

INVITATION TO A BANQUET

By Pastor Gordon

Introduction: While Pastor Gordon was in ROTC, he had to go through a training class on dining etiquette. He was taught how to use silverware and how to eat finger food and salad. The instructor told all the cadets that this was important so that they will not embarrass themselves or the Army during formal dining outs. That is why you do not have to worry because your tax dollar was being put to good use. The students were also told to RSVP whenever invited to a formal social event and to send a “thank you note” to the host for the invitation once the event was over. Like you, Pastor Gordon thought it was insulting and a waste of time to be taught how to present himself in public since this was common sense. When I think about it, the Army was right because even the Bible also talked about this. The Lord told us that there is a great banquet feast called, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and an invitation had been sent out to every one of us to come and dine with the Lord. During the last wedding that Pastor Gordon conducted here at the church, there was a great celebration afterward and only those that were invited were present at that wonderful marriage feast. It was a first-class celebration, and everyone enjoyed themselves. When the host invites someone, it is expected that people will respond in advance to let them know whether they will come. That is especially important so that the host can decide how much food to prepare and to make seating arrangements. There is a lot of work, expense, and preparation made to hold that kind of celebration and that is why the host is very particular about receiving advance notice on those that will come to the celebration feast. Usually, close friends, family members, and special guests are the ones that will receive the invitations. Jesus

gave a parable one time about a wedding feast that was being held. Since Jesus spoke in parables on many occasions, we need to understand why He did that. A parable is usually an illustration that people can easily understand or identify with. Jesus often uses a parable to make an important teaching point. Today's sermon is called, "An Invitation to a Banquet" and what God wants us to understand from this sermon is that you and I are his honored guests that have been invited to a banquet feast. This is not something that should be taken lightly or ignored because of the tremendous sacrifice He had to make to make this great feast a success. The Lord expects us to respond to this important invitation, and also to go the next step by accepting the invitation and showing up.

Sermon text: Luke 14:15-24: *"One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, 'Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Then Jesus said to him, 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'" But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come." So the servant returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his servant, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." And the servant said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner."*

Message: This parable is a King who wanted to throw a big party to celebrate a special event. This was a big deal that should have taken center stage on everyone's agenda. Those who are or have been in the military clearly understand that if you are invited by a commanding officer to a major event like that, you do not refuse. There is an implied order that your attendance is mandatory. This type of event takes lots of logistics, coordination, and preparation to ensure everything goes right. One of the key elements in setting up a major feast like that is trying to determine how much food and drinks to buy, whether to rent a banquet hall, or to decide on what kind of entertainment to have. All of this depended on the total number of guests that would be present. As expected, the King sent an invitation to all the important people in his kingdom. You can imagine that the king took time to make sure to invite his friends, family members, and chief officials of his kingdom to receive this important invitation. He spared no expenses because he wanted to impress everyone and to make sure those present had plenty to eat, were fully satisfied, and enjoyed themselves. When someone is invited by the king to a banquet celebration, it sent a powerful message that those present were important people. God says in His word that we are regarded as special members of the Kingdom made of royal blood, according to 1 Peter 2:9. With that kind of status that we hold in the kingdom, it is expected that we will be present during the celebration. We are considered to be chosen people because the Master had personally handpicked us to occupy an important position in the Kingdom. When the king went through all the trouble of preparing the banquet table for the chosen few, he was shocked to learn that they did not want to come. They were actually wimps since they did have the guts to tell the King to his face they did not want to come. Instead, they sent pathetic excuses. One gave the lame excuse that he had bought a piece of land and needed to go look at

