

HIS INVITATION TO A FELLOWSHIP

THE PARABLES OF THE WEDDING FEAST AND THE GREAT SUPPER

David Baker – Toowoomba word ministry – 29 May 2022

[Slightly edited transcription]

Introduction

Good morning. What I would like to do today is just pick up from where I was a couple of weeks ago on the parable of the great supper.

We will just refresh ourselves a little bit on the context of the parable, which is the feast in the ruler's house.

As I have been saying, it is quite remarkable just how much Jesus had to say about the *agape* meal in the Gospels and through the course of His ministry, once our eyes are open to see this principle.

Of course, this was His main point in John Chapter 6, in the discussion after He fed the five thousand. The summary point that He made was the fact that the flesh profits nothing. It is the Spirit who gives life. 'The words that I speak to you are Spirit and life.'

He was inviting the crowd to join Him in a fellowship in the word as He proclaimed the word of the Father to them. And it was in response to that word that Peter then confessed, as we have been singing today, 'Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'

Preparation for the years ahead –heeding His call to 'Come!', now

I will just re-say as I begin, we are in a season where the Lord is inviting us to come.

Our preparation for the years ahead is not knowing what will happen.

Our preparation for the years ahead is in responding to the call of the Lord now, to come and join the fellowship where we are receiving provision, today.

We are not receiving the provision that we need in the years ahead now. But we are joining the fellowship that is the context where we will continue to receive the provision that we need in every season.

So that is our preparation for the years ahead. If we are desirous of being ready for His coming, then we respond to His invitation to come.

The Spirit and the bride say 'Come!' –restoration of the fellowship of the *agape* meal

This has certainly been my key-note verse over the last season.

Rev 22:17. 'And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.'

The Spirit is bidding us to come today.

'He who has an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.'

Jesus Christ Himself is addressing us by the Spirit, and, as He did with Ephesus, He is saying, 'Repent and return to your first works. Having fallen from first love, repent and return to the first works.'

The 'first works', as we observe in the early church, was their continual devotion to the apostles' doctrine, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

So it is a very simple proposition. The Lord is wanting to restore the fellowship of the *agape* meal.

As we respond to what Christ is saying, by the Spirit, and we join this fellowship, we are then able to testify concerning the fellowship and invite others to come.

When the Father takes His seat, we join that initiative where the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed in all nations. It is the Spirit and the bride who are bidding every person in the world to come and escape the judgement of God upon the world and join the fellowship of the tree of life in the middle of the new Jerusalem.

Then those who are responding to that invitation to come are also turning around and inviting others to come.

This is a most remarkable thing, as the Lord harvests right to the ends of the earth, particularly in the end of the age.

So we are responding to His call to come today. We are in a season where the Lord is calling us.

Addressing our uncleanness and impediments to fellowship

And we are also in a season where the Lord is addressing our uncleanness, because He wants to remove every impediment in our lives to us joining this fellowship and participating according to the sanctification of our name and who we are as a son of God.

So the Lord is interested in our impediments, or the things that are restricting us and restricting our capacity for fellowship.

As Paul said to the Corinthians, 'You are not restricted by us'. The Corinthians weren't restricted by Paul and those who were proclaiming the word to them. He said, 'You are restricted in your own affections.'

And so the Lord is wanting to highlight for us where are the points of restriction or the impediments.

Our excuses for our non-participation

When we are looking at the parable of the great supper, Jesus was identifying certain impediments which easily become excuses for us concerning our participation. That is where I am going this morning. We will probably just look at the first one.

But the excuses are, 'I have purchased a piece of land so I need to go and see it'. We will discuss what that means.

The second one is, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen and I need to go and test them'. That is an interesting one.

The third one is, and Richie Kaa has been focusing on this one, 'I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come'. That is just addressing the culture of our marriage covenants.

We will just re-orientate ourselves a little bit here, and I may make a few points on the way through. This is the feast in the ruler's house.

The parable of the wedding feast –Jesus addressing sacramentalism and focusing on the *agape* meal

Luke 14:1. 'Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.'

As I said a couple of weeks ago, I am sure you could cut the tension in the air with a knife. This was a very interesting meal. No one enjoys a meal when you know there are multiple agendas happening. There were certainly multiple agendas at this meal, and they were all watching Him closely.

Vs2. 'And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy.'

This is an interesting condition in terms of the swelling of tissue, which is symptomatic of often very severe underlying health issues, which are fatal if not addressed. So here was a man with a condition which was symptomatic of very severe underlying health issues which would be fatal for him if not addressed.

