

# Included! Including!

Love Your Neighbor – Week 3

April 5, 2020

## **DAY 1: An historical metaphor for the story of the bible**

1. As our Civil War was coming to a close the question in Washington D.C. was this. “What should be done with the Rebels?” It was not an easy question. (1) The Confederates fired first, an attack on Ft. Sumter. (2) The war would cost the lives of 620,000 Americans! (3) The South had invaded the North.

2. Some in the North wanted the South severely punished. Many had lost husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. Widows were working farms.

3. When President Lincoln decided on the question at hand, his answer was simple. “We will treat them as if they had never been away.”

4. One month before the Civil War ended, Lincoln gave one of the most famous speeches ever given in history--his second inaugural address. It included these immortal words.

“With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan - to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

5. When Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, those who knew Lincoln said, “They (meaning the South) have killed the South’s best friend.”

6. In microcosm, this story is the story of the bible.

### **The story of the bible can be summarized thusly:**

1. God created the universe, and a world expressly for the delight of the relationship that mankind could enjoy knowing God. God gave every imaginable blessing to Adam and Eve.

2. Adam and Eve rejected God’s involvement with them unless it was on their terms. Chaos and dysfunction naturally followed.

3. In every generation since, in every human heart, there lies this sin nature—to proudly insist on its own way as best, to rebel against any command we don’t like, to insist on making ourselves the center of our concern, and pushing God out of His rightful place in our hearts and into the role of bystander, bellhop, or to even deny His existence.

4. To solve the problem of rebellious human nature, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ. We killed Him!

5. In spite of our rebellion, pride, and insistence in going our own way, God STILL invites us to join Him!

- We are invited. We are included! We can RSVP, or,
- We can go on rejecting His gracious and costly offer.

## DAY 2: Invitation. God's invitation to everyone.

1. God invites people to find their deepest satisfaction in Him. This is by design!

*Isaiah 55:1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.*

*<sup>2</sup> Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.*

*<sup>3</sup> Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.*

2. The invitation is addressed to the “*thirsty*.” God is **not** talking to people who are physically thirsty, like people stranded in the desert. He is talking to people who are aware of a human thirst in their soul. (v. 1)

3. Are you aware of a thirst in your soul? How would you describe it?

4. The “water” God offers us is what most can quench human thirst. Does it cost anything to get that water? (v. 1)

5. When we are away from God, we seek almost anything to quench an inner thirst. And we will pay almost anything and “labor” to get what we think will quench the thirst in our soul. Will it work? (v. 2)

6. How do we appropriate the water God offers? (v. 2)

7. How does God describe the effect of eating His “rich fare”? (v. 2)

8. V. 3 amplifies on how we appropriate God’s “water” and His rich “food.” What are we supposed to do?

9. Notice that this is **not** a religious solution. It is **not** believing a certain set of religious facts. It is a personal solution rooted in a relationship with God.

10. How does He describe the effect on the soul of the person who takes God up on this invitation? (v. 3)

11. I often hear lost people say, “I just want to feel alive!” In the long run there is only one way that will happen! It’s spelled out in these three verses!

### **DAY 3: Rejection: God's invitation is rejected.**

1. You would think that thirsty people would take God up on this incredible invitation! Consider:

- a. We are thirsty and hungry for something we sense is missing.
- b. God offers what we most need.
- c. What He offers is free!

2. Yet, human beings reject His offer.

3. We are like people when we lose something important at home. We search every room, look under every piece of furniture, look through every trash can, look in the garage, look in the car, empty pockets of clothes in the hamper ... in greater and greater frustration ... until ... we finally find what we were looking for.

4. Instead of looking to God for our deepest needs to be met we foolishly and stubbornly believe that what we are looking for can be found ... somewhere ... somehow ... someway ... without having to humble ourselves, admit we are wrong and turn to God.

5. We believe that if we could just get a college degree, get married, have children, get a good job, have a nice career, stay healthy, buy a house, etc., that we will be *satisfied*.

6. Remember yesterday's verse:

*Isaiah 55:2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?*

7. If God does not get our attention with His hand of blessing, He can certainly get our attention through the hand of difficulty or even misery. In this world the natural effect of refusing to let God be God in our lives is misery. We can taste it here. When we do, we must awaken ourselves to the danger of continuing on, unabated, on our slow slide away from God.

*2 Thessalonians 1:9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power*

“The lost enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded.” –C.S. Lewis

“If you want your own way, God will let you have it. Hell is the enjoyment of one's own way forever.” -Dorothy L. Sayers

#### **DAY 4: A parable about human nature**

1. I occasionally hear a lost person say, "I don't believe in a god who sends people to hell."
2. That statement is loaded with assumptions! Here are a few.
  - a. Human beings don't deserve hell.
  - b. Human beings are more just than God.
  - c. People may end up in hell because God is unjust.
  - d. The person making that statement is more just than the god they accuse of being unjust.
3. Is this person correct? Let's look at a parable that Jesus told that addresses these issues.

*Luke 14:15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."*

*<sup>16</sup> Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.*

*<sup>17</sup> At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'*

*<sup>18</sup> "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' <sup>19</sup> "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' <sup>20</sup> "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'*

*<sup>21</sup> "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'*

*<sup>22</sup> "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'*

*<sup>23</sup> "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.*

*<sup>24</sup> I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"*

4. The main character in this story is the one preparing a great banquet that he is hosting for free.
5. He has established an invitation list, and sent out invitations.
6. What is the response of the people who were initially invited? (vv. 18-20).

7. The owner of the house, the host goes to Plan B. What is it? (v. 21)

8. What is the attitude of the host/master when the banquet hall is still not full? (v. 23).

9. The natural result of not attending the banquet is you will not taste the food. That choice was not made by the host. That choice was made by those who refused to attend the banquet.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

**DAY 5: Renewed invitation! The long-suffering of God for rebellious people.**

1. Have you ever been falsely accused? What is the sting of that like?
  
2. Have you ever been maliciously accused? What was that like?
  
3. Have you ever done something unimaginably good for someone else and gotten kicked in the teeth for it? What was that like?
  
4. If you were able to answer any of these questions in the affirmative then you have tasted some of the awful, evil, wickedness that human beings have accused God of doing.
  
5. YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET, YET...  
God STILL invites rebels to come to Him!

*Isaiah 1:18 (RSV) "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.*

*Matthew 11:28 (RSV) Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.  
<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

*Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!"  
Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

6. God's invitation to His banquet is carried forward by His children, you and me!

*2 Corinthians 5:20 (RSV) So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.  
We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

7. And we are reminded of the great privilege we have to carry His invitation!

*2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*