

The Party; The Cost **March 19, 2019**

Today you get to meet three dodgers
 (not as in baseball, but as in dodge ball, the game we played as kids)
 and three Wanna-Be's
Depending on where you find yourself in today's stories will determine
 whether they're stories of great hope,
 or a sobering story of tragically missed opportunities.

Meet our Three dodgers in the Parable of the Great Banquet, Luke 14. (*In your bulletin*)

Jesus has been invited to dine in the home of a religious leader and his friends.
Jesus proceeded violated all social etiquette
 by criticizing the *guests* for vying for the seats of honor
and then turning and criticizing the *host* for only inviting well-to-do people
 instead of the crippled, lame and blind,
suggesting that if he did that he would be rewarded at the resurrection of the righteous.

Then one of the guests, I assume feeling the tension in the room
 and wanting to say something positive to get the conversation back on course,
 hears Jesus refer to the resurrection of the righteous and blurts out . . .

Luke 14:16-23

“Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

This seems like a non-sequitur to us, but not to the other guests.
They knew that the resurrection of the righteous
 would be accompanied by a great feast.

Isaiah 25:6

**The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;
A banquet of choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine.**

But Jesus isn't going to let them off the hook,
 not bothered at all by the social discomfort he's creating.
He picks up the topic that has been tossed to him
 and proceeds with one of his famous parables.

“A certain man was preparing a great banquet
[and yes, they are all now thinking about God’s banquet]
and invited many guests.
At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited,
‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

“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.’

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

“Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

Have you ever heard someone say, Excuses, Excuses, Excuses!
I think it applies here!

The religious elite at the table are shuffling on their pillows.
[remember, they reclined at table; didn’t sit on chairs]
“Is he suggesting that WE might make not be at the resurrection feast of the righteous?

Yes! hey are the ones who received the invitation,
They were the first tier of invitees.
And they’re coming up with excuses to dodge the invitation,
because they love their own lives more than being at table with the host.
OUCH!

So, Dodger #1 said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it.
Please excuse me.’

Really? When was the last time you bought a new piece of real estate
and didn’t look at it *before* you bought it?
Furthermore, now that he owned it,
couldn’t he go and look at the ground any time.
Surely, he didn’t have to go see the plot of land *that* evening.

The truth was, his new acquisition was much more captivating to him
than the party with the host,
so, he manufactured an excuse to ease his conscience
and hopefully stay in the good graces of the host.

How often does Jesus say to us, I'm over here today.

This is where the river of life is flowing.

Come and dine with me.

We don't want to offend him, so we say, thanks,

but all these things that I own are demanding my attention right now.

As soon as I take care of . . . I'll be sure to join you.

As with this man, the short-lived joy of our possessions

can rob of the eternal joy of the feast with Jesus.

Dodger #2: 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out.
Please excuse me.'

Again, when was the last time you purchased a large capital investment

needed for your livelihood, like a car or truck,

without test driving it first?

This invitee so absorbed with their work, developing their career

that it overshadowed the value of the invitation they have received.

"My job/career demands all my attention right now,

but as soon as I get over this hump, I'll be there, Jesus!

My work is NO exception!

I'm too busy writing sermons, Jesus.

As soon as I get done, I'll join you at table.

Dodger #3 has the best excuse! LOL 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

Read into that what you want.

But at its heart it says, my relationships are more important than being with Jesus.

Wow. Not much has changed.

Jesus just nailed the three biggest reasons we don't come to his banquet.

- Our possessions
- Our work
- Our relationships

These dodgers, like us, didn't *have* an excuse; they made an excuse.

Here's a statistic for worth knowing.

99% of all people who fail are people who have a habit of making excuses.

What's your excuse for not attending the Jesus party?

"My work just demands too much of me right now."

"Once I graduate from college, I'll make decisions about faith."

"I have so many home repairs that need my attention right now."

"My kids take up ALL my time."

"I've got to focus on my family right now."

"Maybe when things slow down . . ."

"I'm too young."

"I'm too old to change my whole life now."

"I've done too many wrong things, God couldn't take me, God wouldn't have me."

So what happens next in the parable?

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.'

What does Jesus do with the Dodgers?

Here's the sobering part.

He doesn't argue or plead.

He just moves on without them.

Their moment of opportunity passed.

The invitation would not forthcoming again.

This really spoke to me.

How much time to I spend going after people that just aren't interested?