Vs3. 'And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees...'

The Pharisees had brought all of their lawyers to the table, so that was not going to help the overall feel of the meal, was it?

'... saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"'

He was wanting to engage them in a discussion here about the meaning and substance of the Sabbath.

You notice this happened all the way through Jesus' ministry, where He was confronting the sacramentalism among the Jewish people concerning the Sabbath day. They had constructed a whole range of rules around the Sabbath, making it a sacrament and completely losing its meaning and purpose.

So Jesus was saying, 'What is the substance of the Sabbath? And is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' His goal was simply to engage them in a fellowship, in a discussion.

Vs4. 'But they kept silent.'

So, He pressed on to demonstrate the substance of the Sabbath by healing the man. What He was doing was much more than addressing the

Sabbath. He was identifying what is the central focus, in many ways, of the *agape* meal.

Remember that this was a meal in the house of a ruler, and He was saying, 'Central to this fellowship will be restoration and healing'. So what better context to call the man forward and heal him.

The *agape* meal –restoration and healing of the poor, the blind, the lame, and the maimed

He healed him to demonstrate this point, that the *agape* meal is the context for the ministry of restoration and healing.

As I have been saying, the Lord is inviting to His *agape* meal, the poor, those who are poor in spirit, recognising that they are not self-sufficient, who do not have the resource of wisdom and understanding in themselves. They are coming, recognising that they are completely dependent upon the Lord. So He is inviting the poor.

And He is inviting the blind, because we are confessing that we cannot see unless we are receiving illumination in this fellowship.

And He is inviting the lame, because we are all recognising that, in terms of our capacity to participate in fellowship, we are lame. We have not exercised ourselves as we should. But there is healing for the lame!

And then there are also those who are maimed, those missing a limb because of injury, whether it be their fault or someone else's fault.

The *agape* meal is the context for healing, restoration and wholeness. So the major focus is healing. And then it goes beyond that to the multiplication of life by offering, which of course is eternal.

But a big part of our *agape* meal at this time is healing.

Ministering grace and healing to another

It is our healing as we respond and participate, but also we are learning how to minister to one another so that we are ministering grace and healing to another.

Our tongue is a wholesome, or a curative, or a healing tongue. This is a big part of 'the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations'.

Prov 15:4. 'A wholesome [or curative] tongue is a tree of life.'

So, He is firstly saying that this is the context for healing.

Choosing the 'best' seats at the feast –the seat of our choosing

Luk 14:7-8. 'So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him."'

Now, you could substitute there 'best place' with 'preferred place', the place of your own choosing, because your preferred place may not be at the head of the table, the most prominent seat at the table.

You might prefer to sit in the corner of the room. That is your place of choice, and it is equally a reproach upon the Father, because He is inviting you to sit at the table.

Clothed in the wrong garment –the sin of presumption –clothed in our own projection

This was the same issue at the wedding feast for the man who was not clothed in a wedding garment.

When He was saying, 'When you are invited to an *agape* meal', He was addressing the sin of presumption; sitting in a place that is not your place, or the presumption of sitting at the table not clothed in a wedding garment.

No one sits there in their underwear. The point is that we clothe ourselves in our own projection concerning who we want to be or how we want to be received by others.

Often, our projection is that we are 'under' everybody and we are not good enough or not accepted. That is equally a projection that we have created for ourselves.

Often, we hold onto our lamenesses because they are part of our projection and it has become an identity-verifying mechanism for us, which is why Jesus always says to every person, 'What do you want Me to do for you? Do you want to be healed? Because if I heal you, you will be accountable for your participation. You won't be able to use this as an excuse anymore.'

There are all kinds of excuses we may have, but the point is that we need to sit in our place and we need to be clothed with a wedding garment.

The fundamental requirement for being clothed with a wedding garment, which is our priestly garment, is dealing with uncleanness. Because you can't wear a wedding garment, or a white robe, if you are not receiving the Lord's initiative towards you that is addressing and cleaning your culture.

So we need to be clothed with a wedding garment, which is our priestly robe, and we also need to be sitting in the right place.

No fear of God

When you are looking at this parable here, it is addressing the sin of presumption, which is symptomatic of no fear of God.

For the man sitting in the wrong place or the man with no wedding garment, both parables are talking about the sin of presumption, but that is symptomatic of no fear of God.

We receive a fear of God when we receive the word and turn in response to it, to meet Christ eye to eye.

