



# awake to Jesus! sunday school resources

## 4: Jesus the Storyteller

### Sunday school lesson 4: Luke 13-16

#### Teacher's notes / Devotional for teachers

I think one of the things we forget about Jesus was just how good a teacher he was. We rightly prioritize seeing Jesus as God and Saviour and Lord. But in doing so, we can forget the wonderful way he taught, mentored and led the people around Him. And that is a real shame for we can learn so much from Him in this regard.

Perhaps one of the reasons Jesus' teaching remains so easily with us is because of his ability to tell wonderful stories. In doing this, he was simply drawing riches from His Jewish heritage. It was a powerful way in which rabbis communicated truth. And nobody told a better story than Jesus, and we call these stories, parables.

On the surface, these parables seem like relatively straight forward, almost simplistic stories that both young and old can readily grasp. However, Jesus' parables are much more subversive than that. Indeed, I tend to liken them to the depth charges used against submarines. At first they simply sink down into our minds but then they explode within us and force us to make decisions regarding what Jesus is really talking about.

Nowhere is this more true than in the parable of the Great Banquet! When we understand this story in its original context, we realize that Jesus is talking about entering the Kingdom of God. He is calling for a commitment to acknowledge Him as King and to follow Him wherever he commands. And this parable reveals once more in the ministry and teaching of Jesus that it is seldom the 'in crowd' of society that receive the Kingdom, but rather those on the margins, the ordinary, humble people who jump at the opportunity to be with Jesus when he invites them.

This parable is all about Jesus' invitation into his reign as King. Everyone is invited into the Kingdom, but not everyone expects the sort of Kingdom that Jesus brings. That is the meaning of the parable. An invitation has been sent out firstly to a group of people who turn the invitation down. This group of people represents many of the Jewish leaders and people who are expecting the kingdom to belong to their nation only and indeed it would be of a military nature, subjugating all other nations before them as they had often been subjugated themselves.

They turn down the invitation with false excuses that verge on being ludicrous.

The first person says in verse 18: 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please, accept my regrets.' As if he had not seen it yet. In a country where land is limited and precious, buying land without looking at it is just not done. There's an old saying from the Middle East: No one buys a field in the Middle East without knowing it like the palm of his hand.

This is the equivalent in our day if somebody were to say to you, "I can't come over, I just bought a house and I need to go look at it and see what its like and where it is."

Has anybody here ever buy a house without looking at it first? This is a bald-faced, unvarnished lie. The speaker knows it is, and the host of the party knows it is. It's not intended to be taken

with credibility.

The next guy comes along and says, "I just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm going to test them." Again, in that day, five yoke of oxen would be a huge financial investment.

If you were going to buy a team of oxen there was a standard procedure. You'd go to the home of the owner or to the marketplace where they were being sold, and you'd see if they could work together as a team because if they couldn't work as a team it would be a total waste of money. You wouldn't buy them. Nobody would buy oxen without having tested them out first.

Again, it's the equivalent in our day if somebody said, "Well, I just bought five cars. I want to go see if they have engines in them." I'm not a car guy, I don't know too much about cars. But I know enough that it's a good thing to make sure the car has an engine and runs if you're going to buy it. Again, this is a patently ridiculous excuse. The guy knows it, and he knows full well the host will recognize that it's a sham.

The third guy comes along. "I'm married," he says. Now, in the text here it simply says, "I married a woman. I cannot come."

Well, we can say at the very least that this man certainly knew he was getting married when he accepted the invitation. And here he's not even polite enough to ask to be excused.

Here's the truth: These are not legitimate excuses. These are people who are deliberately attempting to humiliate the host with openly spurious excuses. They intend to subject him to ridicule and rejection. They aim to stop the party. That's their aim.

So when they won't come to the party, the invitation is sent out to anyone else who wants to come in. In its original context that meant the Gentiles, every other non-Jewish nation, and that includes us!

And so a straightforward story suddenly explodes into a call to commitment to Christ. And many people still respond by either rejecting or following Jesus. Let's make sure we don't offer ridiculous excuses for failing to follow hard after Christ, our King. And let us make sure that we let our children know that they are welcome in the Kingdom but the cost is potentially explosive.

- Explanation of lesson
  - This is the fourth in the series of Sunday school lessons and looks at Jesus as the Storyteller.

