicate on the church we have two modes of communication so if you're here for the first time or if you've been here sleeping for a year we use our website and so we have a new website that just got put back up put up so revamped and so if you go to watermark church dot hk this website will have everything you need to know about events and places and gatherings and sermons and how to get go there and we're trying to make it as simple as possible for us to keep up but as informative as possible for you guys as the church and

I think what I want to do here I actually want to bring up all the leaders but we've been introducing to you some community group leaders so you can know what groups are happening and where the groups are and sharing a little bit about themselves so I want to ask Bill and Shannon to come up and Jeremiah to come up tell a little bit about your community group and is Graham here Graham said he was going to be here so if he's here okay so these are all three different community groups that meet in different places a lot of times you're like okay what is a community group and we say that's the hub of the church and how we gather and you know whether you know or not Sunday for us is like 20% of the church we feel like where we want people to really get plugged in and to grow and learn happens the rest of the week and so we love Sunday and it's a fun time but it's not the heart of the church the heart of the church is the community groups and what God is doing as we reach out to this community and so I want Jeremiah will you share a little bit about where your group is and when you meet and go ahead hey how's it going so yeah our group is branching out from Mike and Katie's group kind of got super huge and there was no more room in their house so we will be meeting also in Sying Poon every Thursday at 730 and it's mostly mostly young professionals and university students but uh so yeah

[60 : 38] Sying Poon Thursday 730 okay and Bill and Shannon hey Watermark um I'm Shannon this is Bill we meet at our place here in Cyberport we're literally right next door in Bel Air phase two and so they're always on time to church they never come late because they're just like never never did my nose just grow um we meet up on Mondays at 730 we share a meal at 730 and then we begin group study at 8 um our group is open to everyone we have um I'd say mid-20s to late mid to late 50s in our group we have single male single female we have um moms, dads, families without kids so come on join everyone's welcome every Monday every Monday 730 um four meal and then 8 o'clock for the study Graham I don't know if you guys know Joshua Hammond but he once described our community group as special okay and uh the reason we're special is because we're kind of homeless right we're nicknamed the uncharted group we don't belong to a specific area but we we're even closer than Bill and Shannon we meet right here so we literally do we meet in the Rapids room on Sunday afternoons right after church so you don't have to go very far to get to us uh the most of the people in our group uh we welcome everyone but we find it's it's people with kids little kids who find it difficult to get out during the week late at night with kids it's a great time for them to be involved in community groups uh we've got single boys girls everything dogs, cats they all they all come along so yeah but we meet at the moment we're meeting every second

Sunday uh we gather at one we eat together which is really important and then we start at 1.30 and we're done by three so that's every second Sunday and we're hoping to bump that up this year to about three times a month yeah that's us that's great so you've seen them there are other community groups as you walk out on the table there'll be information about community groups and sign ups and so please feel free to ask questions from them if you're in their area or uh Charles will you stand up and Franklin stand up so Charles and Franklin keep me straight and they're so the three of us are the elders of the church uh God brought them to us after a year and a half of planning the church and so if you have any questions about the church the rhythm of the church the life of the church why we don't pass around offering and ask you to do it at the kiosk or anything like that please grab us uh in an appropriate place out here so let us get our food first that didn't that didn't sound the way I meant for it to the south uh yeah well delete that from the tape

Dylan okay uh anyway so just uh get a hold of us and talk to us and we want to we want to ask answer any questions you have and with that would you guys please stand and I just want to pray for us as a family and for this meal you know what I I always am fearful of doing sermons uh just the weight of it sometimes and wondering what people are going to walk away with it keeps me up at nights my my prayer my hope is that you walked away from today you saw how amazing God is you saw how patient he is with us how kind he is with us how his grace is abundant and it's free and you can trust him that's what I hope you heard father I thank you for my brothers and sisters here thank you for this food we're about to eat for this family for this this place you've put us in these facilities all these things are from you and we pray that we would use them well to honor you we pray for this food that it would be great time communication and Lord we love you we pray these things in your son Jesus name amen

God bless you and we'll see you at the tables