

The Wedding Banquet - 2

by Jackie Pullinger

Jackie Pullinger emphasizes the importance of accepting God's invitation to the Wedding Banquet while addressing the excuses that prevent people from attending and the need to reach out to those in need.

Duration: 39:47

Scripture: Joel 2:28, Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:54-56, Luke 14:18-24, Acts 2:17

Topics: "Heaven"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a group of people who decided to feed the poor on a rubbish dump at Christmas. They estimated the number of people they would feed, but hundreds more turned up than expected. Despite the limited amount of food they had, they decided to cut the ham thick, believing that there would be enough for everyone. Miraculously, they ended up with more food left over than they started with and were able to feed 12 orphanages. The speaker emphasizes that God wants His house to be full and urges the audience to invite and compel others to come to Him.

Transcript

This is the in-gathering of all of God's people. This is the final feast. I mean, this is the important one for us all to be at.

There is no other one after that. This is the coming back of the Lord Jesus and the welcoming of all the people who know him to the party. Now, just to, so we understand about this invitation giving.

I don't know how you do it in New Zealand, but there are some, the very proper people back in England, and Chinese don't do it like this, but what they do is when you've been asked to an invitation, to a party, you get a card and you tick it and you put it on the mantelpiece where everyone will see how many invitations you've got. And you put accepted on it. You've written back to say I'm coming.

Well, in these days, when they had parties in Jesus' time, the custom of the time was to send out invitations. Okay, will you come, will you come, will you come? And so some of them write back and some of them phone back and they say, I'll come, I'll come. Yeah, I'd love to.

I'll come back, I'll come. And so you and I, we've walked forward at a meeting and we've knelt down and we've said, yes, I invite Jesus as my savior. And I want to spend eternity with him.

And at that day, I'll be there, I'll be there, I'll be there. We intend to be at the party. But the custom at the time then was to wait for a second invitation.

And what happens was that the master would prepare the food and when it was ready, then he'd send out his servants and say, now, now, now, come. And they would wait for that second invitation. For when the food was ready, you better come quick.

And so the people in this particular story had already said, yes, I will come. Now, I believe this story is about the church. You and I, we've said, yes, I will, I will, I'll come.

At the time of the banquet, he sent his servants to tell those who'd been invited, come, for now everything is ready. But they all alike began to make excuses. And the first said, I've just bought a field and I must go and see it, please excuse me.

And another said, I've just bought five yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them out, please excuse me. And still another said, I just got married, so I can't come. And I'd like to go through very briefly some of the excuses that we as the church might make for not coming to this party.

The first one is, I have bought a field and I must go and see it. I suppose this doesn't apply to us here. I suppose it doesn't apply to you.

But the problem with these people, I mean, I suppose it doesn't because that's why you're at this conference. You see, the people in this story or the church in this story has become involved in buying property. I'm not saying buying property is wrong.

All I'm saying is that the people in this story were so interested in looking after their bit, they missed the party, that's all. It's very important to inspect your field when you've bought it. And I believe it is a warning for us that in the days of the coming of the kingdom of God, our priority should be men and women and those who are hurting outside, those who've managed to look all right but are aching inside.

I don't know how it is in your culture. I know in both Chinese culture and in British culture, they teach the men not to show what they're feeling. Anybody been taught that? But they cover it up.

They become hard on the outside, but they ache inside. Their mouth may not shake and their heart may cry for a while. And after a bit, all may become numb because inside there are things which have been hurtful and harmful and painful.

There are men and women all over this country who have been desperately hurt. And I'm afraid there are a number of us here now. I want very quickly just to turn back to perhaps a reason why this might be.

And it's just a couple of chapters back in Luke. Luke 11, 47. Here, Jesus is talking about those who killed the messengers, those who killed the prophets.

