

10.18.26

Luke

Chapter 14 - An Unprecedented Invitation

A Costly Invitation (vs. 25-33)

Luke 14:25-33: Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Jesus continues with this reoccurring theme, all or nothing. Everything. He keeps repeating that, doesn't He? You'd think that we would get it. Jesus says, "If you're not for Me, you're against Me." You need to make up your mind. I think it's one of the great problems of our society is that we want to somehow ride the fence or think that in some way we are appeasing God by virtue of partial obedience. God says, "I want all of you and you need to be all in. And if you're not, you're not following Me. Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and you don't do what I say?"

We come to this passage, it is no different and it's very clear that Jesus is drawing those lines once again. And one of the reasons why He is so hated by those around Him, because He doesn't allow for the hypocrisy, the falseness, masks that man puts on. He wants real and He wants it total. This is in the setting of a meal. And at the beginning of Chapter 14, we realize that Jesus has been invited to a

meal. It's the meal with the Pharisee in particular. It's in his house and it's on the Sabbath and it's a great and glorious meal of the Pharisees on the Sabbath. It was a time in which they would invite the upper echelon and those that were privileged people, and all the beautiful people would come together, and they would dine. Jesus begins to perceive those who had been invited, and He speaks to them, and He says, "Okay, I can see what you're doing. You're looking for the best seat in the house."

If you drop on down to verse 7, it reads this way,

(Luke 14:7) "And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table..."

He then begins to talk to them.

We go a little bit further in the passage and in verse 12, He then addresses the person who has invited everybody.

(Luke 14:12) "And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him..."

So, at first He deals with those that had been invited, now He deals with the one that had sent out the invitations.

And in both cases, He shows them their superficiality in coming. They aren't necessarily coming to fellowship around God. They clearly are not necessarily concerned for one another. They're only concerned for themselves. And you realize that even the guy that's been inviting people is not necessarily doing it because he's altruistic or benevolent in his desire to give to people, but his desire is only to have some kind of quid pro quo or tit for tat or some kind of reciprocity for his invitation, "So, if I invite this person, he'll invite me or maybe I can get a business deal or something like that." And so, Jesus turns to them, and He goes, "You need to invite maybe the poor, maybe people that can't give back to you, you need to invite." And He gives a message to them.

When we come to verse 15, He begins reclining at the table with them at this particular dinner and this meal.

And one man cries out,

(Luke 14:15) "... "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!""

It's very easy for us to perceive that we're like this (*crosses fingers*) with God. We're just unified with God

and yet to be so far away from Him. I oftentimes think of Amos, he goes, "I know you all are wishing for the coming day of the Lord, but it's not in wisdom that you ask this because it's not going to be a good day for you. You think it's going to be a day of light, it's going to be darkness."

So, man perceives himself as being the privileged one and clearly, I guess just by virtue of their presence there, they perceive themselves as special in God's eyes.

He turns to them, and He gives a parable.

In verse 16, it is the parable as He starts off,

(Luke 14:16) "But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many."

And He goes on and He begins to give this parable. As He goes on in the parable, He reveals that many of those that had been invited by this one, which was a grand and glorious opportunity for them, refused and they belittled the invitation. And by belittling the fact that they have other things to do, one bought a piece of land, other had five oxen, he wanted to try them out. Another had just married, and he says, "I just can't make it." All of this, Jesus was wanting to convey to them that this angered

the man that invited the people. And because of that, he tells his servant, "Go on the highways and byways and invite everybody." And so, the door is now open to everyone, and He gives this story.

The end of the story, if you look at verse 24, ends this way,

(Luke 14:24) "'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste...'"

And here the pronoun changes. It's very interesting. If you remember, there's some ambiguity as far as whose dinner is it, and the way that He starts the parable off in Luke 14:16 is,

"But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner...""

See that?

But now, in verse 24,

"'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

Okay, now we know. The parable was Him; He was the one inviting. And people had turned Him down. I mean, who would turn God down? Who would turn down an

invitation from God? It's such an amazing thought that God would invite us at all. You see not only the humility and the graciousness of God and the mercy of God and the fact that He would invite us, but I oftentimes make reference to that passage in Luke 22:15, where Christ turns to His disciples at that Passover supper, and He says, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." I mean, can you imagine that He would actually earnestly desire to have that fellowship with us.

