

An Open Invitation

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[0 : 0 0] If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn to Luke chapter 14. Luke chapter 14. We spent several weeks now talking about heaven. And if you talk about heaven long enough, it will make you more hungry to go.

We've talked about it a lot. Some of you have talked about it in your homes. You've shared that with me and come back with questions and all those things. It's glorious to talk about. And next week, I'm going to close out the portion of the reality of eternity on heaven by answering some questions that people often ask and that we haven't touched on yet.

And I love talking about it. But I want to give you some grim news today, to be honest with you. I don't like talking about it. But I must be honest with you.

All are welcome to go to heaven, but most won't. People get so caught up in this life and in their way and sometimes in the uncertainties of an unseen God.

The questions that seem to plague them. The questioning of the validity of eternal life. What really happens after this. I read an article this week where scientists had studied the last moments of people's lives and when they clinically died and was brought back to life.

[1 : 3 0] And what did they experience? What could they share? They said that some, they put headphones on as I guess they knew they were dying and repeated three different fruits to them in their ears repeatedly.

To if they came back to life after working on them, see if they could tell them what they were telling them. I'd hate to think that I had a loved one that was dying and they said, do you mind if right before we try to bring him back, we put headphones on him and say banana, apple and orange in his ear until he's dead.

I'd have a hard time with that. But the reality is I read this article out of Scientific American and they didn't know any more from all of that than they did before they started the study.

They really had no idea what went on from that point. And the reality is there's a lot in this life that we may question.

And because of that, many people will miss the opportunity to even spend eternity in heaven and to have the opportunity to have a relationship with the Lord.

[2 : 4 8] The opportunity of eternal life is both now and forever. In reality, I love what Christ says about eternal life.

He said, I've come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. He's not just talking about forever, folks. He's talking about right now, that there's a difference that happens in your life when you give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you surrender your ways and say, God, I need you to take over. That opportunity of eternal life while on earth is better and more free and more vibrant and more meaningful than anything else you can have outside of Christ in this life.

And Satan robs you when he leads you to put off making a decision to follow Christ. When he talks you into putting off, surrendering your life to Christ, he robs you of that.

But I want to be clear about something. God wants you to have not only be in relationship with him, but to have a steadfast relationship with him. Here in this life, enjoying the glories of walking with God and to be with him in glory.

[4 : 0 0] And we have that opportunity. The invitation is open to all who are willing to come. Period. It's open to all. Christ came to share that message.

And he shares it again and again. And he shares it clearly. He shared it in a way that we could understand it. He shared it in a way that we could grasp it. And he does it in the passage that we're to look at this morning.

He makes it abundantly clear. And I just want to take a few minutes to just reiterate some things that you'll see in Luke 14.

We're talking about the reality of eternity. And we're going to look in a couple of weeks at the reality of hell. And we're going to look at that for a few weeks together. But before we do, I want you to know this morning, you don't have to go to hell.

You don't have to go to hell. I want you to know that you can go to heaven for sure. But I also want you to know that if you do not make a decision for Christ in this life, you have made a decision.

[5 : 0 6] If I'm in a hurry and I'm approaching a yellow light and I become an amber gambler hoping I can make it.

And that light changes as I go under it. And a law enforcement sees it and pulls me over and writes me a ticket.

I can't tell him, well, I just couldn't decide. I thought about it. But I just couldn't decide.

That wouldn't make any difference. I still ran a red light. And if you choose to not make a decision for Christ in this life, you made your decision.

And the reality is, you'll go to hell for all eternity. And I don't want you to. And Jesus don't either.

[6 : 1 6] And that's what the story he tells talks about. It's in Luke chapter 14, beginning in verse 1. I just want to introduce the area and then go to 15. It says, one Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

As they were watching, he said this in verse 15. When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said, Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.

But he said to them, a man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet, he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready.

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, I bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.

Another one said, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. Another said, I've married a wife.

[7 : 3 1] And therefore, I can't come. So the servant came and reported these things to his master. The master of the house became angry and said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and lame.

And the servant said, Sir, what you've commanded has been done and there's still room. And the master said to his servant, Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled.

For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. Now let me just break this down for you real quick and then show you how it applies.

The banquet preparer in the story is the Lord. The servants that he tells to go invite are his people. People who have committed their life to Christ.

And I mean that and not just some one-time decision. I mean they've committed their life to Christ and to follow Christ and to do what he tells them. And he tells them to go. The invited is anybody else in the world.

[8 : 40] I mean, he said just go find folks. Let them come. The banquet represents eternity in heaven with the Lord. It's actually described as the marriage supper of the Lamb.

So it is quite a banquet in the way that they describe what heaven is like. And the point of this is the invitation of the Lord is an open invitation. And that message can be found in four principles that I want to share this morning.

