

The Wedding Banquet - 1

by Jackie Pullinger

Jackie Pullinger's sermon emphasizes the joy of eternal life in Christ and the urgent call to share that joy with those who have not yet experienced it.

Duration: 40:11

Scripture: Matthew 22:1-14, Luke 14:7-35

Topics: "Heaven"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the parable of the great banquet from Luke chapter 14. The story is about a man who invites many guests to a banquet but they all make excuses and decline the invitation. The man then sends his servant to invite anyone they find on the streets, both good and bad, and the wedding hall is filled with guests. The speaker relates this parable to the importance of inviting sinners to the Kingdom of God and emphasizes the need to not only speak the Gospel but also show love and act upon it.

Transcript

Been through eight of these things. I learned that I had eternal life. Because I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and you know all the right things.

And then my friends sat down to pray. And they all started thanking the Lord for eternal life, you know, and I looked at them, and I thought, wow, they look happy. I mean, they mean it.

And then I thought, well, I suppose the same applies to me. I have eternal life too. And I was joyful too.

For a moment, I tasted this feast. For a moment. Wonderful.

I'm going to spend eternity with the Lord. Wonderful. And each one of them thanked the Lord.

And then we stopped that bit of the prayer meeting, and they said, now we're going to have the equivalent of fried rice. And I thought, fried rice? How can you eat fried rice? How can we sit down to eat food now? Because, you see, what had happened to me was, at the same time as feeling very joyful that I had eternal life, immediately, I thought the opposite has to be true as well. For if I know I have eternal life because I know Jesus, that means there are some people who don't have eternal life.

And I couldn't enjoy sitting down to eat with them after that. Because I wanted to go out and find somebody who had not yet eaten so they could share it. And I'm afraid I've been like that ever since.

No, I normally can't stand a conference for more than half a day without wanting to go out and find the people outside, because it doesn't seem fair to eat it by yourself, or to feast so fully when there are others who haven't even heard that there's a party yet. And somebody, some people get quite worried about me sometimes. They say, Jackie, you've really got to learn to enjoy the Lord, you know, and you go away for six months and have a time of Sabbath.

He hasn't asked me to do that yet. And I say, well, you know, I don't know how I can enjoy the Lord and not grieve for the people who don't know Him. I don't know how.

For me, it's like breathing. You know, I breathe in His goodness and His healing and His forgiveness, and I want to go out and give it to the people who don't know any. You know, it's as quick as that.

And in God's mercy, a few years ago, while I was at a conference, and I was getting very worried about this time, there are all these people that go off, you know, and have these long, long, me-alone-with-the-Lord times, you know, sometimes for a whole year. And they kept prophesying to me, you know, that my time was coming, and I thought, God, I don't know if I'm going to be able to do this. And the Lord said to me, it's all right, Jackie.

I'm just going to teach you to take deeper breaths. But I think it's like that. And I think for us, when we've tasted a little bit, just a little bit of how good the Lord is, we will want to go out and share with people who have not yet tasted.

When we've breathed something of His aroma, when we've caught that much of His smell, we want to go and share that perfume with others. So I start by saying, there is a feast, and I've been invited, and you've been invited. Let us eat.

Let us eat. Let us enjoy. It's not that we shouldn't enjoy it, because other people can't.

Let us enjoy it, and let us go out and share with those who have none, or haven't even heard there's the party. Well, that's why I went to Hong Kong. That's very soon after this fried rice party.

I started talking to the Lord and said, okay, now what do you want me to do? And it's a very, very long story, but He sent me to Hong Kong. And when I got there, I was desperately wanting to share Him with other people. I desperately wanted to tell them, there's a party.

There is a party that you can come to. And today I want to share two different parables which are going to show what this party is about, how we get to be invited, and how we get to invite others. So if you've got Bibles, the first one's in Matthew.

We'll find it in Matthew 22, and it's the parable of the wedding banquet, Matthew 22. Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who'd been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

And then he sent some more servants and said, Tell those who've been invited that I've prepared my dinner. My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding

banquet.

But they paid no attention, and they went off, one to his field and another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. And the king was enraged.

He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burnt their city. And then he said to his servants, The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.

So the servants went out into the streets and gathered in all the people they could find, both good and bad. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.