In verse 47 of chapter 11, "Woe to you, because you built tombs for the prophets "and it was your forefathers who killed them." "He says to them, "By building tombs for your forefathers, "you've done the wrong thing." This seems a bit mean. Look, look at this. "Woe to you, because you built tombs for the prophets "and it was your forefathers who killed them.

"So you testify that you approve "of what your forefathers did. "They killed the prophets and you built their tombs. "Why should they not build tombs for the prophets?" "Does not scripture say that we are not going

"to be punished for the sins of our ancestors?" "Yes, it does.

"We don't need to be punished "for the sins of our ancestors. "We are dealt with by the Lord "because of our response to him. "And in mercy, he deals with our hearts individually.

"We don't have to have the sins "of our ancestors put upon us." The problem with the men that Jesus was talking about was that they had never acknowledged that their ancestors had done wrong in killing the prophets. They merely made edifices. They merely built tombs for the prophets.

They didn't identify with the sin or recognize the sin of their forefathers in killing the prophets. Now, I'll tell you something shocking. I've spent 23 years in Hong Kong and seen thousands and thousands and thousands of drug addicts.

I've seen people one day and know that they've died the next. We've got one brother here from Macau and every week one of their friends die, every week. And every week, one of their friends' arms or legs fall off because the mixture of drugs is so poor that they inject this junk into them and it causes poison in their limbs.

That's awful. But you know who did it? My forefathers. You know how Hong Kong began? It began maybe not a whole lot different from this country.

It's not got a long history, middle of last century. You know how it began? Well, some men wanted to do trade with China and so they used Hong Kong as a place to camp. And in order to get trade from China, because China didn't want to trade with Britain, they traded in something.

That they felt China would like and so they sold opium to China. You know who put the curse of drug addiction upon Hong Kong? The British. We did.

And now look at us. Years later, we're going to back out and leave them. I acknowledge that my forefathers and my people have done wrong.

They have bought another nation and thousands of beautiful people into bondage and death. That is an awful thing to do and I am part of that. But God gave us a key a few years ago.

We were praying about this and he showed us the most extraordinary thing. I believe some of you were here this morning and you heard the story of Joseph and how it got turned around, you know? Joseph who'd got sold into slavery and yet God in his mercy turned it round, or maybe it was his plan all along, that that which his brothers had meant to harm him became that plan of salvation to rescue Israel from hunger. Extraordinary, because of the generosity of Joseph Hart, not blaming his brothers, didn't bear them any animosity, extraordinary man.

God showed us it was the same key. And you know the most amazing thing has happened in the past few years? We've seen one drug addict after another, after another, after another come to know Jesus. And a few years ago we had a time of prayer and we said sorry, as the British, those of us who put it upon them.

We said we're really sorry that we did this to you. For you were a better nation before we came. You were fishing and trading quite well and we sold you this mud.

We're sorry, will you forgive us? Just a few people did it. And one or two generous of our Chinese brothers very generously said yes, we will forgive you. And we prayed together.

And you know what has resulted? Resulted the most amazing thing. You know, I'm terribly biased about this, but I think that the best bunch of gospel preachers that are in Hong Kong, I'm terribly biased about this. The best bunch of people that there are is our guys.

None of them are very clever. By worldly standards, only the very wise in God's ways haven't been educated, I suppose not as much as most of you anyway. I think some of them have had a couple of years primary school.

The most here is somebody who's been up to form four, secondary school, but the rest didn't complete primary school. One of them here had 30 times in prison. Another one here's slept in the streets for 30 years.

And they were under the curse of heroin addiction. They were what people call nothing, hopeless. They were ones that even their parents said are not people.

They speak about them like apples sometimes. They say we got two good ones, two rotten ones. They talk about their own family even like that.

But they are the ones, they are the ones out of the whole of Hong Kong who have come in to salvation through Jesus Christ and they're absolutely sold out now in preaching the gospel. Where to? China. You see the enemy's plan is thwarted through the cross.

