

## I'm Invited to the Table of the Lord: Mephibosheth

I have four legs but I don't have feet.  
I stand up when everyone takes a seat.  
What am I?

New series begins tonight. "The Table."

I want you to picture the table at your house. Think about all of the meals that have been eaten there. All of the conversations that have been had. Some of those conversations really light, but others might've been pretty tough or heavy or sad.

Maybe your parents might have sat at that same table before you were born and over time more and more seats have been filled. Maybe they remember when your highchair sat at that table. Think of all of the guests that you've had over for dinner. The laughs. Maybe even some tears.

The prayers that have been offered. Maybe you've played board games around your table. Does your family have seats that they always sit in? When those seats are empty it's a weird feeling, isn't it? Some of you may have brothers and sisters that are in college or something. That's a weird feeling when that seat is empty.

I want you to close your eyes and imagine for a minute that there is a table in Heaven. What it would be like to sit at that table, to sit at God's table? If our tables on earth are filled with joy and laughter and great memories, imagine what's waiting for us in heaven.

I love that one of the images in God's Word that we are given of heaven is that of a banquet and a feast. One of my favorite parables is the parable of the wedding feast where a king wishes to invite guests to dine with him and celebrate the marriage of his son. That's our God! He wants people to come to that feast. To come to that table that is prepared for us on high.

There's a really popular song out right now written by Chris Tomlin that is called "The Table," and I wanted to share those lyrics with you.

### The Table

*\*Lyrics by Chris Tomlin*

I will feast at the table of the Lord  
I will feast at the table of the Lord  
I won't hunger anymore  
At His table

Come all you weary  
Come and find  
His yoke is easy  
His burden light  
He is able, He will restore  
At the table of the Lord

There is peace at the table of the Lord  
There is peace at the table of the Lord  
And I won't worry anymore  
At His table

Oh I know He has a place for me  
Oh, what joy will fill my heart  
With the saints around the mercy seat of God

I'm invited to the table of the Lord  
I'm invited to the table of the Lord  
He says, "Come just as you are"  
To His table

Tonight we're going to be studying what I believe to be one of the most beautiful stories in all of God's Word. It's a story about grace. It's a story about being invited to the table.

It's found in 2 Samuel 9 so you can turn there if you'd like.

1 And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

David and Jonathan were boys. They were BFFs. In 1 Samuel 20:15 they made a covenant with each other.

"...and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth."

What was common. Most kings would seek vengeance. David sought to show kindness.

David's mind is in a place of grace. We had a class about this a couple of weeks ago in the high school class.

Grace is literally the idea of stooping down to show benevolence or kindness. In fact the word kindness is used three times by David in verses 1, 3, 7. If you look at verse 3, notice that David refers to the kindness of God. That tells us that David remembered where he had learned this kindness. It was the kindness that was shown to him time and time again.

2 Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant." 3 And the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." 4 The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar."

So, David brings in this servant who used to serve the house of Saul named Ziba, and he says, "Hey, Ziba. Is there anybody left from Saul's family that I can show kindness towards?"

And isn't interesting the way that Ziba responds? He doesn't even tell David his name! He says "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet."

Who is this son of Jonathan that Ziba is talking about? Look with me very quickly at 2 Samuel 4:4.

4 Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

His name is Mephibosheth. Say that one with me, "Mephibosheth."

I want you to think about how sad this story is. When Mephibosheth was a five year old little boy, he finds out that his dad and his granddad were both killed on the same day. That right there is bad news enough to begin with.

But then look what happens. The nanny hears this news and decides she needs to run for her life, presumably because she doesn't feel safe. And as she's running out of the house she picks up Mephibosheth she drops him. And this drop, this injury is so severe that leaves him crippled.

And so on the same day that you lost your dad and your granddad you also lose the ability to walk.

\*David Faust writes in his book Praise Under Pressure, "A bone injury like this one was especially serious in ancient times. There were no physical therapists or orthopedic surgeons, no leg braces, wheelchairs, or even crutches as we know them today. There were

no cars or buses to make travel easier. The lame had to make their way around by using sticks or canes, or persuade some friends to carry them around. Life wasn't easy for Mephibosheth. He couldn't run for fun and exercise. He couldn't run from his circumstances either."

