

**Beware”**  
*October 18, 2020*  
Luke 14:7-24

## **I. Introduction**

[Exodus 34:6-7](#) record that when God passed by Moses on Mount Sinai, He described Himself as “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.” James wrote in [James 5:11](#), “The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.” In [Matthew 14:14](#), just before He fed the five thousand, we read that “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them.” The compassion of Jesus Christ is seen throughout the Gospels; one such place is here in today’s Scripture.

As you may remember from last week, Jesus had been invited “to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee” ([Luke 14:1](#)). But this invitation wasn’t made to honor Jesus or to learn from Him—the leading Pharisees had invited Jesus in order to trick Him into breaking their Sabbath restrictions and thereby proving that Jesus wasn’t from God, as He claimed to be. But Jesus turned the tables on them, exposed their hypocrisy, and shamed them into silence. But then, instead of stomping out in anger or chewing them out in righteous indignation, Jesus had compassion on them. Earlier in [Luke 13:34](#) Jesus had lamented, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . , how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.” In a similar thought, [2 Peter 3:9](#) says, “The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Although He knew the Pharisees’ plans were to kill Him, Jesus used this time He had with them to one more time challenge them to change their ways and repent and become part of the kingdom of God. Jesus used three parables or stories to warn them and to challenge them, beginning with “Beware of Pride.”

## **II. Beware of Pride**

While those at the meal may have been watching Jesus, Jesus had also been watching them. As they came in for the meal, “He noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table.” A typical table of the time would have been U-shaped or separate tables arranged in a “U” shape. Instead of chairs, 3-person couches were used so that groups of three guests reclined at the table together. At the head table was the host and on either side of him were the two most honored guests. For all of the couches, the middle position was the place of highest honor. When the guests entered for a meal, there would be a mad dash for the seats of honor—a kind-of “musical chairs” competition. Everyone would rush to the “head positions” because they wanted to be seen as being important.

Jesus gave His warning—Beware of Pride—by using a wedding feast—the most important of all community events. He said, “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of

honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited.” Rudely rushing in and grabbing a place of honor could backfire if “a person more distinguished” (and therefore of more prestige and better able to reciprocate to the host) had “been invited.” In that case, the host would make the less important man give his seat to the more important one. The “humiliated” and disgraced man would then have to “take the lowest place.”

Jesus advised the guests to take the lowest places, and then have the host say, “Friend move up to a better place.” Jesus said that that would result in even more honor “in the presence of all your fellow guests.” This is the principle Solomon gave in Proverbs 25:6-7, “Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among his great men; it is better for him to say to you, ‘Come up here,’ than for him to humiliate you before a noble.”

Jesus wasn't giving them a “gimmick” that guaranteed promotion. The false humility that takes the lowest place is just as hateful to God as the pride that takes the highest place. Proverbs 16:5 says, “The Lord detests all the proud of heart.” As God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” Jesus' words were designed to picture those, like the Pharisees of the day, who, in a demonstration of spiritual pride and self-righteous arrogance, sought the chief places in the kingdom of God. Jesus warned, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Humility is more important than being esteemed. In Isaiah 66:2 the Lord said, “These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.”

No one will enter the kingdom of God by merit, good works, righteous actions, self-promotion, spiritual pride, or making and keeping man-made religious laws. Salvation comes only to the humble who recognize their helplessness and who plead for mercy and grace—turn to Matthew 5:3-5. James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace are you saved through faith.” Turn back to Matthew 5:14-16—the good deeds we do aren't to earn our salvation or to bring praise to us but to bring praise to God.

### III. Beware of Selfishness

The host, the one who had invited Jesus, was not involved in the battle for the important seat—it was his already. But Jesus turned to him and gave the 2<sup>nd</sup> warning: “Beware of Selfishness.” Jesus knew that the host had invited his guests for one of two reasons: 1) to pay them back because they had invited him to past feasts, or 2) to put them under his debt so that they would invite him to future feasts. Such

hospitality wasn't a demonstration of love and grace, it was evidence of pride and selfishness. Such a person was "buying" recognition.