He meant that not only China but Britain should both be in bondage because of this sin. You see it always brings two lots of people into bondage. Both the people who are sinned against and therefore hurt and don't forgive and the people who do the sinning and are arrogant.

Two lots of people get into bondage but when the cross of Jesus Christ comes, turns it all around and he who has wounded all his descendants says sorry. And those who have been wounded and their descendants say, it's all right, I forgive you because I've been forgiven through Jesus. And the whole situation gets turned around and I believe that this is what God wants to do here tonight and in the coming year and years in New Zealand.

You've heard today a lot about different cultures and even now there are people here who hurt terribly and it's not your fault. You have been sinned against. Maybe somebody took your land.

Now where about the cross? And for many of us a start in bringing about the reversal of that which the enemy wants to ruin this country. With it's going to be an admitting that there's pain. Not a covering up but saying I hurt desperately.

I don't know who my people are. I don't know where my land is or my land got stolen or I've never been considered anything. I feel an outcast, I'm rejected or my people haven't been considered.

Others have come into my land or my place and have taken what was ours. And the Lord says this can be made right through the cross. And through the cross it's so different because none of us will be saying this is ours or this is my right even.

We will understand that we are merely aliens and tenants and what God gives us is for us to use for his glory and to share with each other. The church, our job as the church is to be very busy in reaching the hurt people in our towns, in our cities, in the highways and byways. They are really not hard to find.

If you ask the Lord to open your eyes or it could be open your ears because it's a dangerous thing to do but if you do ask him to open your ears you may hear them crying or screaming. They're wanting to be found, you see. They're wanting to be found.

They may not dare do it out loud because they may have been taught otherwise. But inside, I heard it tonight, you see. I heard it while we were singing Hosanna.

I know some of you heard it too. You were bravely singing Hosanna, it's okay. But if you'll ask the Lord to open your ears you'll hear them and then you can't ignore them.

You must see that they receive what the Lord came to give, binding up, binding up for the brokenhearted, the balm, the oil, the soothing. And let them know it's okay to cry. It's all right, Jesus did.

He had no stiff of a lip. He was disappointed even that his friends weren't there. He didn't cover that up.

He needed his friends and they weren't there. I know he had God. He wasn't stoic about having God as his father.

But he needed his friends too. And when his friends did not minister to him, God gave him angels. It wasn't just the love of the Father that did instead.

It wasn't just so spiritual that he didn't need friends. He admitted his need for his friends. He wanted them to be with him.

We can admit when we hurt, when we're lonely, when we're terribly disappointed that our friends weren't with us and didn't understand and didn't go through the things we were going through. We can admit that it's all right. It's all right to cry and bring it to the cross of Jesus and let him bind us up, make us whole.

It's why he came for. And then those wounds which have been buried so deeply in us and for some of us here for generations will be made whole and the cross will turn that whole agony into victory. And that whole destruction into blessing.

We may repent on behalf of our forefathers. We may identify with their sin and we may be forgiven so that those who are alive now who are longing to know the Lord Jesus will know him. We do this all the time in the streets.

We go out to where people are. We don't invite them to church. We pray with them in the streets.

We see people come to know Jesus nearly every day. We've got a girl here, Elizabeth, who deals with a whole lot of street sleepers in one particular area. She goes week after week after week.

She takes some rice boxes and blankets and food and she says, can I pray with you? You know, if you ask people, can I pray with you, nearly everyone will say yes, nearly everyone. In fact, strange thing, most people feel a bit flattered. You know, they might not want doctrine pushing at them, but if you say, can I pray for you, nearly everyone will say yes.

And nearly everybody's got something that needs praying for. You know, all the old ladies have got ankles that need praying for, or knees, definitely, or wrist joints, you know, stomach things. Nearly everybody's got a back.

You know, you can, it's not hard to find those who are longing for prayer. It doesn't matter if they believe in your God or not. It doesn't matter.

You say, I'm going to pray in the name of Jesus, most people will say yes. And then when you invite him, you see, he touches them. They're surprised.