What a nightmare of a day for anyone, especially a child. What a terrible, terrible memory.

Let's move on.

*5Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. 6And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant."*

Stop right there. Imagine what's running through your mind if you're Mephibosheth at this very moment in the story. Your face is on the ground. A new king is in charge. Your grandfather terrorized this man. You're expecting a sword to come down. But notice what he got.

*7And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always."*

Mephibosheth expected a sword, but he gets grace. And here's the rest of the story, verses 8-13.

*8And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"*

That may be a little bit of a glimpse into Mephibosheth's self-esteem. Maybe he feels like a burden or worthless.

*9Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. 10 And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. 11 Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. 12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants.*

And verse 13 reminds us about grace once more as the story comes to a close. *13 So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.*

Isn't that such a cool story? But what I think what makes this story even more beautiful is when we apply it our lives.

**Life Lesson #1: Our King has reserved a seat for you at His table.**

I want you to consider just how big of a deal it was for David to invite Mephibosheth to eat at his table.

**1. The king provided nourishment for Mephibosheth.**

Think about the contrast between the meals that Mephibosheth was used to having versus the meals at David's palace. The food quality and the food quantity must have been vastly different...like going from canned SPAM to an all you can eat buffet.

**2. The king provided respect for Mephibosheth.**

If I wonder if Mephibosheth was ever made fun of growing up? Mocked for his handicaps, his weaknesses?

Not anymore. David would demand respect for him. I imagine that when he arrived at David's palace, the word spread pretty quickly about who this guy Mephibosheth was, and about who his father was.

You see, around David's palace, the name of Jonathan carried some weight. They all knew the stories of David and Jonathan.

### 3. The king provided rest for Mephibosheth.

He didn't have to worry about where his meals were going to come from. He didn't have to worry about anything. He would live in a palace with a king who loved him and his family.

### 4. \*The king provided fellowship and a family for Mephibosheth.

Verse 11, basically says that Mephibosheth became like David's adopted son.

I want you to consider what our King has done for us.

1. Just as King David provided nourishment for Mephibosheth, our King provides us with nourishment. It's greater in quality and quantity than what the world offers us.

Jesus said in John 6:35 "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

### 2. Our King respects us. How much does He respect us? Jn.3:16.

### 3. Our King provides rest for us.

Like Mephibosheth we can be broken, weak, crippled by sin. We feel unworthy, and sometimes we live in fear.

But Jesus says "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

### 4. Our King has provided fellowship and a family for me.

Doesn't the table represent that to us today? In fact, the first word I think about when I hear the word table is "family." Pretty cool to consider, too, that the Lord's Supper was set up for us at a table.

In this church, we have fellowship with one another and fellowship with him. In this church, you belong. You have a family.

Life Lesson #2: We need to seek out opportunities to show grace towards others, inviting them to the King's table.

In verse 1 David says, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

It doesn't say is there anyone qualified? He is actively looking to show someone kindness. He seeks out Mephibosheth and goes out of his way (Lo-Debar the name of the place where M lived means "n pasture." In other words this guy is out in the middle of nowhere.) David went out of his way to show kindness to a guy who wasn't expecting it.

What if we woke up every day and had that same kind of mindset that David had? How can I show kindness today?

\*Story of the lady at Thanksgiving.

You and I are not so different from Mephibosheth. We don't have much to offer the King. We are sort of crippled in our feet. We don't always walk like we're supposed to, but praise God, I am invited to the table of the Lord. Let's pray.

# psalm 23

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## storms

We're familiar with storms.

Storms can be really bad. They can cause hurt / pain / suffering. They can take a lot from us — home, cars, family, friends... They can last a while... but they don't last forever.

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This storm in Tuscaloosa was there for only a day. Really for only a few minutes. And it was gone.

This storm is a valley in the lifetime of Tuscaloosa. It was a LOW POINT in the lifetime of the city. But the city is no longer in that valley. It has moved on, risen up out of the valley.

