

Reflection (Zoom) on Sunday 23 March 2025 by Forbes Mutch, Lay Leader of Worship

Gospel: Luke 14: 15-24 – The rich man's banquet



Food plays an important part in the New Testament. It crops up in many of the stories surrounding Jesus. Think about it.

There are miraculous meals, such as multiplying loaves and fish to feed large crowds or turning water into wine at a wedding. Jesus regularly eats with people, including tax collectors and sinners, demonstrating his inclusive and compassionate nature.

Meals are a time for fellowship and community, and Jesus often uses meals as opportunities to teach and connect with people.

There's the Last Supper, where Jesus shares bread and wine with his disciples (symbolising his sacrifice and the promise of eternal life).

And Jesus often uses food as a metaphor for spiritual nourishment, stating, "I am the bread of life" and emphasising the importance of seeking God's kingdom rather than focusing on material needs, which is what we see in this morning's gospel.

It doesn't take a massive leap of imagination to understand in Christ's parable, that the great banquet of the rich man represents the Kingdom of God, and the invitations are not about sharing a Macdonald's Family Deal for £14.99 but are an encouragement to follow the way of Jesus to help make the Kingdom of God come alive on earth, right here, right now.

I don't know about you but, in my journey of faith, in becoming a Christian, I have never been lucky enough to have a Road to Damascus experience. This is where you're travelling along in life when suddenly 'boom', Jesus pops up out of nowhere and says: 'Follow me'. You believe and your life changes instantly.

My faith has been more like a process of slow osmosis: one day red hot, the next day lukewarm; one Sunday fired up and ready to roll, the next Sunday uncertain and full of questions. But, having said that, there have been occasions, in certain circumstances, where God has sent me an invitation and I've had to make a choice: do I stay, or do I go?

You would think, wouldn't you (?) that an invitation to follow God or Christ would be clear cut, with no alternative but to accept willingly and enthusiastically. But in the real world, it's never that easy.

God's invitation is not always the big one; it's not always about giving up the life you live to follow him forever without deviation. Sometimes God may be inviting you to do something for a neighbour, or helping a friend in hospital or getting involved in the community Christmas lunch for old people. And these invitations often come at an inconvenient time.

It's like the postman's knock on the door or your mobile ringing just as you're about to get the children off to school or dashing out to catch a bus. You can't be bothered to answer, thinking, *Well, if it's important, they'll phone back.* Or there's a pressing appointment that simply must be undertaken before you can even contemplate looking in the diary to see if there's a space to do God's work. Or maybe there are personal reasons why the invitation is unwelcome: you're in a relationship where your partner won't approve, or you're tired and don't have the mental or physical energy to do God's will.

These choices have been the same for people throughout history. God invites, we respond, or we give our excuses.

But the invitations, however small and insignificant they might seem, are to more than a mere banquet, they are to participate in the Kingdom of God on a day-by-day basis. That's quite a privilege. So, it's a shame that so often we meet the invitation with excuse after excuse. Things seem so good in this life that we just can't bear to give them up at this moment in time, maybe later, on our terms and in our timetable.

The people who God chooses, so often return the invitation to his banquet unopened, or cast it into the bin like junk mail without opening it and reading the message inside. I know I've done that on a few occasions in my life... although I've usually regretted it later.

So, I leave you with a question. Are you someone who has just bought a field or five yoke of oxen, or are you on the road or the country lanes, ready and happy to be invited? Because, one thing is for sure, there is always plenty of room at God's banquet for you.

Amen

With thanks to *John Birch* of the Faith and Worship [website](#).