Nearly everyone we pray for is surprised. I've prayed with countless people who didn't believe, or did they? I don't know what they saw that they should say yes. I prayed with a couple of drug pushers in the streets once, and they tried to run away.

Drug pushers are always running away from me. And they tried to run away, but they couldn't because I trapped them by a sewer. And they'd seen Jesus change their friends, many of them.

And I said, can I pray for you? And they said, all the excuses about, you know, I smoke and I gamble and I'm a this and I'm a that. You know, they still thought you had to be good. They didn't understand mercy.

I said, it doesn't matter what you do. Can I pray for you in Jesus' name? He came because he loves you. Oh, don't expect them to understand that.

But anyway, they said yes. They hadn't got a great amount of choice. Wasn't letting them out of the sewer.

So, you know, immediately asked if I could pray for them. They put their heads down and sort of gritted their teeth, you know, and thought we were going to go through this boring thing. And I said, no, it's not like that at all.

You haven't got to say any words even. All you need to do is just put your hands out a little bit just if you're going to get something, you know, because every time we pray in Jesus' name, you always receive something, you know, because he's alive. So they looked a bit more hopeful.

And I asked the Lord to touch them. They both began to cry. Well, I couldn't do that.

I mean, I hadn't even said anything, you know. I just said, Lord Jesus, touch them. And they said, kum do, kum do, kum do.

I never guessed, I never guessed, I never guessed. He would touch me. I mean, they'd heard about him touch their friend.

They just never guessed he would touch them. They couldn't imagine it. Well, you can't before he does, can you? Try praying with people out there.

Don't ask them to church first. Try praying, give them a sample, the menu. Don't tell them to read the menu.

Don't give them the doctrine. Don't say, here's the feast. We do a lot of that, don't we? We parade the menu, all five courses, you know.

They simply can't digest that. Give them a morsel in the name of Jesus. Pray for them.

You'll see people get healed. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. Go with a couple of you, you'll see.

You'll be really surprised. After all, if you pray in the name of Jesus, they're not gonna be worse, are they? So you may as well start. Well, you haven't got to perform.

You haven't got to promise people they're going to get healed. You haven't got to make extravagant promises. You just say, I know the Lord wants to touch you.

He always does. I say, come, Jesus, you know, expect him to. But brothers and sisters, be ready and be busy about bringing men.

Be more busy, perhaps, than buying land and buildings and all the things which could distract us from the party. The next lot. The next lot said, I've just bought five yoke of oxen, so I can't come.

Well, you know what the oxen are, don't you? Because parables always have the same allusions. You know who the oxen are? They're your church workers. So here we have the church saying, I'm terribly sorry, I can't come to the party because I've got a minister's training weekend.

Pairs of them. We're building up our eldership, sorry. I don't want to say any more about that.

It's just for me. It may not be, you may not have to deal with this, but for me, this is terribly important, and I need to keep reading this, that I never get more busy with my church program than in seeking to minister to those that the programs are for. And the third one.

Now, this one you'd think was reasonable. This one doesn't even say, sorry, I can't come. This one says, I got married.

Now, this is reasonable, isn't it? And you may belong to a fellowship or a church that says you can have a year off after you get married. Hear that, David? Get a year off after you've got married. Well, this seems quite reasonable, doesn't it? Well, I think the problem with this man who says, I've just got married, so I can't come, is he's married the wrong wife.

And what's happened when the invitation is coming, she says, darling, what about me? We need time together. They're your friends. So he doesn't come, but you see, you shouldn't have married her because he'd already said yes, you see.

I'll come, I'll come. If he was going to marry this wife, he should have said to her, I've been invited to the greatest party. Will you be going? And I believe that many of us as Christians in the church, it could be that there are some things in the church, alliances, groups that we've got involved in, which could actually distract us, even if they seem to be good or beautiful, from the party.

And we're going to see that this party is desperately important to get to. I'll go on. The servants reported that these men made excuses.