The storms in MY life are only but a valley in the grand scheme of things. They will only last for a time. And the storm will move on. Rise up. Overcome. Conquer. Walk through.

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[Read entire passage]

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117 words in the passage. First five are "the lord is my shepherd". What's so great about having God be the one to take care of you, guide you, defend you? **He (David) unpacks it for us.**

And I want us tonight to specifically study verses 4 and 5.

Life is full of valleys, all kinds of valleys. In David's day, to move sheep from one pasture to another pasture, he would have to move sheep through a valley (or more!)

~~Do you know what a valley is?~~

Valleys are low, dark, cold, lonely places.

God saved David from the mouth of the lion - bear? - wild oxen (22.21) -- David knew about the tough times! **David knew all about the "valleys" of life...**

There are some things to remember when in a valley:

## when in a valley, remember:

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### his plan

It is good practice to ask ourselves: what is God's plan for me in the valley?

We know that when you're in a valley, you're not there to stay. Don't get comfortable in your valley! You're not going to be staying there! You're just passing through!

Even though I walk through...

Anytime, you're in a valley (in a lonely, cold place in life), do you spend time thinking of the good things to come? ... All the time I spend complaining to God or yelling at God in the valley, I could have spent time *moving / walking / crawling / inch worming* through the valley.

**God's plan does not involve a permanent valley — a valley is temporary. In the end, God wins!**

Make the best of the valley. Find purpose in your valley — maybe God takes you through your valley because He knew you could impact somebody else.

## his presence

for you are with me...

His presence in the valley is what gives us permission to not fear in the valley. David says "no fear because I'm not alone!"

[Did you notice how David talks using the phrase "the Lord" for a lot of verses but then He says "You"] This is so interesting to me.

When you're hurting don't just talk about God but talk to God.

**Phil 4.6-7** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I choose not to dread something that hasn't happened yet.

God is waiting to give you just what you need at the right time.

You ever heard this?

Don't pay for tomorrow's problems with today's peace.

**God has a track record of showing up at the right time.**

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I'm confident each and everyone of us will [at some time] go through something we don't think we can go through. (Going through the valley...) We're going to go through *something* in life — might be going through it right now! — where we feel like we can barely make it... that we might *not* make it!

Examples: death / sickness / anxiety / external pressures / school is hard / friendships + relationships can be difficult / sports can be stressful + painful...

God gave us what we needed right when we needed it.

He's with you through your pain / divorce / sickness / break ups.

## his power

your rod and your staff, they comfort me...

This is the shepherd's power. It was the rod that David would have used to kill the bear and the lion (1 Sam 17.36).

Would have been more than just a stick. Would have had barbs, sharp objects. Symbol of power.

“The image is that of a shepherd in attendance on his flock, with a staff on which he leans with one hand; in the other hand the ‘crook’ or rod which was the symbol of his office. Either of these also might be used to guard the flock, or to drive off the enemies of the flock.”  
(barne’s notes)

The shepherd's rod It is like a policeman's club. It is often made of oak wood and has a knob on the end of it. Into this knob nails are sometimes driven so as to make a better weapon. It is very useful for protection, and no shepherd would be without it. (CE. George M. Mackie, Bible Manners and Customs, p. 31)

Remember God used the staff of Moses to part the Red Sea... The rod and the staff of the Shepherd should give us confidence and comfort in his power.

## his peace

When it comes for you to step off this earth, what's your plan?

Can't just be a good person / can't just be a religious person.

**Jesus** is the one who can give us peace.

In verse 5:

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Why is all of this okay? Because you prepare a table (before me). Because God prepares a table for me.

And there is peace at his table. There is no more death / sickness / storms / depression / social problems / arguing and bickering / anger. Not at God's table.

Victory is guaranteed.

- there is guaranteed victory — wouldn't it feel good to know the outcome of a game beforehand?

# there is healing at the table of the Lord

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## recap

We talked during our first part of this series about being "invited to the table of the Lord".

And what we discussed was the truth from God's word that you and I are truly **invited** to the table of the Lord. What a wonderful thing it is to be **invited!** No one is overlooked / ignored / or missed in the distribution of the invitation.