Friend, he asked, how did you get in here without wedding clothes? And the man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, Tie his hand and foot and throw him outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are invited, but few are chosen. Now I guess most of us understand what this parable is about.

It's a parable of the kingdom of heaven and the Lord inviting who to come into the kingdom of heaven. Well, I believe that this parable is inviting, first of all, the Lord's own people, the Jews. And so he had this banquet, this wedding banquet for his son.

But when the people who'd been invited were reminded, they refused to come. So he sent some more servants and he said, Tell those who've been invited that I've prepared my dinner. But they paid no attention.

And they even seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. And that is, of course, what they did to the prophets. They killed the prophets.

The people who were sent to the people of Israel to tell them, The Messiah is coming. Get ready, prepare your hearts, turn to the Lord. They did not listen.

They went about their own business. Or they mistreated and killed them. And the king, therefore, was enraged, sent his army and destroyed the murderers and even burned their city.

Look what happened to Jerusalem. And then the rest of the parable seems to be an opening of the invitation to everyone else. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.

And that's what the servants did. And so good and bad came in. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Now I knew that the Lord invited good and bad. I knew that he wanted to invite sinners to the banquet. So I got myself to Hong Kong, which is where I was sure he wanted me to be.

And I began to pray to know what I should do. The problem was that there seemed to be so much to do. I'm not sure what you do when you see the streets here in Porirua, if this is where you live.

I don't know whether they look like ordinary streets or whether the people look like ordinary people or whether you can actually see them. I don't know what you feel about the people inside the houses. I've only been to New Zealand four times.

But every time I've been here, I've heard about the people in the houses and I've met a lot of them. And there seem to be hundreds of screamingly hurting people. I keep meeting them.

And so I wonder when I go past here, the houses, who's inside and how are they feeling? Do they know about Jesus? I know there are a lot of churches, but I want to know if they know about Jesus. When I went to Hong Kong and saw the people in the streets, there were literally thousands sleeping in the streets. It's a very crowded place.

It's very hard for you to imagine the streets of Hong Kong here. It's very difficult. But just to tell you that the average family lives in one room.

This is average. And in one place that I've been for many years, they sleep and they eat and they wash and they do their homework and they make love. All in one room.

And some families have to take it in turns to sleep. Because they can't all lie down at the same time. It's an important room.

Even if they're sleeping on bunks, it's just not room all to sleep at one time. So there are thousands of people who are sleeping in the streets, some of them in the middle of the streets, down the bit that goes down the middle, and some of them under the flyovers because they haven't got a home. Well, it's all very well for me to know the abundance of God's house and to feast on those riches, but what about them? God led me to a place called the World City, which is, well, some people have described it as hell.

It's about five or six acres and completely dark. Well, when I first went, it was completely dark. They just had a few lamps inside.

Nowadays, there's quite a lot of electricity because they've stolen it from outside. They've run wires from other blocks and then they've run wires off those and they've run wires off those and they've run wires off those. So when you walk through the streets, which are just two or three feet wide, the wires are just above your head.

Because above that, the buildings are built over. They've just got as many people as they can. There used to be about 60,000 people in these five or six acres, if you can imagine this.

That's why the city is dark, because they've built it as close as they can so no light gets down. The only way you can see sunlight is in a very few places by looking up between the cracks of the buildings, but that's not smart because they don't have loos, and so they pour things out of windows. You don't call them loos, no? Yeah, you do.

So anyway, it's not too smart to look up. They've got the sewers underneath your feet, which are open, so it's better to look where you're going because it's easy to fall down those things. That was what I saw.

That was the place I saw, and my heart not big enough. Sometimes people say to me, you have to be very brave to go to a place like that. You don't.

You don't need to be brave to go to a place like that. You see, I couldn't take on a whole city, but for me, I saw people just one by one. Now, you don't have to be brave if you see people one by one.

That's all I can advise you to do is to see people one by one. You know, I don't understand taking cities and taking countries and taking nations. I know that's what this conference is about, but my heart doesn't

really understand that.

I haven't quite got there yet. I can understand the one man, and that's not hard. The first one I saw there was just wearing sandals, flip-flops, and he'd got very close cropped hair, which means he'd just come out of prison, and he was putting his hands through the sewer that I found out later he was seeing if he could pick up any rubbish which had fallen into the sewer and get something, because of course he doesn't get any state aid when he's come out of prison, so he has to live on something.