We're very familiar with that Psalm 23 which quotes in verse 5, "Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." And clearly, this is an interesting picture of that kind of happening in which Jesus sees all those people that are out for themselves and nevertheless He now segues into, "But I have a table, I'm inviting you and you're all welcome." And you really hear the graciousness of God.

One of the great passages of dealing with the banquet that God has for us is declared in Isaiah 25. And let me just read a few lines from it. It's basically verses 6 through

9, which is kind of, interestingly enough, a combination of Revelation 19 and Revelation 21. So, you might want to kind of put those off as a parallel passage to these things.

But in Isaiah 25, 6-9, it reads this way,

(Isaiah 25:6) "The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples..."

It's a great thought, isn't it?

And it goes on and reads this way,

(Isaiah 25:8) "He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces..."

(Isaiah 25:9) "And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us...""

I'm looking forward to that banquet, aren't you? What an amazing thought that God's invited us. And yet, the clarity within this particular passage is, can you imagine people turning that down? Can you imagine people saying, "I'm just not interested. I have other things that I'm involved in and I'm just not interested." God is calling, He's inviting, He's asking you to come, and you're turning it down. For

what? Other ventures, other things? What makes those things so important? So, He begins to cause man to reason and to work through these things.

He will now turn to a different audience. As He began to speak to those that have been invited, He turns to the one that gave the invitations, and then He turns to one that makes the statement in the text. He now will turn to multitudes who are following Him seemingly after the dinner. And yet, it is in the context of this grand invitation that God gives us.

And so, as He turns to the multitudes, if you'll pick up with me in verse 25, it reads this way,

(Luke 14:25) "Now large crowds were going along with Him..."

Now, as we read the last parable, the one who had invited everybody said, "Because you refuse, we're going to the highways and the byways; we're going to invite everybody." And so, you have this interesting picture of multitudes following Him. It's like, "Okay, we're invited." And they just start clamoring around Him.

"Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,"

"Glad to have you with Me. This is going to be a great time." Wow. That's just the opposite.

(Luke 14:26) "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

I know that some people go, "Well, I don't want to be necessarily His disciple; I just want to be a Christian." I just want to remind you, Acts 11:26 says that the disciples were first called Christian at Antioch. So, they were actually disciples first. But "disciple" just simply means "learner of the Lord." And so, His statement is, "This is an all or nothing venture."

And then He states this in verse 27,

(Luke 14:27) "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

I mean, that's pretty emphatic, right? I don't see any confusion in that statement.

He then states in verse 28,

(Luke 14:28) “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower...”

And by the way, if you want to get a clear picture of that, it literally is making reference to a fortified tower.

“For which one of you, when he wants to build a (fortified) tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?”

Calculate the cost. Count the cost. So, within this particular passage, He's going to have these multitudes, these people, begin to count the cost. Now, right off the bat, you have to ask yourself, "I thought it was a free meal. So, what's the deal with the cost?" And I would say, you're absolutely right. It's a free meal. He's invited you to come to the free meal. However, the journey is costly. It's not the meal that you're going to pay for, but it will be the journey.

And the journey means that there are going to be all kinds of things that are going to come into your life that will try to keep you from going to the meal. You have an

invitation, but you have things that are coming in that are going to draw you away. Sometimes it's your own desires, sometimes your own inclinations that we've been talking about, but beyond that, there are going to be other things, whether it be family, friends, foes. There are going to be things that come into your life that are going to try to draw you away and you're going to have to say, "I'm not going to let them draw me away." You have to consider the cost. You have to consider the fact that there are going to be other people that are going to be trying to hinder you from making the decision. It's very clear that God doesn't want you to hate your family in the sense of not caring for them because He even turns to John at the time of the cross, and says, "Take care of My mom," basically. So, we know that there's not a divorce from the care of the family. However, what He's saying is, in the context of your devotion to God, it has to be so much higher that it's as if there was a sense of hatred or disdain, not allowing them to influence you in any other way to keep you from following the Savior. And let me just say this too, that in following the Savior, there's nothing better that you could ever do for your family.