The table of the Lord... is a place for all of us. And we are all *invited to the table*.

Go there in your mind with me, we of course are sitting around the table. And the Lord is at this table. The Father and the Son.

The Father has invited *you* (!) to the table! He has invited *me* to the table! // To come around this "table of the Lord", I think it's important for us to *know what is at the table*.

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Last week we discussed one aspect of gathering at the table.

When we gather at the table of the Lord, **we find peace**. There is peace at the table of the Lord.

In Psalm 23, we saw that no matter what kind of valleys we go through in life — and we will go through some valleys — our God is with us, He comforts us, and He prepares a table before us. And at that table is peace. Peace in the valley.

This week, we are going to study for a few minutes another spiritual benefit of gathering at the table of the Lord.

Let's read **1 Corinthians 11.23-28**,

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

You can go back in your minds to the night Jesus was betrayed. And in the upper room with his disciples, Jesus broke bread and drank of the cup. And he did so around what? A table. Or a similar setup to a table.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 **Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**

As we go through this lesson, let's think about gathering around the table. Lord's supper. To examine ourselves // to see how healthy we are.

**Truth:** there is healing at the table of the Lord.

[could talk about healing — finding healing for my throat, someone looking and finding healing, etc]

## there is healing

Turn with me to Romans chapter 5. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts... And then we find a letter written by Paul to [who?]

This is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. Whenever we take the communion on the Lord's day — Sunday — I often like to turn to this passage in Romans 5. To place myself in the right mindset. Because this passage is one that talks about how you and I are made clean through Jesus Christ. At the right time, in the right way, for the right reasons, everything came together — the plan that God had in place — it all worked out (in our favor!)

Let's read starting in verse 6...

6 For **while we were still weak**, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

What does it mean "while we were still weak?" The original word there for "weak" was usually applied to those who are sick and feeble, deprived of strength by disease.

7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—

Paul says, we might find someone who would die for someone who is good!

8 but God shows his love for us in that while **we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.

Paul makes the comparison that not many would die for a *good person, much less a bad person!* But on the other hand, Paul says, we are all stained — all dirty, all imperfect. And even though we were sinners, "Christ died for us."

God communicated His love for each and everyone of us when He sent His Son! The sending of Jesus is God trying to get our attention — "I love you this much!"

For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **John 3.16**

Continuing...

9 **Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood**, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

MAYBE THIS ILLUSTRATION WILL HELP (MAYBE THINK OF SOMETHING FUNNIER): Talk about being physically sick.

(Can talk about one of my best friend's who has lyme disease — they have been all over the country — in search of someone to diagnose them and tell them how to get better... // Albany, NY; Baltimore, MD; Birmingham, AL; Cleveland, OH)

Wouldn't it be ridiculous for us to not seek the cure if we knew there was a cure? For cancer. For Lyme disease. Another disease.

Luckily and thankfully: Not everybody suffers cancer (luckily) / not everybody gets Lyme Disease / not everybody has MS... LUCKILY. If you don't suffer from those diseases, you don't have to seek out the doctor.

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But when we're talking about our spiritually health, *Everybody* has suffered or will suffer from sin — back in verse 6 "while we were still weak". // In verse 8, "while we were still sinners..." // **Romans 3.23 / 6.23.** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." It's bad news. It's unfortunate. But it's the truth. **We all have suffered or will suffer from the spiritual disease of sin.**

I have sinned. You have sinned. We all have sinned. **And that puts us all in need of healing. // SPIRITUAL HEALING.**

But, the good news is that Jesus Christ came and died on the cross — paying the ultimate price / finding the cure / *being the cure* for our sin disease. And we don't have to go far in our search for Him.

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Do you know what the word justified (v.9) means? **to declare or show to be free from blame or guilt / it also means declared or made righteous in the sight of God.**

To be justified means — to be healed. Healed of the disease of sin. Sin plagues us. Cripples us. Sin separates us from God.

But God is right here. He has the cure to sin — He IS the cure to sin! And He has made himself available. There is healing at *His* table.

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In the world, people have always tried to find healing from their sicknesses in different ways.