His eyes are like a flame of fire, and they are firstly revealing His wrath. That is what we see in His eyes. It is His wrath upon our sin and uncleanness.

But, at the same time, His eyes are also revealing His love and mercy toward us as He is offering to us a participation.

A need to understand the depths and the heights

So we are responding to His invitation to come and take the lowest place, because we recognise the depths of our human heart, confessing, like Jacob, 'I am not worthy of the least of Your mercies'.

But as we confess that, and that is the lowest place because we understand the depths, the Father then is also faithful to say to us, 'Friend, come up and sit higher, because I also have a seat of honour for you, which is the seat that belongs to you as a son of God.'

When this parable is talking about the lowest place, and then, 'Friend, come up higher', it is just talking about understanding the depths and the heights. And we understand these two things together.

The key point is that we allow the Father to seat us where we need to be seated. When you are invited, allow the Father to define where you sit.

Vs12. 'Then He also said to him who invited Him,'

Jesus was not missing anyone here; He was talking to everybody at the table. He healed the man with dropsy. Then He talked to everyone who had been invited.

Jesus' instruction on hosting a feast

Then He took the opportunity, while He was 'on a roll', to talk to the man who had put on the feast. I am not sure what the man's motivation was for the feast but, anyway, Jesus talked to him about when you host a meal.

'Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbours, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid.'

I am just picking up a few things on the way through here.

The nature of a worthy house

Jesus said, 'When you give a dinner or a supper'. He did not say, 'If you', but 'When', because the Lord is asking all of us to not only respond to His invitation to come and eat at His table, but to also be embracing a culture of hospitality so that we are hosting *agape* meals. I am talking very practically. So it is 'when you'.

It is interesting to me, and I really enjoy considering the nature of the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Their house is sort of given to us in the Scriptures as the example of a worthy house. I would have thought that if Jesus was giving us an example of a worthy house He would pick Mum and Dad and two kids, or something.

Mary, Martha and Lazarus as three siblings, weren't quite your typical house. We believe that Martha's husband Simon had passed away. So you have this house of three siblings, but I think that between the three of them, what it is doing is revealing a worthy house.

In the week of Christ's crucifixion, He was back and forth from their house. In that week, which was the most significant week in His ministry, it is amazing to me that He kept ducking out to

Bethany to be refreshed in this household. Between the three siblings, I think they are revealing to us what is the nature of a worthy house.

-devotion to the word

Firstly, in Mary, it was a devotion to the word; just sitting at the Lord's feet listening to His word and making that our first priority. Mary had chosen the 'good part', to prioritise the fellowship of the word.

-a culture of hospitality and service

But then you have Martha, who was embodying, or exemplifying, a culture of hospitality and service.

We know that Jesus needed to address her in terms of her anxiety. And her hospitality, and hosting, and serving could not be an identity verifying mechanism for her, with her feeling good if she put on the ideal party. So we know that Jesus had to address that in her but, nonetheless, that was part of who Martha was.

Six days before Jesus' crucifixion, when Mary was anointing the feet of Jesus as He reclined at the table, anointing Him for His burial, the Scripture says, 'and Martha was serving'. That is who Martha was. That was her name. She was exemplifying for us an implicit part of a worthy house, which is a culture of service and hospitality.

-the fruit of resurrection life

Of course, then you have Lazarus, who was exemplifying in himself the fruit of resurrection life.

That is what you will see in a worthy house. You will see a devotion to the word, a commitment to hospitality, and you will see the fruit of resurrection life.

So it was an interesting household, picking up those three points in relation to those three siblings.

Show no partiality in our hospitality

Part of a worthy house is this culture of hospitality.

But Jesus said, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or neighbours'. It is not a social occasion.

He is not saying that you can't invite friends or family members or neighbours. Practically, in terms of our fellowship here, hopefully we are all reasonably close friends. So, if we completely

exclude friends, then we are a bit 'thin on the ground'.

What He is saying, though, is that the basis of the occasion is not the history of friendship. We are meeting with our friends, but it is on a completely different foundation.

And we are meeting with our family because we are to have *agape* fellowship with our family members, but we are not meeting on the basis of our familial connection. We are meeting on a different basis.

Equally, we are inviting neighbours, but there is no trading mechanism. That is what Jesus is saying to us.

When He said, 'When you are invited to a meal', He was addressing the sin of presumption. But when He said, 'When you host a meal', He was addressing the sin of partiality. Do not be partial.

I am sure that, in the years ahead, the Lord will stretch us in terms of our comfort zone in hosting people in our house whom we might not ordinarily choose to host. There is going to be a great multitude coming into the kingdom of God, so we are learning a culture now in preparation for the days ahead.

