

JESUS IS AN INVITING KING

1. THE INVITING KING

- A. Jesus walked through life with His arms open wide. He was and is the most inclusive person ever.
 - I. Think about the people He sought out and interacted with in scripture.
 - II. In the story of the women at the well. **John 4**. Jesus seeks her out and chooses to invite her.
 - She has three strikes against her. She is a woman, a Samaritan and an adulterer.
 - III. Or consider the demoniac of Gadara. He is an insane outcast by the people who raised pigs.
 - IV. Jesus invited all: the sinner, prostitute, sick, Samaritan, Canaanite, tax collector, poor, & outcast.
 - V. Story after story, He is reaching out to people and inviting them to join Him.
 - “You come too! Of course you are invited.”
 - “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me.” **John 7:37**
- B. Inclusion sees the invisible. Inclusion is the activation of compassion.
- C. This is God’s heart: He is a father of the fatherless...God sets the solitary in families. **Psalm 68:5-6**
 - I. In the King’s house there’s always room for the sparrow and swallow (poor & disenfranchised). **Ps. 84**

2. THE NEED TO BELONG

- A. What we believe about the King will determine how we live our lives both individually and communally.
 - I. *“When we begin to see to the inviting and inclusive Jesus and follow in His footsteps, we will see a revolution in the western church because inclusion touches the great need of society.”* – Steve Stewart
- B. In healing the wounded heart, we talk about how we are all born with needs that could be summarized as:
 - I. The need for unconditional expressed love (intimacy).
 - II. The need to feel secure and comforted (safety).
 - III. The need for praise, affirmation and acceptance (identity & belonging).
 - IV. The need for a purpose (significance) in life.
- C. When I was growing up, I always felt like I was on the outside looking in when it came to church.
 - I. Until I found the vineyard in the mid 90s. The people were ordinary, everyday kind of people.
 - II. However, they would worship for an hour and the presence of God would just sweep into the room.
 - III. I would feel the tangible love of God and just weep as I felt included, belonging, and acceptance.
- D. We all long to be chosen and included. This starts when we are very young and continues through life.
 - I. Whether it is the team, the circle of friends, the date, the club or the job.
 - II. It is a wonderful feeling to be chosen. You feel accepted and desired.
- E. A few years ago we had a preaching series on Culture of Honor. Part of this culture is receiving people.
 - I. We create a safe place for people to be themselves by celebrating who people are, without stumbling over who they are not. This freedom allows people to bring their best to the table.
 - II. Think about how Jesus governs? Jesus never made anyone obey Him.
 - III. He told the truth about His Father, His kingdom and gave invitations and choices.
- F. When you are chosen, you develop heart messages that agree with God’s truth about you.
 - I. “I am special, I am beautiful, I am loved”
 - II. When you aren’t chosen, you often develop heart messages that are not consistent with God truth.
 - III. “I am not enough, I am not lovable, or I fall short of others.”
- G. One of my most gratifying experiences was seeing Abigail smile & knowing I’d given her a place to belong.

3. THE ANXIETY DRIVEN-NEED TO BE INCLUDED

- A. We all desire to be chosen for who we are and can go to great lengths to be someone we’re not to be chosen.
 - I. Who is desirable varies from culture to culture.
 - II. It could be based on wealth, ethnicity, where you were born, went to school, the job you hold etc.
- B. Our anxiety driven-need for belonging can lead to superiority. What have we done to get into the right group?
 - I. Our sense of wanting to belong can lead us to try to exclude others. Think about the fraternity freshman.
 - II. Have we ever discounted someone from hearing the good news? Or decided who’s worthy of salvation?
 - III. Have we ever excluded because we want the security of knowing we’re part of an exclusive group?
- C. The “anyone of Jesus” is exciting to us personally but when it includes others it can make us uncomfortable.
 - I. Consider Zacchaeus. Jericho’s crowd is excited to be included, but not thrilled when Zach is included.

4. THE INCLUSIVENESS OF JESUS

- A. In the Old Testament we read of God's chosen people
 - I. We read how God chose Moses to deliver, David to be king, and Elijah as prophet.
- B. Upon Jesus arrival, He introduces His upside down Kingdom.
 - I. All are invited. Whosoever believes shall be saved. **John 3:15-16**
 - II. If anyone is thirsty let him come to Me and drink. **John 7:37**
 - III. Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name welcomes me. **Mark 9:37**
- C. In His Kingdom, Jesus includes us in fellowship with Himself.
 - I. For whoever does the will of My Father is My brother and sister and mother. **Matthew 12:50**
 - II. Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them. **Matt 18:20**
- D. We also see Jesus' inclusiveness in His invitation to the disciples
 - I. "Come and see." **John 1:35-42**
 - II. "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." **Matthew 4:19**. Invitation to partner in eternity.
 - III. After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." **Luke 5:27-30**
 - IV. Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." **Luke 5:31**
 - V. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." **Luke 5:32**
- E. As a side note, I have found one of the greatest tools of evangelism is inclusiveness.

5. THE PARABLES OF THE GREAT SUPPER AND THE WEDDING FEAST

- A. In these parables, Jesus is clearly presented as the inviting King.
- B. The parable of the wedding feast. **Matthew 22:1-10**
 - I. He sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding.
 - II. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "I have prepared my dinner; Come to the wedding."
 - III. Go into the highways, and *as many* as you find, invite to the wedding
- C. The story of the great supper. **Luke 14:15-24**. Context. **Luke 14:1**. Preface. **Luke 14:12**
 - I. A certain man gave a great supper and *invited many*
 - II. He sent his servant at supper time to say to those invited, "Come, for all things are now ready"
 - III. Go out quickly into the streets and lanes and bring in here the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind.
 - IV. It is done, as you commanded, and still there is room.
 - V. Go out into the highways (main road) and hedges (out-of-way places), and compel them to come in.
- D. The preface: "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." **Luke 14:13**
 - I. Isn't this really the perfect description of the people Jesus invited and included?
- E. Hidden in the mystery of these parables, do you see Jesus as the inviting and inclusive King?
- F. "*When we begin to see to the inviting and inclusive Jesus and follow in His footsteps, we will see a revolution in the western church because inclusion touches the great need of society.*" – Steve Stewart

6. MINISTRY TIME

- A. Instead of trying to convert people, or thinking that's what we're supposed to do, what if we just let people taste the kingdom and see if they want more?
 - I. Invite the Kingdom.
 - II. "Are you experiencing anything?" or "What are you experiencing?"
 - III. "Do you like what you are experiencing?"
 - IV. "Would you like more?"
 - V. "Would you like personal access to this Kingdom any time, any place?"
 - VI. "Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? Would you like one?"

SCRIPTURE

John 1:35-42 (NKJV) Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?"

They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

Luke 5:27-30 (NKJV) After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." 28 So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. 30 And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Matthew 22:1-10 (NKJV) And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 4 Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."' 5 But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. 7 But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' 10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Luke 14:1 (NKJV) 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.

Luke 14:12-13 (NKJV) 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 neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind."

Luke 14:15-24 (NKJV) 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!"

16 Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, 17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' 18 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.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' 20 Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' 22 And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' 23 Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"