The first one is this. Excuses keep many from following the Lord. It keeps them from following the Lord. I mean if these excuses seem bogus. If they seem absolutely ridiculous to you.

Well they should because they are. Verse 18 says, but they all alike began to make excuses. All of them had some reason why they couldn't.

Bogus excuses are pretty common. They're pretty common among those you ask about Christ. About those who are reluctant to follow him.

[9 : 44] Sometimes people say, you know, I'm just not ready yet. I got to live a little longer before I do something like that. Or some people will just tell me, hey man, I'm good.

I'm good. Or me and him's all right. Me and the man upstairs is all right. Well I'm going to tell you, if you call in the man upstairs, you're not all right.

Okay. Some people will tell me my faith is a private matter. And expect you to close that off.

Or they'll tell you that they belong to a church of some other denomination. So you don't have to talk about the personal relationship with Christ. All excuses that keep us from following the Lord are sad.

And any delay that you make in a decision for Christ is taking a risk. Unjustified excuses, any excuses will not be ignored or looked past the day we meet the Lord in the air.

[10 : 46] Delaying a decision for the Lord is like, it's like staying behind in a burning house to save the furniture. It's like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

I mean, it does not make sense. And you will die doing it. Because our sin has separated us. And God has willingly allowed Christ to come.

To die in our place. To forgive us through the sacrifice of Christ. And if we have the audacity to fail to accept that gracious, undeserved invitation of the Lord.

To be blunt. We'll have hell to pay. There's not a doubt about that. There's no need to deny that.

Christ died so we don't have to. And to ignore that is to reject a holy, loving, outreaching God. Period. Second principle is this.

[11 : 54] All are invited. That's what the parable says. After many rejected him, the master reached out to those that no one reaches out to.

He reached out to those that no one would invite to a wedding. He reached out to the outcast of the day. The lepers of their society.

That means those who were contagious. Those who were diseased. Those who seem plagued in whatever way. To reach out to the Gentiles.

That's those of other languages. To reach out to sinners. That's those that don't live for the Lord. That live despicable lives. That show no remnant of reality with God.

But those are the one that he reaches out to. And I want to challenge you Christian today. That too many times we have an idea of who we'd like to come to know the Lord. Who we want to go to church with.

[12 : 59] What kind of background should they come from? But that's not God. God don't do that. And the point of this passage is that God invites all.

So often those that look like they have their act together. So often those that think they have their act together. They also think they don't need God. And how sad that is.

I want you to be clear today. We all need the Lord. I don't care how much money you have. I don't care what family you're from. I don't care your background. I don't care your education.

How pretty you are. Or how ugly you are. We all need him. We all need him. And thank God scripture tells me that whosoever will may come to him.

Romans 10 13 says for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. You hear me? Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Well I need to clean up some things.

[13 : 59] You don't have the capacity to clean up your life on your own. There's no need for you to wait that. He'll clean you up. You just surrender your life to Christ.

You don't have to look a certain way. You don't have to. He'll lead you to make the necessary changes in your life. Don't wait until you get your problems straightened out. Your life together.

And your habits taken care of. Because you'll never get those things straight outside of Christ. And you may struggle with them after you receive Christ to be honest with you.

But the church of Jesus Christ is a bunch of people that God has committed to follow him. And we are all imperfect. And we pick each other up when we got to pick each other up. And we carry each other when we got to carry each other.

And it's a mutual business that goes on in the body of Christ. He's a problem fixer. He's a life mender. He's a habit breaker.

[14 : 57] And don't you let anybody else tell you that you're not invited to come to him. Because you can come as you are.

And he'll save you. And he'll change you. Don't let your petty theological questions come in the way. While you're arguing about superficiality stuff.

You can slip away from this life without Christ. Come to Christ. And when you come to Christ. A lot of your questions will be answered. And a lot of them really won't matter anymore quite honestly.

I have people tell me sometimes when I go to heaven. You know what I'm going to ask? No you're not. No you're not. You're going to be caught up so much in the absolute glory of God.

That's unlike anything in this life. I promise you. You'll be overwhelmed. He'll guide you through the unanswered questions in your life.

[15 : 53] The greatest thing about the banquet of the Lord. One I'm so glad I can say. Is all are invited to come. All are invited.

Third thing is this. This is the reason why I'm the way I am. God is insistent. In his invitation. He says compel them to come in.

That's in verse 23. Now when he says that. He's not talking about forcing people to come to the Lord. We can't do that. That don't work. That don't work. People have to make their own decisions.

And to try to do that is wrong. But I'll tell you what he is saying. He's saying insist. Tell those that don't feel like they can come. Not only can they come. But they've been invited to come.