Jesus wasn't forbidding having friends over to share a meal. There is nothing wrong with getting together once in a while. But Jesus was saying that one should not be selfish and do things for the applause of men. One should share for the praise of God. Sharing for the praise of God and not the applause of men was unheard of in Jesus' day. Everything the Pharisees did was self-serving. Jesus' challenge to the host pointed to the true path for eternal blessing: **"But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."** True members of the kingdom of God demonstrate humility and lack of selfishness by caring for people who cannot repay them. Jesus said that they will be repaid by God **"at the resurrection of the righteous."** **Ephesians 4:32** says, **"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."** **Turn to Matthew 25:31-40.**

#### **IV. Beware of Missing Heaven**

When Jesus mentioned **"the resurrection of the righteous,"** one of the guests said, **"Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."** He had missed what Jesus had been saying. In their pride, the Pharisees and scribes continued to base their salvation, their acceptance into the kingdom of God, on being children of Abraham and keeping the traditions, regulations, and rituals of God and man. Not only did they expect to be at the heavenly feast, they expected to have the seats of honor. Jesus responded by telling them a parable that warned of such a misplaced sense of security—Beware of missing the banquet, i.e., Beware of Missing Heaven

In Jesus' day, when guests were invited to a dinner, they were told the exact day but not the exact hour of the meal. A host had to know how many guests were coming so he could prepare enough food for everyone. When all was ready, a second invitation would notify each of the guests that the banquet was ready. **"At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to all those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'"** The eagerly anticipated and long-awaited dinner was about to begin.

But instead of eagerly coming to the feast, all of the guests insulted the host by refusing to attend, and they all gave very feeble excuses to defend their change in plans. This was totally unexpected and unrealistic. Not one person invited to an extravagant dinner given by a wealthy host would have refused to come, let alone everyone. For the status seeking Pharisees, such actions were incomprehensible—they must have looked at Jesus in disbelief.

The first guest said, **"I have just bought a field and I must go and see it. Please excuse me."** No one would buy property sight unseen, so he obviously had seen it before. Surely seeing a field again was

not more compelling than the honor and joy that would come from attending this banquet. The 2<sup>nd</sup> excuse was pure nonsense, “I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.” Who would purchase that many animals without first testing them? For that matter, he was already on his way to the farm when the servant came with the final call to dinner; he had totally ignored the invitation. The 3<sup>rd</sup> guest had no excuse at all: “I just got married, so I can’t come.” Since they involve so much elaborate preparations, Jewish weddings were never surprises, so this man knew well in advance that he was getting married. This excuse was just as ridiculous as the others. These lame excuses would be both insulting and embarrassing to the host. In a similar way, the Jews were ignoring God’s invitation.

Since too much time, effort, and expense had gone into preparing the banquet to cancel it, the host determined that the celebration would go on, but with a different and totally unlikely set of guests. “The owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’” In reality, such people would have to be strongly persuaded, if not physically brought in, because they would be hesitant to come on their own. They understood the protocols; they would know they couldn’t respond in kind. They had no means to do so. The thought that a wealthy, prominent man would invite poor, despised outcasts to such a banquet was as outlandish as imagining that the original guests would all turn down their invitations.

There was still room, so “The master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel or make them to come in, so that my house will be full.’” This group consisted of people even further down the social ladder. They were people with no home of their own, the outcasts, the loiterers, the homeless, the undesirables. This latter group would be harder to “Compel .... to come in,” since they would be even more reluctant than the poor in town. Both of these groups were actually the precise people Jesus came to save—turn to Luke 5:31-32. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance.

Not only did the host get other people to take the places assigned to the invited guests, but he also shut the door so that the excuse makers could not change their minds and come in—“I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.” Those that ignore God will miss heaven.

## V. Conclusion

This parable had a special message for the proud Jewish people who were so sure they would “eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Within a few years, the Gospel would be rejected by the official religious leaders, and the message would go out to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and then to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

The message of this parable applies to all lost sinners today, too. God still says, “All things are now ready. Come!” 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, “Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.” Nothing more needs to be done for salvation. Jesus Christ finished the work of redemption

when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. The feast has been spread, the invitation is free, all are invited to come. Sadly, people today make the same mistakes that the people in the parable made—they ignore or delay in responding to the invitation. They settle for second best. There is certainly nothing wrong with owning a farm, examining purchases, or spending time with one’s spouse. But if these good things keep you from enjoying the best things, then they become bad things. The excuse-makers were actually successful people in the eyes of their friends, but they were failures in the eyes of Jesus. It is now our turn to go and compel them to come to God’s feast—**Matthew 28:19-20** says, **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”** Are you telling others of the one way to salvation and an eternal life in heaven? Jesus said in **John 14:6**, **“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Light. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

There’s a warning for us as well as a challenge. We need to be on guard that we don’t become like the Pharisees. Watch out for pride—it’s like yeast, it slowly works its way into a person’s life and suddenly bursts into full bloom. Be on guard for selfishness—this is one of the foundation stones for our godless culture. We are constantly being told to *“Go ahead, you deserve this.”* But instead of serving self, serve God, bring praise and glory to His name. Finally, do your best to make sure that no one you know will miss the grand celebration banquet with Jesus and His saints in heaven. Peter summarized all this in **1 Peter 3:15**, **“In your hearts revere Christ as Lord, i.e., be humble and serve God. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”** Beware of Pride; Beware of Selfishness; Beware of Missing Heaven.