And then I saw a lady, a little old lady, she was very thin, and she had marks in the back of her hands, and that's because she injected heroin every day into the back of her hands. She was a prostitute, and I don't know whether she became a prostitute to pay for her drug habit, or whether she took drugs to endure her business. I don't know.

But one will always go with the other. Who could be frightened when they look at a lady like that? We've brought one with us, actually. She's not actually in this city.

She's sunning herself in Rotorua right now. But she's now 70, and she came to live with us after she'd been on drugs and on the streets for 50 years, starting at 16, when she was raped, and then of course thrown out of her family, of course. And then what would you do? Who could be frightened? Who could be frightened? And if my own heart has ever been touched by the heart of Jesus, how could I go and enjoy that feast, knowing she had never tasted even a bite? How could I? They're not frightening, you know.

They're not. Not one by one. Not if you know how Jesus touched you a little bit, and you long that he would touch them.

But how? How can you get them to the party? I made an awful mistake to begin with. I'm really sorry about it now. I used to ask them to church.

I don't know why I did it. It's just really I didn't know any other way. I thought this is how people got to eat the feast.

But you know, I didn't like the story. I don't mean I... I like the people. I just didn't like what we had to get through.

I beg your pardon, but I got very confused with all the standing up and sitting down and who was passing around the plate and what it was all about. And I used to sit there saying, God, I hate this. I love you.

Therefore, I'll put up with it. And I love the people too. But you know what we did I thought, oh God, wouldn't it be awful if they came in? I mean, I'm having a hard job getting through this meeting.

But what would they feel like? I mean, they... The sinners I was seeing in the World City and the people I knew who were sleeping in the streets couldn't read the words of the songs that we were standing up and down singing. How could they enjoy it? They would only feel despised because they're not educated. And the people I saw too dressed nice.

And all the other people that in the meetings I went to dressed nice. The people for whom Jesus came seemed to be outside. But I used to pray that they would come.

I just didn't know how to get them to the party. Well, I'd heard that Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain for us in the World City. So I thought if I could get that through to these sinners because Jesus came for good

and bad, their hearts would be changed like mine.

But how do you say unblemished in Chinese? How do you say precious Lamb of God when you can't even say good morning? Well, that's very complicated and very deep Chinese. So, I read about somebody and you earlier on somebody mentioned David Wilkerson's book. And in David Wilkerson's book *The Cross and the Switchblade*, I read that what he said was Jesus loves you.

And this gangster's heart cracked. So I thought this is very simple. Instead of learning how to say Lamb without blemish and spot and all of this, I'll just say Jesus loves you in Chinese and it'll crack.

So it's quite simple. It goes and I practiced it until I got it quite good. And I chose my victim who was sitting outside a gambling den.

And they're addicts, of course, who sit outside the gambling dens. And this was going on quite swinging around about 3 o'clock in the morning. And I went up to him and he took no notice.

I mean, now that was simple stuff and I expected his heart to crack. So I was very disappointed and went off and learned another word. And that was really.

I thought if I really, Jesus loves you. So that will move him. So and not only was he not moved, but he was rather rude.

He said to me which means what's that have to do with me? Huh? And then he said why don't you run? Why don't you go find someone else? Go find someone else. You're interrupting my business. Well, this is very disappointing when you've come to invite people to the salvation party and you can see that they're sitting there in misery every night.

These poor men used to have to sit there and they got the equivalent of one of your dollars for a whole night's work. One dollar. Just enough to feed that day's heroin.

That's all. And you know that Jesus came so they could have salvation, rich and free and eternal life and all that. But how do you get it through? Well, I tried several other people and it didn't seem to get through either.

At least not the words until God showed me that actually they don't mean anything. The words don't mean anything by themselves. Why should an old prostitute be touched because I say Jesus loves you? Why should she? Not if nobody ever loved her.

How would she know what love was? And who's Jesus anyway? Some westerner's God? All she knows is that Christians have nice clothes and they can read and they have Sundays off but she can't read. She doesn't get Sundays off and she doesn't have nice clothes. So she has nothing to do with me.

How can you get it through then the gospel if not with words? Only one way. You have to be Jesus. I know that sounds shocking but you see that's how he got through to us.

He didn't send us messages from heaven. He didn't even duplicate tracts about the love of the Father or send us four ways to Christ or he has an acceptance prayer. He didn't send us printed words.