it. Who in their right mind would invest that kind of money into a property without looking at it and making sure it was worth the price? Another person had the nerve to say that he had bought some cows and therefore, could not come to the banquet so that he could try them out? Can you think of anyone that would buy livestock sight unseen? Worse yet, a man gave the excuse that he just got married and could not come to the banquet. Using his wife as an excuse to avoid from coming to the banquet is not too original. Many employers are used to hearing this type of excuse. They would use the wife's name in vain by claiming that could not go to work because the wife broke the car, has a doctor's appointment, or going through some tough times. The king was not happy to learn that his chosen people turned down his royal invitation and the opportunity to personally dine with Him. That is why he made the decision to invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame to the banquet feast. Those that society had cast aside as being a nobody, worthless, stupid, or whatever label you want to add, were the ones that the King selected to replace the chosen ones. The only thing the king expected of those that were called was to accept and show up to the feast. Brothers and sisters, the chosen ones were the Jews, but they rejected the Messiah. That is why God reached out to you and me, as gentiles, to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. When you consider the fact that those poor, uneducated, and lame individuals did not have the fine clothes, the right family pedigree, or impressive positions in life, yet were invited, it means that God is not impressed with those things. He is only concerned about the condition of our souls. That is why the gentiles who were regarded as inferior or of lesser worth, were grateful for the free gift of eternal life. They valued the grace of God being extended to them to forgive them and to give them eternal life. Those that have been forgiven much by God tend to be less judgmental, quick to forgive, and

very accepting of those who are imperfect. Thank God that our validation is not based on our financial standing or high-level positions held in society. Our validation is based solely on the fact that we have received and accepted Christ in our hearts. As a result of that decision, we are washed, forgiven, sanctified, and have been given the privilege of dining with the King of kings. Those who see themselves as rich, powerful, and important will not see the need for the Master, and therefore, will give any old excuse on why they cannot come to the banquet feast. That kind of mindset will lead to the chosen ones thinking they are okay and deserving of heaven on their own goodness and merit. Those that were initially invited felt they had already arrived, righteous, and complete. People do make excuses on why they turned down the Lord's invitation to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb. Those who cry out to God to have mercy on their soul after facing the fact that they are spiritually bankrupted, hungry, or broken are the ones the Lord wants to invite to the marriage supper of the Lamb. They are the ones that will understand and value the sacrifice made by Jesus at the cross of Calvary. It is because of His shed blood that we as gentiles are forgiven, washed, renewed, and accepted into the beloved. When we recognize that we are unworthy and desperately need God, rest assured that the Lord will extend an invitation to His banquet and will go to all length to bless those who accept his invitation.

CONCLUSION: In closing out this message, God does not want us to miss an important point. The Lord has called many to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. But only a few were chosen because the rest refused to answer the call to come to the banquet table. God does not want to close the door to heaven on anyone. But as he knocks on the door of our heart and

extends the invitation, we will have the choice of making excuses of why we did not attend the great celebration at the palace. The other choice is to recognize our need for the Savior and thank God for his awesome mercy to have invited us by actually taking him up on his invitation. God did not come to save the righteous, but instead came to save the lost, the destitute, the broken, and those who recognize their unworthiness. It is through that realization that we can understand what a wonderful and merciful God we serve in the hope of being invited to the marriage support of the Lamb. It is those who have nothing to offer; the needy, the ragged, and the down and out that need the gospel message. Those who are deceived by thinking they are so good and perfect are incapable of humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God. My brothers and sisters, where do you stand? Have you arrived at the point where God can do nothing in your heart or is the Holy Spirit able to do a work in you because you recognize how much you need Him? If you and I have the type of heart that will be grateful because we have been extended an invitation, and readily accept it, we will be able to experience the glory of the Lord and will be allowed to sup with the Master at the heavenly palace. Let us therefore open our hearts so that when the gospel message goes out, we will not reject it. Instead, we will joyfully accept and be grateful for it. That decision to accept the invitation will result in us being able to eat at the banquet table of the Lord and be satisfied. We should not cheat ourselves or forsake our mercy by rejecting the bread of life when it is offered. The Lord will bless us, even though we are gentiles, for our sound decision to come to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. I did accept the invitation God sent and therefore, I will be dining with the King of kings. I am happy to know that you will be there also.