Many search for healing through ***illegal drugs.***

Many search for healing through ***smoking.***

Many search for healing through ***anger.***

Many search for healing by ***holding a grudge.***

Many search for healing by ***gossiping.*** Telling a "story" about someone.

Many search for healing by ***comparing themselves to others*** — "at least I'm not *that sick*".

Many search for healing by ***hooking up.*** Doing things with our bodies that should only happen in the wonderful place of marriage.

Many seek for healing through ***pornography***.

And the list goes on...

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In the Bible, people tried to find healing in different ways, as well.

Lame man hung out by the pool of Bethesda for many years. He had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. Never found healing. (John 5)

There was a woman who had a discharge of blood for 12 years. Many doctors had tried to heal her — she kept suffering, even got worse...

25 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, 26 and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse (Mark 5)

There were multiple blind men. One blind man had been blind all his life — many years. No one could ever heal him. (John 9)

Ten lepers, who had been cast out of the city, who no one would go near. No one could heal them. (Luke 17)

There was a man who was demon possessed (Mark 5). He had been living in the tombs. People could not contain him and heal him.

Centurion's daughter.

Peter's mother in law.

People searched and searched — they tried and tried. They looked for healing! But there was never physical healing found — **except with Christ.**

And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the **lame**, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and **many** others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, **Matthew 15.30**

There is only healing found through Christ...

## **closing up shop**

So, how do I find healing in Christ today?

1. Baptism — putting on Christ, who washes away all of the iniquity, the sin, the ugliness that sin causes...
2. Gathering at *His table*....

It's found when we commune with Him. When we *gather around the table* and have communion — communication / spend time thinking about the healing that He has given us — with Him.

Remember that **1 Corinthians 11.28** says,

28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Let's make sure we're healthy.

Taking the Lord's supper (as His children) is a way of remaining healthy. Performing a check up.

We go to the doctor every so often to make sure we're still healthy. *We gotta go to the table to make sure we stay healthy.*

To make sure we're still healthy Christians, we perform a personal examine in communion with God.

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Let's not be the kind of people that search for healing in the wrong places. Let's not spend time, effort, energy searching for healing in the wrong places and in the wrong people.

Know that if I want to find healing, it can only be found in Christ and at His table.

#### Lesson 4: I Will Feast at the Table of the Lord

\*Show wedding vow song.

Mention the feast we had before the lesson.

As we bring this series to a close, I want to draw your attention to one of my very favorite stories in God's Word about a feast. Turn with me if you would to Matthew 22.

*Matthew 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,*

Alright, so who are our characters? A king.

The king is God.

The Son, and the son is who?

Jesus the Son of God. So the king, God, wants to throw a wedding feast for Jesus, His Son.

*3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'"*

The king sends out wedding invitations. He uses the royal postal service, sends out his servants with these invitations. But nobody RSVPs. Nobody will come.

And He does it again. Maybe they'll listen this time. And He says, "Look, this wedding is going to happen! I've got all of this food ordered and prepared. My Son is going to be there. I've saved you a

seat. I've done all the work for you. Everything is ready! Just show up! Just come!"

*5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.*

And this part of the parable represents what Israel had done to the prophets in the OT and also what the Jews would do to Jesus' disciples in the NT. Israel, Judah, the Jews refused to listen.

God was angry. How could these guests reject this invitation, even going so far as to kill his servants?

The King punishes these murderers. He allows their cities to be overtaken, and their enemies took them over. Interesting that in verse 7 the Bible calls them the king's troops. These were armies that God Himself would send to humble His people. They became His troops that would carry out His will.

And that's what happened to the Israel in the Old Testament. They became a broken people. And later on the New Testament timeline, the same thing would happen to Jerusalem as well. It would be destroyed and many who refused to heed God's warnings were killed.

So now what? The wedding's still on, but still no guests.

*8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.'*

Verses 8-9 "Ok, new plan. Find anybody! Doesn't matter if they are "good," or if they are "bad." I want you to invite anybody and

everybody. The criminal, the adulterer, the tax-collector, the little old lady with blue hair, the construction worker, the blind, the crippled, the rich, the poor, the do-righters, and the do-wrongers.