Even practically on a Sunday morning, there will be certain people that you feel most comfortable talking to. It is not a bad thing to just mix that up a bit. Hopefully, we are pretty comfortable with everyone, but you can hear what I am saying. We are to be willing to meet and fellowship with anyone, as long as it is on this foundation.

Participating in a worthy manner

Vs13. 'But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.'

So we are recognising that this is us. We are also recognising that this is who we are inviting to fellowship with us. The key point is that we are laying down our life for one another.

Vs14. 'And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.'

Jesus explained that a son of God who participates in the fellowship of an *agape* meal in a worthy manner, not looking to derive any earthly benefit in this lifetime, so there is no trading mechanism but an expression of laying down life,

will be repaid in the resurrection. They will be raised at the last day.

Connecting fellowship of the *agape* meal with the resurrection

That was a big part of what Jesus was saying in John Chapter 6. He was connecting the fellowship of the *agape* meal with the resurrection at the last day.

He said, 'Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day'. Joh 6:54.

Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God

Now this is where I am going, and this is where I finished a couple of weeks ago. I just love the human dynamics of this. You have this meal where everybody is on their absolute best behaviour, very conservative, very tense – and then this guy was hearing what Jesus was saying, and before he had enough time to think about it, he just blurted something out.

Now, I don't know if he regretted it afterwards or not, but I am going to view this in the most positive sense, that he was illuminated and could not help but say something!

Vs15. 'Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God' – and, never, was a truer word spoken!

Have we, and are we, receiving this same illumination? Is this your faith?

The true sayings of God

–blessed are those called to the marriage supper of the Lamb

The messenger who was revealing to John the judgement of Babylon, and particularly in the end of the age, said:

Rev 19:9. 'Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"

'Blessed!' This is the same statement.

'And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God?'

If you were to just grab the essence of what the Lord is saying, and what is fundamentally true and what you can build your life on, this is the true saying of God: 'Blessed are those who are called to

the marriage supper of the Lamb'. An amazing statement!

–blessed is he who keeps the words of the book

This next verse is in relation to revealing the nature of the new Jerusalem, which has been coming down out of heaven, from God, since the Day of Pentecost.

Rev 22:6-7. 'Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true". And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book".'

What the book of Revelation is revealing to us is a fellowship, and we are being invited to come and join that fellowship. And so we are to keep the words of the prophecy of the book by participating in the fellowship that is being revealed to us.

–blessed are those who do His commandments

Vs14. 'Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.'

The parable of the great supper

–an invitation from the Father by His Servant, the Son

It is really important to start here, because this is the context of the parable of the great supper – it is set against the backdrop of this 'Blessed are those who eat bread in the kingdom of God'.

Jesus was responding to the man who said this by giving us the parable of the great supper. What He was effectively saying is, 'What you have said is *absolutely* true, but unfortunately many will not recognise this and there will be many who refuse the invitation or will make excuses on why they cannot come.'

Talking to the man who said, 'Blessed are those who eat bread in the kingdom of God, Jesus said:

Luk 14:16. 'Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many".'

So, 'Okay, what you have said is true. Let's pick it up now and apply it to the whole of the church age'.

Vs17. ‘...and sent his servant [singular] at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’”

We have talked about the parable of the wedding feast, where the king is the Father, the son is Christ, and the bride is the church.

Now we have a different parable – the parable of the great supper – but the ‘certain man’ who is inviting many is still the Father, and the servant (singular) is Christ.

In the wedding feast, you have the Father sending *servants* (all of the messengers) to invite people to come. But Jesus here is saying, ‘Alright, the Father is putting on the feast, I myself, as *the* Servant of the Father, am also, personally, inviting every person to come.

This is Jesus saying, ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock’. So, it is not just the messengers; it is Christ Himself.

Vs17. “ ‘...Come, for all things are now ready.’

All with one accord began to make excuses

Vs18. “But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’

It is interesting that it is ‘all with one accord’. Obviously, we are only talking about three men here and so these are representative excuses.

‘All with one accord’ is saying, and we need to recognise this, that there is a natural propensity in our heart, because of the other law, to reject the invitation.

The word, when it comes with prevenient grace, is cutting us free from that natural propensity, and is cutting us free from every other thing that is imposing itself upon us to preclude us, so that we can genuinely choose.

‘I cannot come; I have bought some land’

So, let’s just focus on this first excuse: ‘I have bought a piece of ground...’