Deuteronomy 6 is very clear, you know, you teach your kids when you're walking by the way, of the Lord, when you stand up, in whatever you're doing. Ephesians 6 will emphasize this as well. So, God has called us to do this. However, the journey is clear. You're going to be walking with a cross. That's verse 27.

If you look in the passage,

(Luke 14:27) “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me...”

So, you're following Jesus to go to the meal.

Once again, Revelation 19 gives that wonderful picture of that meal of the bride of Christ, right? And of course, you go into Chapter 21, every eye is dry and God does away with death. What a wonderful promise that is. Looking forward to that banquet. However, this is not an easy journey. There is a cost to the journey as you begin to walk with Him and walk towards Him; coming after Him.

(Luke 14:28) “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate...”

"Okay, what's involved here? What am I going to be having to deal with? The meal is free, the journey is not, what do I have to do?" What's the cost with your relationships? Immediately, there is this sense of sitting down and actually the phrase that's used in the text is kind of like "bean counting." "This one's going to love me, this one's going to hate me, this one's going to try to do this." And He says, "You've gotta think through this. And you need to see," if you look at the passage, "if you have enough to complete it." Now, what the passage does is it transfers into the realm of everything. In other words, it's not just about building material at this juncture. It's about having enough fortitude to finish the job. Paul will say in 2 Timothy 4 to Timothy, "I finished the course." We believe that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of finishing. Hebrews is very clear about that. As he turns and as the book is written to those that are struggling, he goes in Chapter 10, "You have need of endurance." What's the problem? And the problem was that they were anchoring in superficial things. They weren't anchoring in their faith. His statement is, "Faith is the substance of things not seen." In other words, you want something of substance.

You don't want something that is superficial like maybe the external tabernacle or the external things. So, he talks about those as shadows. He says you don't want to anchor in shadows. People say, "Well, I have a Bible." Well, good, I'm glad you have a Bible. You need to read it. So, the fact that you just own the Bible and hug it doesn't mean that you're closer to God. What it does mean is, if you take this Bible and you let these words become a part of your life and you live them, or as James would say, "faith without works is dead," you begin to live the words of life, then you will begin to taste and see that the Lord is good. But you actually have to taste and see. You actually have to do these things. So, in many ways, we begin to lie to ourselves and there are going to be times where things get a little difficult. I think of individuals that have come up to me, and they go, "Wow, I didn't know it meant that I was going to have to sacrifice." I go, "Well, you should have thought about this because God doesn't give you a snow job when He calls you. I mean, read through Scripture, 'Foxes have holes, birds have nests, and the Son of man doesn't have a place to lay his head.' Come on. And if you think that's not a grand invitation, then read

this one, 'You're going to have to take up a cross. You're going to have to follow Me.'" I mean, there's nothing about taking up a cross that connotes ease and comfort and pleasure. Everything about it states that this is going to be a shameful, hard, difficult relationship. And people that you think love you are going to be against you, and they're going to be pointing their finger at you. They're going to be laughing at you, and you're going to become a laughingstock to them. And that's the journey to the meal. Matthew 10, if you look there with me, Jesus gives an example to the disciples as He sends them out. And He gets a little bit more detailed in this.

If you look with me in Matthew 10:16, His declaration is, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves..."

That's pretty graphic, isn't it? I mean, what does a sheep have to guard themselves, to protect themselves against the wolves?

"... so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

(Matthew 10:17) But beware of men, for they will hand you over..."

That's an interesting statement. That's telling me that He's actually saying, "You're going to be delivered up." He says the same thing to the disciples in John 16, right? "They're going to take you up, they're going to bring you before synagogue, they're going to deliver you before authorities." You know what that's saying, don't you? It's saying you have no control. None. They're in control. They're taking you around. And we know God is sovereign over them, but I'm saying you have no control.

The passage goes on and says,

"But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

(Matthew 10:18) and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

(Matthew 10:19) But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

(Matthew 10:20) For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

(Matthew 10:21) Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

(Matthew 10:22) You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."