God says, I want you to invite Kylie Brasel. I want you to invite Chandler Franzen and Bailey Oldham and Allyson Stallworth, and Ty Frudenthal, and Olivia Glidewell.

They are all invited. We are all invited.

**10** *And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

That's not the end of the parable. It's got a powerful ending that I'll save for another lesson. But there are some things that I want us to really take note of that have taken place in the story up to this point that I think are really fit so well with this idea of a feast.

Do you ever think about what your wedding is going to be like? I think I can answer this one for you: girls, ever since you were three. And guys, never once in your life.

I was thinking about me and Laura's wedding. Weddings really are beautiful. It's a day where you hold a ceremony that is literally a celebration of your love for each other. It is a celebration for you and your bride. The ceremony is a celebration of love.

The wedding feast that God is throwing for you and I is a celebration of His great love for us. And not just of His love for us, but also the love that Jesus, His Son, has for us. As His church, we are His bride. We are joined together with Christ, just like in a marriage.

Now here's a great hypothetical question for you: who gets invited to a wedding ceremony?

You may not know it yet, but that becomes a big part of the wedding planning. How many people are we going to have there? How much food can we afford? How many people can the venue seat? If we only have 200 seats, then which 200 people can we invite? You'll even go through the scenarios of "Who do we hope says no just so we can have more seating?"

I'm telling you it can be a pretty stressful ordeal. That was challenging for our wedding. We didn't rent out Bridgestone Arena so we couldn't just invite a limitless number of people.

So, who do you invite? Who gets invited to your wedding ceremony?

Well, it's your family, your closest friends, and your closest family friends. Right? It's those that are special to you.

You know what you don't do? You know who you don't invite? You don't send a bunch of your friends into downtown Nashville to stand on the street corners and hand out fliers for your wedding. That would be a terrible way to plan your wedding.

But notice that's exactly what God does in this story.

"Excuse me sir, do you have a pulse? Come to the feast!"

"Excuse me, madam. Are you busy this evening? My Son's getting married and I'd like for you to be my guest of honor."

"Hey, wedding later. You in?"

That's not how you and I plan a wedding. We only invite people that are very special to us.

...but wait a minute, so does God.

You know why He invited all of those random people to the wedding? Two reasons: 1. Because all of those random people to us are not random people to Him. They are people that He created and loves. Every person is special to God. There's no such thing as a random person to Him.

And 2. The other reason God invites all of those people to this wedding feast is because His Son is that special to Him. He knows how important His Son is and how important it is that others meet Him. He knows how important this union is. He knows that we need more than anything else to be at this feast.

God pulls out all the stops for this feast. And He wants you there. It's an invitation you and I cannot afford to ignore.

And at the end of verse 10, look how many people show up. It's a full house. The chapel couldn't hold as many guests as God has invited. The church building can't hold many guests as God has invited. Bridgestone Arena cannot hold the number of guests God has invited.

Just think of the many guests will be waiting for us at the feast prepared by our King in Heaven.

One of my favorite parts of our wedding video is looking around in the room at the audience and remembering all of the people who came.

There are some who were invited that were college friends or high school friends that we were really close to at the time that we have lost touch with.

There are some that were invited we weren't really that close to at the time but as the years have gone by we have gotten even closer.

There are some guests that we didn't even invite, people that we weren't connected to but someone else was and they came to the wedding as a guest of someone we love. (Every time we watch it we're like, "Wait, why was Clint Haynes at our wedding?")

There are some who were invited that are no longer with us. People like Jackie Anderson, a family friend that was as close to Laura as any grandmother would be. People like my granddad, Jerry Jenkins, who led a prayer in the wedding, but he never lived to meet Lucas and Holley. I wish that he could've.

And then there are others that we would've loved to have join us at our wedding but they passed away before we the ceremony took place.

As we close tonight, I want you to imagine the joy surrounding God's table in heaven. I want you to imagine how awesome it will be to be gathered with those we love, with those we have lost, and to those who we've never gotten to meet.

And I want you to imagine, most importantly, the loving King and the Son that are saving you a seat.

\*Play video.