And then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, go out quickly into the streets and the alleys of the house, bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. Sir, the servant said, what you ordered has been done, but there's still room. God wants his house full.

And God longs for the house to be full of people from this land. There are still room. There are many who've heard the gospel here, us amongst them, there's still room.

So let's see who gets in at the end. Then the master told his servant, go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in. One translation says, compel them so that my house will be full.

I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet. This is the most awful end of the story because it seems that there are some who don't even get a taste. Now, the awful thing is they said, I'm coming.

I'm coming. And this is a warning to the church or to any of us who've said, yes, Lord, I'll be there. I'll be there.

I'll be there. And for some reason, I'm not ready when the invitation comes the second time. It's ready.

Food's on the table. Quick, get there. Well, now I've got my church program.

No, I've got my church building. No, I've got my alliance. We miss it.

And it says you don't get another chance. The end one, we need to be at, otherwise we miss it. And if we have ever responded with our heart to the Lord Jesus, I think we actually are going to be there if it was a true response of our heart because you see, he wants his banquet to be full.

And I believe that if our heart ever was touched by the love of the Lord Jesus, in his mercy, his spirit's going to keep us alive so that we will hear this invitation. Who is it that comes? The poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. Jesus said, you know how to read the heavens, but you don't know how to read the signs of the times.

He said, watch. And I believe that one of the signs of the times these days is that in these last days, and we are somewhere in the last days, God is going to pour out his spirit, not upon the church, but upon all flesh. I've read that for years, and I'd never read it, you know? He said, I'm going to pour out my spirit upon all flesh.

I thought he meant I'm going to pour out my spirit on the church, he says, all flesh. And the time is now when you are going to see God pour out his spirit on the poor in this country, on the lame, the blind, and the maimed. And God is going to have his kingdom and his banquet full of them, for they know they're blind, they're lame, they're poor.

They know they need the Lord. And maybe some of us have said yes and don't get there, but it's a warning. There's still time, this parable.

It's not a judgment. There's still time to make sure that we go. And I tell you, if you want to go to this last banquet, you've got a very nice job to do.

Here's your job. You get to be a bus driver. You get to be a servant who goes out.

And he says, go out into the roads and country lanes and make them come in so that my house will be full. I don't know if you ever saw, it's a lovely Catholic film. It's called Viva Cristo Rey.

Some of you may have seen it. It's about a group of people in New Mexico that started feeding the poor, and they decided that they would feed the people on a rubbish dump at Christmas. And they estimated for a certain number of people and got some hams and stuff.

And they had this party for the poor, but I mean, hundreds more turned up than they had catered for. And you can actually see this happening on the film. But what amazed me was that they cut the ham thick.

My father married my mother because she could carve thin. And if I saw all these people, I'd carve thin, but they carved thick. I mean, obviously it wasn't going to go around, but it did, if you know that story.

And the wonderful thing about miracles, and the more we're involved with the poor, the more you're going to see feeding miracles, multiplication miracles. I mean, the good thing about feeding and working with the poor is that you never need to count money. I honestly tell you this.

It's nothing to do with taking collections. You'll always have enough, always. Don't start taking collections up.

Start by sharing everything you've got, how it works. It's terribly simple. It's very complicated if you do it the other way around.

It's very complicated if you add up and make collections and so on. It's very simple if you share everything you've got, because the promise is you'll always have enough to give to those in need, and that you'll have more to give to those in need, and that you'll have more. I mean, you just can't stop it.

That's how it works. It's a completely, completely different money principle. Kingdom of God, of course, is.

Most of us live by the other system still, but anyway, this is beside the point. Oh, lost myself. Sorry.

If we will feed the poor here, it will be enough, because what they found at the end of this film was that there was enough for everyone, and they'd only had a few hams to begin with, but at the end, they had more food left over than they'd started with, and they were able to feed 12 orphanages, and we've found this three years running in Hong Kong. What happens is that one Christmas day, a whole lot of people walked through our gate, and we had not invited them to lunch. You know, we were having our usual Christmas.