He sent us his son and it says in scripture that he's the exact representation of God's being so that when looked at Jesus they saw the Father. And when you look at what Jesus did when men saw him I don't

know how much doctrine they understood. I don't know at all.

I don't know if any of them understood the cross. It's interesting, isn't it? But when they saw him it was almost as if they knew who he was. You know, they kept saying he's the one.

It's fascinating, you know. How many of them as he went by and the blind ones how many of them called out to him Son of David, Son of David, Son of David. You ever thought why people would call out Son of David? Strange.

Strange. They don't call out your great grandfather's name, do they? When you passed by why would they call out Son of David? It was as if they knew he was the one but he hadn't died on the cross. They didn't understand the doctrine or did they? They saw him though for he was the living word.

And I often think was it when he died on the cross or afterwards that it came together that it was the one who opened my eyes and made me see what's he doing up there on a cross? When would they have understood the doctrine? I think possibly long, long after they'd recognize the Savior and be made whole. It's a mystery but I tell you what I came too long to do and that was that people should meet the Savior and be touched by him and be made whole and in God's good time to understand the doctrine. But it seemed to be a different way from the way which I had planned at the beginning.

You know, in God's mercy I couldn't say unblemished lamb and all of that to begin with. In God's mercy, later on they told me they said it wouldn't have mattered what you said to us. We weren't listening.

Why should they? Why should they listen to our words anyway? I tell you what though, they are looking. They're looking to see if we're like Jesus. And most men, I'm sure it must be so in New Zealand, most men are hoping that it's true about Jesus.

Most men are hoping that there really are men of God who are like Jesus, who give their clothes to those who have none, who invite strangers in, who feed the poor, who walk with the weary one mile, two miles, three miles, who lend without expecting return. You may not like that scripture but it is a scripture. It doesn't say if it's sensible even.

It's not qualified. You see, so much of the gospel is completely, according to our reasoning, senseless. It is not sensible to lend your money expecting not to get it back.

But it says we're supposed to do it. There's so much that's shocking about the gospel. If we would do what Jesus told us to, those people would recognize him because they are hoping that he's true.

And I found in God's mercy after some time, when I prayed to know the power of his Holy Spirit, I found that people had been longing to come to this party. And so it happened that after trying for a long time to speak and then learning that you had to do the actions as well. You couldn't just do the words.

You had to love in deed and in truth. And you, and I did, need to preach the gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit, relying on God's guidance and his ways of doing things. I found in his mercy that people came into the kingdom, both good and bad.

And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. Friend, he asked, how did you get in here without wedding clothes? And the man was speechless.

And the king told the attendants, tie him hand and foot and throw him outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth for many are invited but few are chosen. This seems hard saying, doesn't it? Very hard. Because I know the first thing that happens to all us ladies, I guess you're the same as me, very much the first thing we say is, I haven't a thing to wear.

And for weddings, above all other things, we like to get something new to go in. You see, weddings seem to be the things which we like to go to. So it seems awfully tough that this man was rebuked for not wearing wedding clothes.

Well, I'll tell you about this particular wedding, this particular party. And this is really great to know is that you didn't actually have to go out and buy an outfit before you went to a wedding because when you went to these weddings, you got given clothes at the door. I mean, marvelous.

When you went in through the door, you got your wedding garment. I don't know if you got your hat. I suppose you did.

It would be salvation-wise the equivalent of a crown. So you get it when you go in through the door. So you and I, when we come to the Father through Jesus, we get robed, robed in righteousness.

When I first started sharing Jesus with the gangsters in the walled city, I opened a room there and I used to invite them in at night. And we opened it at night because they slept in the morning. And I found most missionaries slept at night and worked in the day.

So I thought we should redress the balance of it. Anyway, when I used to share with them about Jesus, they'd say, Of course, she's cracked about Jesus. But apart from that, she's all right.

They didn't accept Jesus, but they did accept me. They didn't accept me. They didn't understand about Him.

Of course, and Scripture says, if they accept you in His name, they will accept Him. So it was only going to be a matter of time. But when I used to talk to them about knowing Him, they'd say, I can't because I take heroin or I gamble.

They hadn't understood until God opened their hearts that they could be clothed in righteousness. It doesn't matter if you're good or bad. It doesn't matter if you feel good or bad.