Why do I spend my time going trying to get people to come to church
who make excuses?

Why do I spend all my time praying for people who have turned down the invitation?

All that time and energy spent on the dodgers

is time and energy NOT being spent seeking out people
who would *love* to come to the Jesus party.

We need to go find lost people who want to be found.

The master lets the first tier go.

So the master tells his servant to do what would have been social suicide -- He extends invitations to the **poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.**

I am so glad that Jesus doesn't have a merit-based invitation plan.

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

THAT sounds like Jesus.

“‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.

“Then the master told his servant,

‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in,
so that my house will be full.

I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

If the guest were uncomfortable before, now their seething.

Jesus lets the respectable, well-off people make excuses and walk away,
but he *compelled* the marginalized to come,
those who might think they were unwanted or unworthy.

Now, I love to get up here and talk about the party.

Come-on people, let's go!

But there is another side to the invitation you must understand,
so let me introduce you to the . .

Three Wanna-Be's of Luke 9:57-62

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, [Jesus]

“I will follow you wherever you go.”

Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests,
but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead,
but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Still another said,

“I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”
Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back
is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

These people Wanna-Be’s a follower of Jesus and go to the party! Yes!
Until . . .

They are confronted with the COST.

In fact, **Wanna-Be #1** is filled with zeal and enthusiasm.

Crowds were following Jesus.

Hundreds were being healed.

“Yes, this is just what I’ve been looking for! A purposeful life!

“I will follow You anywhere, Jesus!”

Jesus wasn’t a dishonest recruiter.

Sensing the man was signing up for what he could get out of this, Jesus says,

If you’re looking for a life of personal advancement or comfort,

thinking:

He’ll solve my problems

Help me be more successful in life.

Jesus says, If you’re just in this for yourself, I’m not your man.

Wanna-Be #2 thought that following Jesus was important,

but not *more* important than family obligations.

In the culture of his day, saying “Permit me first to go and bury my father”

didn’t mean that his father had literally died,

It meant he desired or felt obligated to stay with his father as long as he was alive.

He had a divided loyalty.

Jesus is saying, once you’ve decided that NO relationship in your life

is more important than your loyalty to me,

then you’re ready to **proclaim the kingdom of God**.

Wanna-Be #3 is having a hard time breaking with his past.

This Wanna-Be’s had a divided heart.

They couldn’t make a clean break with competing loyalties and attachments.

Jesus says, if you can't break with the past, this isn't going to work.

Watching Jesus basically sending wanna-be's away, really spoke to me.

I see a crowd; I get excited and want to *keep* them.

When Jesus sees a crowd, he gets skeptical and send many away.

I want you to follow Jesus SO MUCH, I'll tell you about the party,

Jesus wants you to understand the cost.

How many of you when you really started following Jesus with your whole heart,

found that your life got easier?

NOT.

Jesus wants you to know this right up front,

so that when it gets difficult, and it will, you won't walk away.

We saw the video.

Peter wanted to anticipate only the good, victory side of Jesus.

"Don't talk about dying!"

Get behind me Satan! You're thinking only about this world.

If you want to follow me, take up your CROSS!

The party Jesus is hosting is the greatest party going.

But it will cost you everything.

But if you accept the invitation, and give EVERYTHING,

in the end, it will the cost will seem to small a price to pay.

Now the cost may not be paid in one heroic gesture.

Often it like taking your **\$1,000 bill** and giving it to Jesus.

and he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 worth of quarters.

We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there.

Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles instead of saying, "Get lost."

Being faithful to this small community of faith.

Absorbing the hostility of someone at home or work.

Taking up your cross is often simple acts of self-sacrifice for Jesus' sake,

25 cents at a time.

We have a PARTY and we have a COST.

Will you be one of the Dodgers or the Wanna-Be's?

Here's your invitation: **Revelation 19:6-9**

Praise the Lord!

For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

Let us be glad and rejoice,

and let us give honor to him.

For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb,
and his bride has prepared herself.

She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear . . .”

“Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.”



Here's your cost. **Matthew 16:24**

“If anyone would come after me,

let him deny himself and take up his cross
and follow me.”



BENEDICTION

I leave you today with a question that Jesus posed to his disciples.

Jesus' teachings were getting just too controversial for the Dodgers and Wanna-Be's,
and so we read in John 6:66-69:

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

Jesus asked the Twelve “You do not want to leave too, do you?”

May you say with Peter . . .

“Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”