

The Difference Between a Believer and a Disciple

Luke 14:15-35

Luke 14:15-24: Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

Background Notes

In the first half of Luke 14, the Lord had been invited for a Sabbath meal at the home of a Pharisee. Here the Lord healed a man and taught the Pharisees that healing on the Sabbath was not contrary to the Old Testament Law. The Lord also continued to teach about the Kingdom of God. As He did in chapter 13, the Lord likened being in the Kingdom to enjoying the blessings of a feast or banquet. At this point, one of those who sat at the table with the Lord said, '*Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!*' (v15).

Was this just a pious statement by one of the guests, who assumed that he and the rest of the Pharisees would be part of the Kingdom of God? Or was this a sarcastic remark to water down the teaching of Jesus: "Yes, yes, blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"? Or was this Pharisee sincere in his statement, and realized that the Lord was teaching the truth? We don't know for sure. In any case, the Lord answered him by giving the Parable of the Great Banquet. The point of the parable was the same as the Lord taught in chapter 13: yes, the blessings of the Kingdom are wonderful - like a great banquet! But not everyone who is invited will be present.

Doctrinal Points

1. **Becoming a believer means accepting the invitation and not living a life of excuses.**

This Parable of the Great Banquet is pretty straightforward and easy to interpret. It is very similar to the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22. In the parable, the man who gives the great banquet is obviously God. The first stage of the invitation was to the Jewish people, when the Lord Jesus came and announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. This offer of the Kingdom was made to the nation of Israel, but the self-righteous Jewish leaders (including the Pharisees that the Lord was addressing) refused to accept the invitation. However, in the parable many of the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind accepted the invitation. These people represented the people who were accepting Jesus as the Messiah and King - the Mary Magdalenes, the Zaccheuses, the poor - all who were accepting Christ as the Messiah.

But still there was room! In the parable, the invitation then went out to the highways and byways, with compelling evidence and power. Clearly this is a prediction by our Lord here that the invitation to enter and enjoy the blessings of God's Kingdom would go out to the Gentiles, with the Great Commission to preach the gospel worldwide.

Again in verse 24, we have the truth the Lord taught in chapter 13. The self-righteous Jews who refused the invitation would be shut out of the Kingdom forever. Verse 24: *"For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."*

The excuse for refusing the Kingdom in Jesus' day are the same excuses people use today for refusing and neglecting the invitation of the gospel. There are three areas of excuses that people use throughout life:

- a. My material possessions: *"I have bought a field and must go and see it."*
- b. My job or line of work: *"I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them."*
- c. My family and relatives: *"I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."*

The invitation to the great banquet is still open and folks are still refusing, and using these same excuses. Several years ago I invited a man to a Bible study, and I will never forget his excuse. "I'm interested as the devil - but I can't come because I'm very busy!" How true of many people in their rejection of the gospel. Becoming a believer means accepting the invitation - and not living a life of excuses.

2. Becoming a disciple means counting the cost and living a life of sacrifice.

*Verses 25-33: Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, **26** “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. **27** And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. **28** For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— **29** lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, **30** saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’? **31** Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? **32** Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. **33** So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*

Verse 25 says that the Lord was now addressing the whole multitude of followers – people who were following Jesus for a variety of reasons.

In these verses we see the great difference between *becoming a **Christian*** and *becoming a **disciple***. True salvation costs us nothing. **True discipleship costs us everything.** Becoming a Christian involves coming to the cross and trusting Christ as Savior. Becoming a disciple involves taking up the cross and following Christ as Lord.

The prerequisite for being a true disciple is found in verse 26: the Lord must be Number One, above **all else**, including your own family. *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”* Obviously the Lord was speaking in relative terms here, because the Fifth Commandment says to honor your father and mother, and the Lord Himself said to love your neighbor as yourself. But, in relative terms, our love for the Lord should be so strong that in comparison, it would seem that we hate others. Of course it does not mean that we should have bitter hatred for others in our hearts! The Lord was just using the term “hate” in comparison to what our love for Christ should be.

The Lord gave two illustrations of what it means to count the cost of being one of His committed disciples. The first illustration is building a tower. What good is it if you place the foundation for a tower - but you don't think ahead, so you run out of funds, or materials, or desire, and leave the tower unfinished? People will ridicule you. In the same way, we should count the cost of being a disciple. What about family? What about being away from home? What about greater persecutions? We should count the cost.

The second illustration is of a king going out to battle. What an appropriate illustration - because discipleship involves spiritual warfare. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not an invitation to a Sunday school picnic - it is an invitation to **spiritual warfare!** Many Christians have started out well, but have not fully counted the cost ahead of time - and sometimes have even compromised with the enemy (v32).

Verse 33 may be the hardest verse in the Bible for American Christians: *“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”* Most of us want to insert the words “willing to” in this verse: “willing to forsake all that he has.” Now that may be the thought, since in chapter 16 we’re exhorted to be good stewards of the Lord in the use of our money and material things. **But** - the Lord did **not** insert the words “willing to” in verse 33! Maybe He knew we would use it as a cop-out to justify hoarding and or failing to live a life of sacrifice. It is very easy to say, “I’m willing to give up everything for the Lord!” - but it’s very hard to actually do it. Becoming a disciple means counting the cost and living a life of sacrifice.

Practical Application

Don’t be “thrown out” as a disciple!

Verses 34-35: “Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

These verses are in the context of **discipleship, not salvation**. If you are a true believer, you will **never** be thrown out of God’s family! However, if you claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and then sully your testimony because of compromise and failure, you will lose your effectiveness as a believer. The world will write you off and throw you out.

Salt is used as an illustration. In the 1st century, salt was often mixed with impurities, and thus it would lose much of its preserving power. It was then good for nothing and was thrown out.

In Matthew 5:13 the Lord said that His disciples were the salt of the earth. But compromising and failing disciples lose their power. They’re unable to do anything to limit the spread of spiritual decline or moral decay all around them. Even the world writes them off. So don’t let yourself be “thrown out” as a disciple!