Whatever we're like, He says, come. You're all welcome. And I clothe you.

You can come in the door. Well, how come this man then had no garment? It must be because he got in through the wrong door. Back door or probably a window.

But he didn't come in through the right entrance. Who is Jesus? You see, there's only one way to come into the kingdom of God. It's through Jesus because He laid down His life.

He took off His own robe that we could wear His. So, thank God in His mercy, I found that people were coming to know Jesus. There were triad gangsters, which is very similar to the mafia.

There were people who slept in the streets. And we found that one after another came in and know Jesus. And now I want to look at the other parable.

And we find this in Luke. Luke 14. It's very similar.

And it's very interesting that this particular parable comes after Jesus has actually been to dinner at a prominent Pharisee's house. And I was rather amazed when I read through the account of His dinner party that He didn't seem to stand on ceremony that much with His hosts because it seems that people were vying for the best seats. And He said, you should take the lower place.

And then, it may be that your host will say to your friend, move up to a better place. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted. And then Jesus went on to say to the dinner party, which would seem to be a bit rude, don't, when you give a luncheon or dinner, invite your friends, your brothers, or relatives, or rich neighbors.

Why not? We do, don't we, as Christians? We invite our friends and our relatives and our neighbors. So why is He saying this? He says, if you invite them, they will come back and so you will be repaid. And He's talking about a better reward than having a return invitation in this life.

When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, and you'll be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Extraordinary.

He says this when He's at dinner at a Pharisee's house. We don't behave that much like that, do we? We keep having parties for ourselves. It's okay, you're allowed to have this one today and tomorrow because we're going to make sure that today and tomorrow we eat the right things so we can go out tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next day and invite the ones He's talking about to the banquet.

So that here in this country and me and mine, we should not merely become fattened Christians or even deadened Christians inviting each other backwards and forwards but that we could waste our lives, our resources, our money on those who've never tasted anything good or sweet and those who would not be able to ask us back. I pray for the day that we as the Church will behave like this because I tell you something, if we behave like this, not only the people that we invite to our parties are going to get blessed but there's going to be a greater number of people who have heard about the party who are going to be blessed. They always hoped that it was true.

And so here, chapter 14, the parable of the great banquet. Now why would he tell a similar story twice? This story differs just a little bit from the other one and it's actually fascinating to see. I looked up four different versions of the Bible to try and get it right and then I had to look up Greek and everything and in actual fact, these two stories are different in this respect.

They're talking about two different meals. In Matthew, the story is about the first meal of the day. It's a wedding but it was a wedding breakfast.

I don't know if you call it wedding breakfast even if you have it in the afternoon but wedding breakfast, it was the first meal and this one, this is the evening meal. I know it confuses me in New Zealand. You keep calling it tea but it's the dinner or anyway, it's the last one.

This is the last meal, this chapter 14 one and he says a certain man was preparing this banquet. This is the last meal and invited many guests at the time of the banquet. He sent his servant to tell those who'd been invited, come for now everything is ready and as the story goes on, we'll find that it's very similar to the first story.

I saw this beautifully illustrated in a Garfield cartoon. What's the name of the boy in Garfield? John. Okay, well, what happened was that John said he was going to have this wonderful tea party for all the neighbors, presumably all the neighbors who could ask him back to their tea parties and so he wrote out all these invitations and then he gave them to his dog.

What's his dog's name? Okay, he gave he gave all the invitations to Odie and Odie goes outside and Odie gets a bit excited and the wind blows and Odie gets even more excited and all the invitations get blown around so he gives up. He never posted them properly because the wind has blown them around and come the day of the party, here is John with his wonderful food which he's been preparing and he opens the door and in come all the layabouts, all the motorbike gangs all the people of the streets who happen to have picked up one of these invitations that Odie never got into the box and so John says I invited the upper crust but all I got was the crumbs and I always think that he must have read this because it's exactly this story where the upper crust got invited but the wind of the spirit took the invitations and the crumbs got in to this wonderful feast and how this parable works out is this the first invitation the first party was for God's own people the Jews and they couldn't hear and didn't come and made excuses and so the Lord Jesus said send out invitations to the Gentiles that's the story we read in Matthew but here this particular banquet now this story is talking about the last one this is the last meal this is the ingathering of all of God's people this is the final feast I mean this is the important one

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