

Compel Them to Come in Sharing the Heart of God

Thesis: I believe the Lord wants us to experience his heart for people, especially outsiders. I believe the Lord wants us to become impassioned with his love for people with every kind of moral and immoral background, people quite different from us culturally, socially, ethnically, and ethically. And, I believe the Lord wants us to get in action, in word and deed, to show and tell the love of Christ to the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled, and the hurting.

Text: Luke 14:12-24

Jesus is the master teacher. He connected with people. He told stories that got their attention. He communicated in the common language of the day. Jesus taught with authority and impact, which was very different than most of the teachers of his day.

Often when Jesus taught, he shared in parables. **A parable is a story that has a shocking twist to it in order to get the attention of people.**

When Jesus told a parable, it was designed to shock the hearer, to give the listener an opportunity to wake up, pay attention, and change.

Let me give you an illustration. I want you to picture people sitting around, mesmerized by their smart phone. All of a sudden, there is the screech of tires in the street. There is a loud crash. For just a second, the person who has been fixated on his or her apps has the chance to break free, to look up, and to go see what is happening. Or, that person can just go back to what they are doing.

The parables of Jesus are like that for the hearers. Jesus came to bring the kingdom of God, the will of God, on earth as in heaven. He came to turn the world right side up. We are lost in our culture, lost in our own world views, lost in our own reality. Jesus wants to wake us up and give us a chance to respond to what God is doing all around us.

So, when you read a parable of Jesus, ask yourself, "What is the shocking element for the original hearers? What is shocking for me?"

And, parables usually have one major point. Yes, there are different interpretations and applications. God's word is like that: he can speak to us at different times and in different ways from the same passages of Scripture.

When you read a parable, look for the major point the Lord is making. And, listen for what else the Spirit of Christ might say to you.

Let's look on one of the parables of Jesus in Luke 14:12-24.

12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." 15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.

17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then 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.'

22 "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and **make them come in, so that my house will be full.** 24 I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet'" (Luke 14:15-24 NIV).

23 "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.**" (Luke 14:13 NASB).

1. **What is the shocking twist of the parable?**

- a. **Shock:** **You are not going to believe who is invited to God's party.**
 - i. The insiders who were invited to the party missed out.
 - ii. The people who were expected to be a part of the kingdom banquet didn't join in the party.
- b. **Even more shocking:** **The Lord sends us to all kinds of places to reach all kinds of people to compel them to come in and to experience the kingdom of God.**

- i. We are sent to people, especially outsiders... people with every kind of moral and immoral background, people quite different from us culturally, socially, ethnically, and ethically.
 - ii. The Lord wants us to get in action, in word and deed, to show and tell the love of Christ to the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled, and the hurting.
 - c. And, we aren't just to invite them. We are to "make them" or "compel them to come in," because that is how much Father God loves people who are not yet a part of his family and kingdom.
2. **What is the primary point of the parable?** (*Luke for Everyone*, NT Wright).
 - a. The first level of meaning of this parable should be clear. Jesus has been going around Galilee summoning people to God's great supper. This is the moment Israel has been waiting for! At last the time has arrived; those who were invited long ago must hurry up now and come! But most of them have refused, giving all kinds of reasons; we are reminded of the parable of the seeds and soils, in which various things caused most of the seeds to remain unfruitful. But some people have been delighted to be included: the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled. They have come in and celebrated with.
 - b. The second level... is what this might mean for Luke in particular. Once again the expected guests are the Jews, waiting and waiting for the kingdom, only to find, when it arrived, that they had more pressing things to occupy them. Of course, in Luke's day many Jews had become Christians.... But the majority of the nation, both in Palestine and in the scattered Jewish communities in the rest of the world, were not. **Instead, as it must have seemed to those first Jewish Christians, God's messengers had gone out into the roads and hedgerows of the world, getting all kinds of unexpected people to join in the party—not just Gentiles, but people with every kind of moral and immoral background, people quite different from them culturally, socially, ethnically and ethically.**
 - c. **But there is a third twist to this parable, in which it bends back, as it were, on itself, returning to the challenge which Jesus gave in verses 12-14. The party to which the original guests were invited was Jesus' kingdom-movement, his remarkable welcome to all and sundry. If people wanted to be included in Jesus' movement, this is the sort of thing they were joining.**
 - d. Once again, therefore, the challenge comes to us today. **Christians, reading this anywhere in the world, must work out in their own churches and families what it would mean to celebrate God's kingdom so that the people at the bottom of the pile, at the end of the line, would find it to be good news.** It isn't enough to say that we ourselves

are the people dragged in from the country lanes, to our surprise, to enjoy God's party. That may be true; but **party guests are then expected to become party hosts in their turn.**

What is the heart of God?

The Lord isn't just giving us a parable. He isn't just giving a teaching. Jesus lived what he taught and believed.

God loves us so much that he sacrificed everything to come after us. God the Father sacrificed his Son to show us his love. Jesus the Son sacrificed his life to demonstrate the love of God.