This man had, evidently, made a choice to buy a piece of land that did not previously ‘belong’ to him.

His decision may have been motivated by his own desire for a certain lifestyle, to increase his

generative capacity, or even to help someone else who had fallen upon hard times. I will explain this in a moment.

Acting on our own initiative –led into bondage

Regardless of the motive, it was the expression of his own initiative. That is point one. ‘I have bought a piece of ground’.

And then he said, ‘And I must go and see it’. We observe that the expression of the man’s freedom of initiative to purchase this land led him into bondage. That is, the ownership of this land immediately imposed certain obligations upon him.

Now, we don’t know whether these obligations were real or perceived, but I am inclined to assume that they were real. However, whether they were real or perceived, what we do know is that the bondage was real: ‘I must go and see it’.

He probably viewed this course of action as being a legitimate expression of accountable stewardship. Let’s just put some religious overtones on this now.

Not recognising the importance of the invitation or the implications of refusal

Believing in the veracity of his own decisions and the expression of his own stewardship, the man felt fully justified in refusing the invitation that he had received from the servant – remembering that the servant is Christ.

This shows that he did not recognise the importance of the invitation to the *agape* meal. This is why the context of the parable is important, which is ‘Blessed is he who eats bread in the kingdom of God’.

So, this man did not recognise the importance of it, nor did he appreciate the implications of rejecting this invitation; because the parable finishes, and this is quite sobering, with the point that nobody who is invited and refuses ‘will taste My supper’.

And so there are eternal implications to this invitation, whether we are receiving it or not, as it is extended to us.

And of course, the Lord is not, in a wholesale way, extending this invitation to the world; but He is certainly inviting us to come so that we are able to join the Spirit and invite those in the world to come.

The man believed that he had legitimate grounds for being excused from the supper. He expected that the servant would readily grant his request.

It is very interesting, just the human dynamic in all of this. He wasn't assuming that this was a big problem. He was just viewing this like being invited to a birthday party! 'I am sorry but I am busy. Maybe next time.'

He expected that the servant would readily grant his request. This presumption demonstrated his pride.

No special cases or extenuating circumstances

In this regard, there are no special cases. Nobody, anywhere, is a special case.

There are no extenuating circumstances.

'Extenuating circumstances' just means justifiable reasons for an excuse. And there are no extenuating circumstances when it comes to responding to Christ's invitation to the *agape*. That is a foundational point.

'These are the true sayings of God.' There are no special cases, there are no extenuating circumstances. So, if I am viewing myself as a special case with unique circumstances or situations, whatever they may be, it is certainly not precluding me from responding to this invitation.

The allocation of the promised land to the children of Israel, as their inheritance

Now, let's talk about the meaning of 'the ground', or the land.

Jesus was making a big point here. He wasn't just saying that you happened to buy a block down the end of the road.

Before the Israelites went into the promised land, the Lord commanded Moses to say to the people, 'When you come into the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance, the land of Canaan to its boundaries.'

The promised land is the type of our inheritance in the body of Christ in the heavenly places, but there is a complete harmony between heaven and earth. So we are saying, what are you doing as a son of God and a member of the body of Christ in this world. This *does* matter!

Having identified the overall boundaries of the land, he appointed Joshua and Eleazar as the men

who would divide the land among the tribes of Israel. He was giving the land to the whole nation as an inheritance, but then it was divided, as we know, among all of the tribes.

Each tribe was to receive a unique portion of the land as their inheritance. Furthermore, the Lord appointed a leader from each tribe who would divide the tribe's inheritance among the families who belonged to the tribe. And so every family was receiving a portion of land, and that land was their inheritance.

The lines have fallen in pleasant places –'You support my lot'

Like, the psalmist, every family was to confess,

Psa 16:5. 'O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup. You maintain *my lot*.'

That is talking about the pebble that was put in the corner of the allotment. We have big square pegs now that a surveyor puts in the ground to define the corners, or boundaries.

Scripturally here, it is talking about the pebble, or the rock, that was put in the corner. Those four rocks, wherever they happened to be for you, defined your boundaries.

And we are to confess that 'the lines [or those boundaries based on the corner peg, or the stone] have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.' Vs6.

For the nation of Israel, that piece of land was the talent that the Lord gave to them according to their ability. And so the land was divided according to the ability of the families to steward the land.

I am sure that a big family was able to cultivate a bigger piece of land. Some were given land down in the fertile plain, next to a river; that is like they received five talents. But the Lord would be expecting a certain kind of return from that.