That's an interesting word, "endure". Because we have the Spirit of God within us and we have the Spirit of His love within us. And we know according to 1 Corinthians 13 that love never fails. So, it is the Spirit of God that will keep us going strong. And it's the very evidence that we are saved is that we endure, as Hebrews 3 will say, "firm until the end."

As we come to this passage, we realize that Christ is making clear reference to the fact that this is not going to be an easy journey. But if you're going to come... And you're all invited... He's not saying they're not invited. You're all invited but just think about this. It's not going to be easy. This is going to be rough. It's going to be difficult. I think of the Book of Jeremiah in particular in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of Jeremiah, where God says, "Look, I want

you to come, but I want you to come with all your heart." And He gives that interesting picture of Judah and Israel and how Israel said, "I don't even want to come." And Judah says, "No, I'll come." But he didn't come with his heart. And God says, "If you're going to come, I need you to come wholeheartedly. Because if your heart's not in this, if you're not coming wholeheartedly, you'll never make it." People put themselves on this journey and they go, "I'm a Christian, I'm a Christian." And I go, "I don't think they're going to make it. Because their trust isn't in the Lord. It's in themselves."

(Luke 14:29) "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish..."

In other words, what's the foundation? Well, of course, Paul says to the Corinthians, "No man can lay a foundation other than the one that's laid, which is Jesus Christ." In other words, there's no other foundation that you can lay on. The point is that your hope has to be completely in Him. If it's not, you're not going to make this. If it's not in His power, you're not going to make it. You better make sure that you are anchored in the right

things. As Hebrews so aptly puts it, we have an anchor for our soul, both sure and steadfast. He'll keep us. It's like that song we sing. He'll hold us fast, right? But it better be Him, because you're not going to make it without Him. You're not going to make it without Him.

He then begins to say,

(Luke 14:30) "... 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'"

I wonder why.

He gives an interesting analogy here within the passage,

(Luke 14:31) "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?"

That's a double thing, right? So, what is that saying? Jesus is saying, "I just want to let you know the odds are against you. The majority will be against you. You need to think this through. And if in fact you're going into this battle, that is to say you're marching to Zion with Me, you're

going to have the meal with Me, you're going into a battle." And I like the way that Paul puts it- We don't fight the battles the same way that the world does. They fight according to the flesh. We fight it according to the Spirit. And what you and I do will look very different than the way the world will fight. The world has their lawyers. We don't use them. The world will have its armor. We don't use it. In fact, it's very interesting when you come to the Book of Jeremiah, when God says to Israel, "Okay, you're going to be taken to captivity. This is what you do- Submit to the authority. And I'll take care of you. I'll take care of you. Everything will be okay. You resist, and you're going to be in trouble." So, we don't fight the same way. What we do is, we allow God to do the fighting for ourselves. And we have an armor that actually pertains to faith, rather than things that we can do.

So, as it comes to the passage, you have to come to a realization, and really, at the very beginning, He says, "You need to count the cost," which is really you coming to terms with the fact that you might be disowned or despised and rejected and that your efforts are going to

be undermined by people that you love and you care very much for. But think about it. Count the cost.

The second thing that He tells you within the passage is that you need to take counsel over the fact that the odds are against you. Clearly, you need to consider that you are physically overpowered. 20,000 against 10, you're physically overpowered. If in fact, you're sitting down and you're going, "Okay, I'll tell you what we have going for us, we have conventional wisdom, we have strategy, we have strength," and God goes, "No you don't, because you're overpowered by that. You're just not going to make this."

He ultimately gives this interesting picture,

(Luke 14:32) "Or else..."

It's like God going, "Or you could just ask for peace, get up the white flag and raise it." And you have an interesting capitulation within the passage.

"Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace."

Which is fundamentally basically withdrawing; capitulating in a sense of surrendering. You're saying, "I accept defeat." Now, you have to ask yourself, in what context is God saying this? I mean, does God want us to give in to the evil? Absolutely not. But God is wanting us to count, consider, and contemplate The question is, what does He want us to contemplate? Well, it's actually summarized in verse 33 because He gives a "therefore". Once again, why for is that "therefore" there for? That's what you have to ask yourself. So, He gives a "therefore" within the passage. What's the "therefore" there for? Well, it's to summarize and it's to give a sense of this is what it's all about.