Maybe you do this at Christmas, your family party, our family meal, and you stuff yourself. I mean, you actually can't eat everything. You feel a bit sick.

Mother's slightly bad-tempered because she's been up all night cooking all this extra stuff, and everyone finishes up by fighting. So this is the normal feast in the family. Okay, well, we were gonna have one of those, and all these extra people walked in through the gate, and we said, excuse me, but who are you? And they said, it's Christmas Day.

We said, well, who are you? And they said, it's Christmas Day. Well, why have you come? They said, well, you're the Christians, aren't you? And we found out that on bank holidays, they go to Ocean Park, which is where it's a sort of fun fair, and on Christmas Day, they thought they ought to come to the Christians. So we said, okay, come for lunch, and we had 100 more people than we'd catered for.

But the next year, we thought we may as well make a feature of this. So we asked people if they would like to invite their friends, and we had 350. And the next year, we said, will you invite your friends? And we had 500.

And the next year, we had 1,000. And this year, we had 1,200. And we didn't have enough food any of these times.

We never had enough food. This year, they had terrific fun. I wasn't there, but there was what they called the turkey table.

We eat Chinese food, by the way, but some people had donated some turkeys. I think there were only three, and we'd got 1,200 people. And so they carved this turkey, as usual, quite thick, you know, which seems a dumb thing to do, doesn't it? Anyway, they carved this out quite nicely.

Then it got no more, and all the turkey table joined hands and prayed and said, Lord, please send enough for your people to be made full. They opened their eyes, and five more turkeys had appeared. And then the soft drinks ran out, and they closed their eyes, and they joined hands, and they said, please, Lord, send enough for everyone to have a drink.

And 12 crates of soft drinks had appeared. This went on the whole day. The whole day is such fun.

This guy. And you know what happened? We had busloads full of grannies. Now, half of the grannies had come to know Jesus because people had prayed with them in the streets.

And their arms had got better, and their eyes had got better. Some blind eyes had seen, some deaf ears had heard. You'd think they'd bring their friends next time, of course.

They'd hear there's a party. They all come. They can't wait.

Now, we don't have to ask them to an evangelistic rally, you see. The feast is the thing. And people say, do you have a gospel message? No, we don't.

The lunch is the gospel message. We don't need to punch them with one, two, three, four. They've had lunch.

They believe, you see. All the way through lunch and before lunch, people are praying with people, and legs are getting made straightened, and sores are being healed. Backs are being straightened.

Eyes are opening. Hearts are soothed. Pains are gone.

People are hugging each other. That's the feast. This is the work of the church.

And you get to be the bus driver. You get, and I get, to be the one who go out and say, there's a feast on. You wanna come? Now, it says make them come in.

It says compel them to come in. Can you compel people? Yeah, yeah. It says in the scripture, the love of Christ compels me.

That was what compelled me, and the Holy Spirit will do the compelling. It's such fun this way around. If you yourself have been healed, if you yourself have been filled full of God's love and mercy and forgiveness, you have enthusiasm when you say, you wanna come to a feast? I tell you, we had to send one bus back three times one year.

We'd counted on 80 grannies from one place. All they have is one bed each. They don't have rooms.

We had to send it back three times because three times as many grannies wanted to come. You think you could persuade them to go to church? No, you couldn't, but they heard there was lunch. Lunch at the place where your wrist got made healed.

In Jesus' name, they queue up. Can you compel them to come in? Yes, and you get to be the bus driver. That's your job.

You can go out into your city in New Zealand. You can go out into the highways and byways. Look for the ones who are poor and hurting.

Hear them. Ask the Lord to open your eyes and open your ears, and you will hear them. And with the love of Christ and the power of his Holy Spirit because of the cross of Jesus, they will be compelled.

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