Then Uncle Joe got his allotment up on the side of a cliff. Uncle Joe might be looking at his portion and needing to confess that 'the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places'. And that might be one talent.

Wisdom to steward the inheritance

Regardless of what they received, every person then needed wisdom from the Lord to know how to steward that talent, or that inheritance, to produce multiplication.

If you received a nice fertile block of dirt down in the valley, then you may have been able to grow wheat, or something. If you inherited the hillside, you would have to grow something appropriate, maybe some grapes. Or maybe it was all rock, and so you had to mine it for copper, or whatever the case may be.

So, you have to know how to steward the inheritance the Lord has given to you. It is, firstly, where the lines are; and then how to steward it.

Reaping to our boundaries but not exceeding them

What we do know is that, regardless of what was received, the Lord expected them to work hard and to sow and reap; to work with what the Lord had given to them and fill it out to the boundaries – so, not leaving it to lie fallow. But, at the same time, not going beyond the lines of their sanctification.

The Lord said to them, ‘*You work hard, you sow and reap – and I will bring the rain, the early rain and the latter rain. The early rain will cause your seed that you have sown to germinate. That is how I will bless the labour, or the work, of your hands.*’

‘*And I will also bring the latter rain, which will bring your crop to maturity. But if you have not put anything into the ground (or, as we have heard, if you haven’t sown to yourself in righteousness, or you haven’t applied yourself to your sanctification as a son of God) then that rain will just bring forth thorns and thistles for you, because the rain is coming, regardless.*’

And so the seed does need to be in the ground.

They were accountable to steward what they had been given; to fill it out but to not go beyond.

All offering is a thanksgiving

And then when it brought forth a harvest, they would bring their offerings to the doorway of the tabernacle, and later to the temple, as an expression of thanksgiving for the blessing that they had received from the Lord.

They were *not* bringing their offerings as a trading mechanism so that the Lord would bless them in the seasons ahead.

That is a very important point concerning offering; that *all* offering is a thanksgiving, and that we are returning to the Lord what He has already given to us.

And so they would bring their offerings as a thanksgiving. Then, of course, they would also eat from the produce of the field, which was totally legitimate.

They were to eat from the fruit that had been produced. If they had been mining copper, then they would need to trade that with someone who had grown some wheat. This was the way in which their economy developed.

At the same time, they were also investing into the seasons to come, because they had to sow for future seasons.

And so there was a stewardship.

Woe to those who join field to field –the sanctification of every house

The Lord was very committed to the inheritance that He had given to every person. And so he said to them, ‘Do not join your house to someone else’s house by adding field to field.’

So, ‘Don’t start going into business partnerships, and so on, because you have compatible skill sets and you think that if you work together you will be able to generate more produce. That is not what I am asking you to do. I am asking you to live within the lines of *your* sanctification.’

Isa 5:8. ‘Woe to those who join house to house; they add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land.’

Of course, this has particular application for business, but it is not limited to business.

But particularly in relation to businesses, a business person needs to know what is ‘the field’ that the Lord has given to them; because if their house is joined to another house, and their field is joined to another person’s field, even if that person happens to be in the promised land, then they will be losing the sanctification of their own household.

They will be losing the capacity to steward their own field and make all the necessary decisions concerning offering, and what they are to eat, and what they are to reinvest in the business in sowing for the next season.

This all belongs to the accountability of the person who has received the field.

And if a person loses the sanctification of their house, then they ultimately lose the capacity for

fellowship, because fellowship is house-to-house and fellowship requires the sanctification of every house.

Part of an economy that is sustaining the body of Christ

So, these are big points. And we are in a season where the Lord is just drawing our attention to some of these things and saying, 'Are you clear on the field that you have received from the Lord? What is your stewardship as a son of God in this world, and as a member of the body of Christ? And what are you producing?'

The Lord is inviting every person to be part of an economy that is sustaining the body of Christ in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, as well.

When we look at the economy of offering among the early church in Jerusalem, that was the firstfruits of the economy of offering that will sustain the body of Christ as we approach, and are then into, the time of the end.

And so these principles are very important to us, and the Lord is absolutely committed to the sanctification of your field. And so we are not just talking to businessmen here; I am talking to everybody.

The Jubilee principle

The Lord is committed to the sanctification of your field, as He was for the nation of Israel; so much so, that He put in place the Jubilee principle so that, every fifty years, the land would revert to the family who originally received it.

Going back to Uncle Joe; he had been a bit lazy and not produced any crops and so became poor. He could not feed himself and needed to sell his field.