(Luke 14:33) "So then (therefore), none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

Now, the Greek word "possessions" here in this text is not just simply dealing with tangible things. "*Hyparchō*" is the word that is used within the passage. It is literally referring to substance. Actually, the root word seems to make up that which we derive our existence from; which is very much inclusive of everything that we might rely

upon in our own strength. So, the point is that "You can't be My disciple till you give up every ounce of your own strength. This has to be Me." Because otherwise, are you really following Christ?

Scripture says in Philippians 2, He emptied Himself and He took on the form of a bond servant. And He ultimately declares, "Not My will, but Your will be done." Now, that's a total emptying of self. And that's what God is calling us to do, because quite frankly, we're going against principalities and powers. We're outnumbered strength-wise and quantity-wise. I mean, there's just no way that we're going to go against the spiritual forces, the powers of this air that we're against, unless we capitulate, surrender. We're going to have to surrender. We're going to have to come to terms with the fact that we don't have the strength to do this. Unless we do that, we'll never make it to the end. We'll never finish the course. Paul will say to the Corinthians, "Not that our sufficiency is in ourselves. Who's adequate for these things?" He states. I mean, that's Paul! The fundamental point is that nobody's adequate for these things. Nobody could go to this meal.

Nobody can make it. I mean, the invitation is open to all. We're not only hearing the call of, "Hey, you got a new car" or "Hey, you got a new house" or "Hey, you got a new bride." We're not just hearing those kind of things. We're having attacks from people that say they love us and they're calling us ignoramuses, and they're calling us hurtful and hateful things. And God is saying, "Just keep marching with the cross." We're so concerned about what everybody else says that we haven't considered just the value of being with Him. And how wonderful it is that there is a day in which He's going to wipe away every tear and do away with death. And we're going to sit down at that table, we're going to say, "This is the One we've been waiting for. This is the meal we've been walking towards." And it's that that God is calling us to. It is a sense of giving up things.

And if you look in the passage, it's very clear what He's asking us to give up. In the relationship wise, He's asking you to give up your acceptance and affirmation by other people. He's asking you to give up adoration by others. "You know, this person used to like me, now they don't

like me anymore." God is saying, "You have to give up. Whatever your perception is of those relationships, it's got to go. Unless you give up everything that is important to you that you literally see as a part of your existence, you're not worthy of Me." If you look at the passage, look, you sit down and you go, "I think I can beat these guys." God goes, "No, you've got to give that up. You've got to come to the point where your conventional wisdom and your strategy and your strength are not going to be used. You give that up today. Unless you give that up, you're not going to make it."

And you come to the end of the passage, if you think about this, there's a reason why He says that king sits down with this battle or else he sends a delegation. Probably one of the hardest things that a king ever has to do is to give up, to surrender, to admit in his own mind that "I don't think I can do this." So, his pride and his prestige and his position and his confidence all have to be laid down at the altar. And he has to say, "I can't do this." And God says, "Unless you say that, you're not going to make this."

Paul will state, and we've oftentimes quoted, but it's just an appropriate passage for us to look at with this in 2 Corinthians 1. If you'll turn there with me. We've got to pick up in verse 3 because of the fact that we have to come to the realization that God loves us, He's got us, He will never leave us, He will never forsake us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Do you believe that? It has to be your faith.

So, verse 3 reads this way,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

(2 Corinthians 1:4) who comforts us in all our affliction..."

That'd be every affliction that you could ever have.

"... so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

In other words, until you experience firsthand, God comforting you, you can't comfort anybody else. But you have to experience God. Now, I'm not talking about somebody coming up and patting you on the back saying

everything's going to be okay. I'm talking about God comforting you. When you experience that, then go tell somebody else, "God can comfort, because I felt it. I've experienced it."

When that happens, as it goes on to say in verse 5, (2 Corinthians 1:5) "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ."

Just in case you think that the walk or the journey is going to be easy, just read that one more time,

"For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance..."