- This lesson looks at a specific story that Jesus told within the Gospel according to Luke. It's the Parable of the Great Banquet. This is a parable that is told reasonably often but does not always give time to explore some of the issues that we hope you will be able to explore with the children in your group while you do this one. Again, as with the others in this series, it can also be done as a "stand alone" lesson.
- Aims of lesson
  - To help children see that Jesus used stories during His ministry to help explain important truths about God and His Kingdom
  - To help children understand the invitation that God gives to each of us to His banquet in heaven and to see that all they have to do is say yes
  - To allow children the chance to ask questions and respond to God's invitation
- Equipment needed

- Whiteboard/poster sized paper and pens
- Feast table with food on it
- Pieces of coloured paper (only 3 colours required; one piece for each child)
- Copies of the Bible passage (printed at the end)

## Introduction

In this lesson we are going to hear a story that Jesus told about a big party. It is one with a difference though.

If you were having a party, what sort of things would you need to organise to make it a success? Get the children to make a list in the group of all the things that need to be done (e.g. make a list of people, send invites, get food, put up decorations, etc.)

Explain that in this story, the man having the party did all the preparations for the party, invited all the people, organised the food and was all set for a special occasion....and then it all went badly wrong!

## **Part 2**

- (Before the children come into the room, have a table prepared at one side with a “feast” on it of special food. Be aware of allergies. Cover the table with a cloth.)
- Ask the children to help you come up with a list of things that Jesus did while He lived on earth (e.g. he travelled, he taught His disciples, healed people, taught crowds, etc.). Encourage them to think about Jesus as a teacher and explain that the story today is going to help us think about how Jesus taught people. Explain that Jesus often told people about God and His Kingdom through telling them stories about things and events that they would see every day.
- Have a pile of A4 coloured pieces of paper (e.g. red, blue and yellow. They do not have to be these colours but as long as there are only 3). Get each child to choose a colour and then stand with the other people in their colour group. Uncover your “feast” for them all to see.
- Read the story in Luke 14:15-24 (printed at the end of the lesson). When you get to the part where some are invited to be part of the feast (v.17-20), ask the children in the first group (e.g. red group) to step forward. At v.21 invite the second group (e.g. blue group) to step forward to the table. Finally at v.23, invite the third group (e.g. yellow group) to step forward.
- When the story is finished, ask the children how they think the people in the different groups might feel about being invited and how they were invited.
- Say that God invites us to be part of a feast that He has prepared for those who love Him and want to follow Him, and all we have to do is say yes. Then invite each child to join in the feast that you have at the table and chat together about how wonderful the feast or banquet that God has prepared for his people will be.

### **Part 3**

- Ask the children how they would feel if they received an invitation from God addressed to them personally? God has and wants us to respond to His invitation to be a follower of Him and eventually join Him for his banquet feast in heaven.
- Ask them that if they did receive the invitation and went to the party what would they ask God about his invitation to celebrate with Him in heaven? Allow the children time to think about it and also prompt them to ask any questions that they may have about responding to being a follower of Jesus.
- Take some time to pray as a group and thank God for the fact that He invites all of us to be part of His family and to come to His banquet feast.

### **Part 4**

- Get everyone in the group to think of their favourite place to be. It may be a beach, the funfair, on their bed. Ask each child to act out the place so that everyone can try and guess where it is. You may need to go first as leaders so that they get the idea depending on the age and participation levels of the children.
- Explain that God wants us to go to Heaven to be with Him and that it is better than all their favourite places rolled into one.
- Finish with thank you prayers to God for His invitation and all that it means.
- Allow time at the end if possible for children who did not want to talk to you about God's invitation to us all in front of the group. Be aware of any children who are hanging back to be able to talk to you and be prepared to answer their questions and help them understand this significant and important issue.

### **Bible Readings**

#### **Luke 14:15-25**

#### **The Great Banquet**

<sup>15</sup>After Jesus had finished speaking, one of the guests said, "The greatest blessing of all is to be at the banquet in God's kingdom!"

<sup>16</sup>Jesus told him:

A man once gave a great banquet and invited a lot of guests. <sup>17</sup>When the banquet was ready, he sent a servant to tell the guests, "Everything is ready! Please come."

<sup>18</sup>One guest after another started making excuses. The first one said, "I bought some land, and I've got to look it over. Please excuse me."

<sup>19</sup>Another guest said, "I bought five teams of oxen, and I need to try them out. Please excuse me."

<sup>20</sup>Still another guest said, "I have just gotten married, and I can't be there."

<sup>21</sup>The servant told his master what happened, and the master became so angry that he said, "Go as fast as you can to every street and alley in town! Bring in everyone who is poor or crippled or blind or lame."

<sup>22</sup>When the servant returned, he said, "Master, I've done what you told me, and there is still plenty of room for more people."

<sup>23</sup>His master then told him, "Go out along the back roads and fence rows and make people come in, so that my house will be full. <sup>24</sup>Not one of the guests I first invited will get even a bite of my food!"