There is an interesting way of valuing such sales, based on how much time remained till the Jubilee; because at that time, the land went back to Uncle Joe's family.

If there were forty years to the Jubilee, then the buyer would have forty years' use out of that land – and so they may have had to pay \$400,000, whatever the rate was; but if there were only ten years, then they would only pay \$100,000.

But the point is that after fifty years it would revert, because the Lord was not going to visit the sin of Uncle Joe down to the third and fourth generation.

Now, there would be implications for those generations, and probably his son would 'wear' some of them, and possibly his grandson.

But the Lord put the Jubilee principle in place to say that 'it is not going to continue; it will revert to the sanctification of what I have given.'

This is a very interesting principle; the year of Jubilee.

Covetousness

–seeking what the Lord has not given to us

This is all important for this parable, because the man in the parable of the great supper had evidently bought a piece of land that did not 'belong' to him.

Remember, we are looking at this from a scriptural perspective, from the perspective of the economy that the Lord had established in the nation of Israel. So there was this Jubilee principle but whether they honoured it or not is a completely different matter. But, in the eyes of the Lord, He wanted the inheritance to stay in the family to whom He had given it.

And so this man, in the parable, had bought a piece of land which was not his inheritance. This is what I am saying.

Why did he buy the piece of land? Well, we don't know. Maybe he was just helping out a poor neighbour.

In one sense, there is nothing wrong with that. But that did not mean that he had to go and see it. Why did he have to go and see it?

There was something else driving this? There was a covetous mechanism in this man who had picked up this block of land, and he had X amount of time until the Jubilee and wanted to make the most of it. So he would go and see it and strategise and plan how he would use this block of dirt. And so he cannot come! He cannot accept the invitation!

Even if he had bought this land to help someone who had become poor, it would only belong to him temporarily. This was the Jubilee principle; they could not sell the land permanently.

The land had not been given to him by the Lord. His desire to make the most of the purchase, while he had the opportunity, was nothing more than the expression of covetousness.

Where I am going is this – and this draws our attention to a big principle.

A legitimate stewardship will not impede our participation

–abiding in the lines of our sanctification

The legitimate stewardship that belongs to a son of God in this world will not impede that person's capacity for participation in the fellowship of the *agape* meal.

Would you agree that these are the true sayings of God?

It would be a ludicrous notion to assume that what God is giving to a person as their inheritance would be in conflict with His invitation for that person to fully participate in the *agape* meal. How could that possibly be the will of God?

And so we need to be wise here, and recognise that, if our perceived responsibility, or our stewardship, in the world has become an impediment to our participation in the *agape* meal, then that is a sure-fire way of knowing that you have gone beyond the limits of your sanctification.

And that is a foundational statement. I cannot see any situation where that does not hold.

Now, we are not talking about when your work or business goes through a busy patch or you have to go away on a work trip, or something.

And remember, when I am talking about coming, I am not talking attending. We are talking about coming and participating.

If your work, or whatever it is that you are doing in the world, is in conflict – and you are noticing the trend – with your capacity to respond to Christ Himself as He invites you to the fellowship of the *agape* meal, then you have gone beyond the lines of your sanctification, and you need to seek the Lord concerning, 'Where are the lines of the field that You have given to me?'

If you are abiding within the lines of your sanctification, that will be *completely* harmonious with your participation in the fellowship of the *agape* meal. In fact, it will be *implicit* to it, because everything that you are doing, and the fruit of your life, will be the fruit of fellowship.

Entangled with a yoke of bondage

If we have gone beyond the lines of our sanctification, we have become entangled with a yoke of bondage.

When the man in the parable received the invitation to the *agape* meal, he should have seen that his land purchase was outside of the lines of his sanctification, because it was preventing him from accepting the invitation.

A season of disentanglement

Rather than excusing himself from the fellowship of the *agape* meal, he should have delivered himself from the entanglement; he should have sold the land because it was *not* part of the inheritance that he had received from the Lord.

Now, this may have been a process.

I am really rejoicing – and I am sure that you are recognising this, and I know that many of you have this testimony – that it has actually been a season of disentanglement.

As you have been receiving the call of the Lord and the Lord has been showing you, firstly, the nature of the fellowship that He is inviting you to join, the parameters of your field are becoming clearer and clearer.

There are seasons in relation to this. We won't talk about the yoke of oxen, but there is no doubt that Elisha was a businessman who was running twelve yoke of oxen, the Scripture says. If one yoke could do one acre in a day, then he was ploughing twelve acres a day as a contract plougher. He had staff and we are told that he was overseeing the twelve pairs of oxen. We can only assume that was completely legitimate for that season in his life.