Does that read the same way to you? Okay, so we're going to be suffering a lot because of the fact that there are going to be people that are hostile and hateful against us simply because we're following Christ. You don't have to do anything wrong. In fact, all you're doing is what is right, as Peter will say, "By your excellent behavior, it will actually condemn them. But it's your excellent behavior that they're going to be reviling you. But be like Jesus,

while being reviled, He didn't revile in return, but He gave a blessing instead."

(2 Corinthians 1:6) "But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer."

There's a strength that comes in the midst of the suffering, not that the suffering is gone, but while you're in the midst of it.

(2 Corinthians 1:7) "And our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

(2 Corinthians 1:8) For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

(2 Corinthians 1:9) indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead."

That was a surrendering moment in Paul's life. That was a moment where Paul goes, "This is way beyond my pay grade. I can't make this." And God goes, "Good. Because this is the moment when you know what resurrection is about." As he says, "That I might know the deliverance of God."

And verse 10 reads this way,

(2 Corinthians 1:10) "who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us..."

The great thing about experiencing the deliverance of God when you put all your faith in Him... I know people say, "all your marbles in one basket." But this is one time you do that. When you put all of your faith in Him and you just see Him just miraculously work, then whatever comes after that, it's like no big deal. That's why all of us have to have that moment of the sentence of death within ourselves. Because until you have that moment, you don't totally surrender your power and your control. But when you do that, then you have the comfort of God, and you go, "Nothing's impossible for Him." A little something comes up, and you go, "No big deal." And you live the rest

of your life that way. Wouldn't that be wonderful not to be worried about stuff, you know? "I got a hangnail. Oh no, it's cancer." But people get so worried about things, and I go, "God's got me. What do I have to be afraid of?" I can tell you this, that God has called us to, like Paul says to Timothy, finish a course. I'm going to go step over a line here. But I'm thoroughly convinced that none of us are going until we finish the course as long as we're on the course. So, you want to be in good shape? Stay on the course. Don't let things move you off the course. God has you. Keep walking. Take up your cross. They're going to be saying things. They're going to be pushing you off. Get back on the course. Because on the course, you will never be safer than that. And then, like Paul says, when the time of your departure comes, you'll go, "I'm ready. I'm done. I don't even know why I need to stay around any longer." And you'll have a great confidence that the Lord is going to take you home on that day. And I look forward to that day where the Lord turns to me, and He says, "Good job. Good job, faithful servant. You did what you're supposed to do." We don't have anything to be afraid of.

In this particular context, the tendency of the multitudes, as they begin to gather around, is to think, "Hey, everybody's invited." And you not only begin to see the meal as not important, but you begin to think in terms of, "Well, I really don't need to get ready. I really don't need to prepare for this." And God says, "Oh no, just because the meal's free doesn't mean you're not going to have to work on this." And so, we're working on the journey, and we're going to follow Him. And we're going to head to that place. And we're not going to allow things to discourage us. But you're going to have to understand all these things are going to come into being. So, you're going to have loved ones go against you and you're going to have the odds against you. And there's going to be a place where you're going to have to say, "I can't do this." And once you do, you're going to find the power of God. Paul will say at the end of 2 Corinthians, "His strength is made perfect when I'm weak." And so, we come before Him, and we lay our lives before Him.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we ask that You work within our hearts and within our lives as we march on to Zion. How wonderful it is to imagine that the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Creator of all things, the Lord of hosts, would invite us to a meal. That You would even desire to sit down and eat with us, that You would even allow us to lean our head against You is just unfathomable. Nevertheless, You've called us. But You warned us in this passage, "This is not an easy journey. People are going to try to stop you. They're going to try to hinder you. You're going to trip up. There are going to be times when you're going to feel overwhelmed. And there are going to be times that it just seems like the odds are against you. Don't listen to them," You tell us. So, we come to you with simplicity of heart and simplicity of mind saying that we just believe You, we trust You; we're not afraid anymore.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed, we're asking you to come before God in genuine faith and reminding you

that when God calls you, He's calling all of you to be all in
and He wants you to surrender all.