Some won't feel worthy. And they're right. They're not worthy. None of us are worthy quite honestly. But thank God. We're all invited. And so. Some will take that opportunity.

[16 : 54] And some won't. But let it never be from the neglect of the believer. Caring. Charles Spurgeon. Wonderful preacher of the 1800s.

He said this. He said if sinners be damned. At least let them leap to hell over our bodies. And if they perish. Let them perish with our arms about their knees.

Let no one go. They're unwarned and unprayed for. Amazingly some have heard it many times. Yet still won't respond.

But the Lord says. Do everything you can to convince them. Share. Insist. Convince. Do everything you can. And lastly is this.

I hate this part. The invitation is only good for a time. If you get an invite to a birthday party.

[17 : 55] And you're supposed to respond to that invitation. And you don't respond to that invitation. And the birthday party comes and goes. And you never dealt with it at all.

And you don't come. It happened without you. Okay. Okay. So the invitation is good for a time.

And the day will come. When there will be no more invitations. Period. Those who refuse will no longer have the opportunity.

When is that day. When is that day. I don't know. And neither do you. Jesus said in Matthew 24 verse 14. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached. Throughout the whole world.

As a testimony to all nations. And then the end will come. I'll just tell you this. More than ever. The gospel is being presented. In practically the entire world.

[18 : 52] And I'm not saying it's today. And I'm not saying it's tomorrow. And I'm not saying it's next year. I'm saying I don't know.

And I'll promise you this. The end is closer than it's ever been before. It's not time for anybody to waste time.

Sinners need to come to Christ. Christians need to be sharing their faith with others. Surely the words of Christ are the most appropriate.

When he said in Matthew 13. 32 through 37. He said concerning the day or the hour. No one knows. Not even the angels in heaven.

Nor the sun. But only the father. Be on guard. Keep awake. For you don't know. When the time. Will come. It's like a man going on a journey. And when he leaves home.

[19 : 56] And puts his servants in charge. Each with his own work. And commands the doorkeeper. To stay awake. Therefore stay awake. For you don't know. When the master of the house.

Will come. In the evening. Or at midnight. Or when the rooster crows. Or in the morning. Unless he comes suddenly. And find you asleep. And what I say to you.

I say to all. Stay awake. Stay awake. Don't be foolish. Invited one.

Because the invitation is open. And the time is drawing near. If you want to know more. I'll tell you more. About this in coming days. But I'll just tell you this. Right up front.

Hell is agony. But you don't have to go. And heaven is glorious.

[20 : 57] And you're invited to go. And you can rest in that today. So I just ask you. When you look at your life.

And you look at your life spiritually. Has there ever been a time. In your life. When you've asked the Lord Jesus. To forgive you of your sins.

To come into your life. And to change you. A time when you said. Dear God. I don't want to do it my way anymore.

I want to surrender my life. To your way. If that's never happened. I'm thankful today.

To tell you. The invitation is open. And in just a moment. We're going to stand. And we're going to sing. And I'm going to walk down to this floor.

[22 : 05] And if you have any questions. About if that's ever happened. In your life before. I'll be happy to guide you through that. I'll be happy to pray with you. And to lead you.

Please. Don't leave. These premises. Without knowing. That you know. Christ Jesus. As your personal Lord and Savior.

And if you're a Christian today. And you do know that. You've got a job to do. And there's no need to make excuses.

There's no need to put it off. God has strategically placed people. In your life. That need to hear. What I've told you.

This morning. And it is your job. Whether you feel sufficient at it or not. It is your job. As God gave us in the great commission.

[23 : 02] To just go tell. Just tell folks. If your ball team won yesterday. You told somebody. You know. Do you go get a new car.

You get out of it. With a new step. And you'll step. When something new happens in your life. And something changes you. You want other folks to know. I'm telling you.

If you know the Lord Jesus. The greatest thing that's ever happened to you. And you need to tell others. Maybe there's stuff in your life. That you need to deal with. Maybe you made a private decision for the Lord. And you never made it public.

Christ by his example. And by his commission tells us. To be baptized as believers. Once we come to know him. To do it publicly. And let others know about it. If that's never happened to you. Let me guide you in that process.

Maybe God's drawing you into this fellowship. Want to be a part of this church. We'd love to help you with that. You come. We'll guide you. I don't have a clue how God has spoke to you. Know what he said to me.

[24 : 01] Don't have a clue what he said to you. But I know you'll never be satisfied. Until you follow exactly what he'd have you to do. Lord Jesus I love you.

Thank you for our time together. Thank you Lord. For the message that Christ gives us so clearly. Father. Just help us to respond in obedience to you today. Oh God I pray.

In Jesus name. Amen.