But when Elijah came and called him to follow, Elisha recognised that the season was shifting, there was a new season, and that he was moving on as a disciple of Christ.

And so there are seasons in this, but for every season we need to know what is the nature of the field that the Lord is giving to us; and we are recognising any conflict.

Again, I am not just talking about a busy season. I am talking about the trend, where it becomes clear to us that, actually, these things are in opposition. That is *not* the will of God.

And so we are in a season of disentanglement. I am really rejoicing that, for many, as you have been responding to the call of the Lord, there is grace for you to disentangle.

Our sanctification is our protection

And now is *not* the time to be invested in the world. There is never a time to be invested in the world but, as we approach the time when the Father takes His seat to judge the world, now is *definitely* not the time to be invested in the world.

Now is the time to be clear on the lines of your sanctification; what is the field that the Lord has given to you – because the limit of your field is your protection.

If a person is invested in the world, when the Father takes His seat to judge the world, then that person will be under His judgement.

Our sanctification is our protection. He is only putting the shadow of His wings over everything that belongs to Mt Zion – and this is why this is so important.

And there is grace in this season for the Lord to show us a] where is my field; and b] if I have gone beyond it, to prune to the reality of my sanctification so that I know that I am in the field that the Lord has given to me.

So, this is a tremendous season of mercy.

The economy in the early church –ever need met in the fellowship of the *agape* meal

This becomes very practical.

In the early church, they actually did exactly that! Doesn't the Scripture tells us that they were all selling parcels of land and laying the proceeds at the apostles' feet so that, firstly, they were not entangled.

The Jews were the greatest investors of all. Never will you find a better businessman than a Jew. I am sure they had all kinds of investments.

Here they were on the Day of Pentecost, responding to the word of the Lord and becoming citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. And they were recognising, 'We don't need all of these investments in the world. We don't want to be invested in the world. We want to abide within the limits of the sanctification of the field that the

Lord has given to us in Mt Zion.' And so they were selling things to disentangle themselves.

In retrospect, I am sure they were quite pleased they did, because it wasn't long before great persecution broke out after the martyrdom of Stephen, (this was well before the destruction of Jerusalem), and they were all scattered except for the twelve.

I think, as they were leaving Jerusalem, they were quietly pleased that they did not have a whole heap of investment properties left in Jerusalem. And even with the loss of their own homes, they were happy to accept that.

But when they were selling these properties, it is not talking about selling the homes in which they were living. We know they were not homeless and were not living in a commune.

It is important to not misinterpret what the Scripture is describing for us. We know that they were living in their houses because there was a house to house fellowship. The whole thing was built on worthy houses in Jerusalem and the apostles proclaiming the word in Solomon's Portico. Then they went and broke bread, house to house.

And so it was not everybody selling their house so that they were homeless or living in a commune. It was just everybody pruning to the reality of their sanctification as a son of God.

So they were disentangling but, at the same time, it was producing an economy in the early church in Jerusalem where there was no lack.

Through the fellowship of the *agape* meal, every need was met – and that included all of the practical needs.

Again, this is also what the fellowship of the *agape* meal is for.

But this has been completely hijacked with all kinds of social agendas, but the Scripture has always been clear that the fellowship of the *agape* meal is the context, for those who belong to the body of Christ, for all practical needs to be met.

James said that if your brother is hungry or cold don't just tell him to leave your house and go in peace. Give him something to eat, and give him something to wear.

And so there is a whole economy here that is meeting the need as we are responding to the Lord and living within the lines of our sanctification.

Exhortation

I do believe that this is a big part of the season that we are in; that the Lord is inviting us to come, He is addressing all of the impediments to our coming, and He is also asking us to be clear on the lines of our sanctification, and to disentangle ourselves from the world where we have gone beyond the lines of our sanctification.

Now of course, we are sons of God in this world. The Lord is not yet calling us out of that. We are sons of God in this world and there is a complete harmony between heaven and earth in the sense of what He has given to us to steward.

Remember, He said to Abraham, 'You will be the possessor of heaven and earth'. And so it does matter what we are doing Monday to Friday. It is all part of our stewardship as a son of God in this world, but the Lord is wanting us to be clear about:

What is the nature of that stewardship?

What are our priorities? Are we seeking first the kingdom of God, and then all of these other things are added to us?

And are we confessing that the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places?