The Father sent the Son to go after the lost, to bring the orphans into families, and to make them kings and priests to serve our God.

The Son left his comfort, convenience, and culture (heaven, presence of God) to come after us. Love for God and love for us motivated Jesus.

Why should we care about outsiders, about lost people?

(Change Your Church for Good, Brad Powell. From Chapter 15: A Life is Waiting: Lost People Matter to God.)

The answer is simple. It's the reason Jesus transitioned from heaven to earth. It's the reason that Jesus builds His church. Lost people are treasured by God and must be treasured by His church. Of course, I didn't make this up; Jesus did. I'm certainly not the first one to write about this; Luke was. Since then, it has been the job of pastors and churches to keep this truth alive. Lost people are treasured by God and must be treasured by His church.

In Luke 15:1–24, Jesus told three stories back to back to back that all teach exactly the same truth.... He was tired of people continually asking why He hung out with tax collectors and sinners. He was tired of people missing the point. So finally, in Luke 15, He told these three stories to make it clear what motivated His life and ministry.

The three stories were about lost things that had great worth. More than likely, you know the stories. There was a shepherd that lost one sheep out of his hundred. As a result, he left the ninety-nine in order to find the one lost sheep. When he did, he threw a party to celebrate.

There was a woman that lost one of her coins. It was a significant portion of her wealth. Therefore, she put everything else in her life on hold and looked for that coin. When she found it, she called everyone she knew to celebrate.

There was a dad who lost his son to self-destructive choices. While the son was gone, the father put everything on hold in his life while waiting and praying for his son's return. Jesus describes the father seeing the son from a great distance as he was on his way home. It's clear he spent his life looking at the horizon for the boy to come home. When he found his son, this dad threw a huge party to celebrate.

THE COMMON PROBLEM

In His stories, no one questions the excitement and celebration over finding the sheep or coin. As if to say, "Of course they should celebrate." But in the story of the lost son coming home, someone does complain about the excitement and the celebration. The elder son throws a pity party over it. Though he had been experiencing the joy, peace, security, and fulfillment of the father all along and would continue to experience them, he was ticked that the father hadn't thrown a party for him.

Here, in this last story, Jesus addressed the common problem found among those who claim to be His followers, both then and now. They begin focusing on and valuing only the insiders. He makes it clear how distorted values can become. No one had a problem with celebrating a business success or financial gain. But celebrating the return and forgiveness of a wayward person was greeted with hostility. How sad. In this, Jesus was clearly addressing the religious leaders who hated that He directed His life and ministry toward sinners. In this, He was clearly addressing churches that gear their ministries toward those already on the inside.

Unfortunately, the complaining elder son is representative of many Christian churches today. They get upset about all of the excitement, celebration, and expense being directed toward the people who walked away from God while they, in their minds, stayed faithful. They're upset at how these people come into and mess up their nice little comfortable churches. This reveals how far from the values of Jesus Christ many of His churches have drifted. This is the reason churches need to change. If they don't, they will compromise everything Jesus loves and values.

Summary

I believe the Lord wants us to experience his heart for people, especially outsiders. I believe the Lord wants us to become impassioned with his love for people with every kind of moral and immoral background, people quite different from us culturally, socially, ethnically, and ethically. And, I believe the Lord wants us to get in action, in word and deed, to show and tell the love of Christ to the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled, and the hurting.

Challenge and application

1. **Let's share the heart of God.**
 - a. That is the challenge for us this season. Let's share the heart of God for people.
 - i. Our God loves people so much.
 - ii. I pray that we would feel what he feels for others.
 - b. And, let's share the heart of God for people. Let's show and tell them how much the Lord loves them.
2. **Here is one way to share the heart of God: Everyone reach one for Easter.**
 - a. Praise the Lord. **Our God has left a clear witness to Jesus in our culture at Christmas and Easter.**
 - i. At least 2 times a year, people are thinking about going to church.
 - ii. **Why not ask them to come with you to Calvary?**
 1. Ask them to meet you here.
 2. Or, ask them to come with you.
 - b. **Jesus is on mission around us.**
 - i. Jesus is on mission reaching the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled, the hurting.
 - ii. Jesus is actively pursuing people like us and different from us.
 - c. **Let's co-labor with Jesus.**
 - i. Ask the Spirit of Christ: Who are you drawing?
 - ii. Ask the Lord: With whom would you have me pray or share?
 - d. **Let's compel people to come in** so that they can experience the life, love, and celebration of the kingdom of God.
3. **As we go, let's go with faith and expectation** (John 4:35; Matthew 9:35-38).
 - a. Jesus said, "Now is the time of harvest."
 - b. Jesus told us to pray for laborers for his Father's harvest fields.
 - c. Jesus told us that there are people around us who are harassed and helpless. They are hurting. They need the help and hope that we find in Jesus.
 - d. The Holy Spirit has already gone before you to prepare the hearts of people.
 - e. The Lord Jesus is with you always (Matthew 28:20).
4. **Take as many Easter cards as you need and give them away, intentionally seeking to reach at least one person.**