

GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Reap the Harvest: Compel Them In

Luke 14:15-24

ANNOUNCEMENTS:



Announcements:

- January 25- Titus 2 Mentor Mixer (Women)
- February 7- Gather (Women)
- February 14- 2nd Saturday (Men)

Check out the TJC Weekend Recap podcast for a more in-depth look at our sermons each week!

The podcast is available on all streaming platforms!

SERMON NOTES

We are in a series to start the year off entitled: Reap the Harvest. We are focusing on two things: 1. Jesus' ministry to reaching the lost and 2. Our church's unique call in our context and time in history to do the same. We are celebrating 20 years as a church this month (next week is our official birthday Sunday). As we celebrate 20 years, and look backwards with gratitude and thankfulness to God for His grace, we look forward to what it means for us to continue Building Up, Sending Out, and Reap the Harvest now and in the years to come.

The first week, I highlighted Jesus' compassion on the harassed and helpless sheep without a shepherd who needed the gospel. The harvest is plentiful. There is a massive opportunity to reach people for the Lord. That was true then, and it is true today. We are putting an emphasis on inviting people to church and having gospel conversations this year. Last week, Pastor Nick showed how Jesus sends us out by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ILLUSTRATION: If you would have asked someone in the first century, who would last the longest? Whose reign would be more influential and powerful?

- The Roman Empire or Christianity?
- Caesar Augustus or Jesus?

Most would bet their lifetimes and their own lives on the Roman Empire and Caesar Augustus.

Yet, two thousand years later, Rome is now just a city with ruins to visit in Italy. And Christianity has spread to 2.5B people around the world. Jesus is King of Kings with worshippers from all time and places. Caesar is a salad.

Jesus is the most powerful, influential, and compelling person in human history. And He's alive. He not only died on the cross to save sinners and give them eternal life, He rose from the dead and is enthroned today as the world's true king. He is Lord. Christianity is the name of the system of worldview and beliefs of those who follow and trust in Jesus. Christianity is responsible for building the Western Civilization and culture that you enjoy so much and has brought the flourishing of countries around the world for hundreds and hundreds of years. Education, medical advancements, rights and dignity for women, abolition of slavery, development of commerce and technology, scientific breakthroughs and discoveries all follow the spread of Christianity.

Everything gets better when people turn to Jesus. Individuals get better. Families get better. Societies get better. And that's why we as Christians go into all the world and make disciples. There is a harvest. We go out in the power of the Spirit. And--what we're talking about today--we compel them to come in.

Scripture Exegesis: Luke 14:15-24

This passage today gives us several things to think about at multiple levels. At one level, we see Jesus addressing the directional movement of the gospel: Jewish leaders --> Jewish outcasts --> Gentile nations. On another level, you are going to see the heart of God to bring people into His kingdom.

15 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

What prompts this parable is someone reclining at the table eating with Jesus says with excitement that it will be a blessing for everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. The natural question is "who will those people be?"

16 But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' 20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

The man who gives the great banquet is "God the Father" and He invites many to enjoy the banquet, which is eternal life in the Kingdom. He sends His Son, Jesus, to invite people to enter this banquet. But everyone has excuses for not being able to come. You have one who says he's busy tending to his new field he bought. Another has oxen to be examined. Another has family responsibilities keeping him from going.

21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' 22 And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 23 And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

The master of the house is angry over these rejections. So he sends the servant back out to all who would come. A special invitation had been given to the previous guests, but now all are compelled to come in. The invitation is for all who would come. Those previously invited and rejected it will not taste the banquet.

There are things operating at two levels here. First, Jesus is telling His listeners that those religious leaders rejecting Him and God's invitation to the Kingdom will not only miss it, but the invitation is going to go to all, including those Gentiles the religious leaders would not believe are invited. At a second level, we learn a few really important principles:

1. We are sent to compel people to come in.

I love the word "compel" here. We are to go and be persuasive.

2 Corinthians 5:11 -- Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

Paul tells the church and leaders in Corinth that because of their fear of the Lord, they work to persuade others. They compel others to come in. In fact, this is one of the most prominent themes in the book of Acts.

Acts 13:43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 17:4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

Acts 18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Acts 18:13 saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law."

Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

Acts 19:26 And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.

Acts 26:28 And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"

Acts 28:23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

Acts 28:24 And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.

These examples are all over Acts and Acts is the book that records the work of the apostles to spread the gospel throughout the ancient world. Their mission and work was one of compelling people to come in. They worked to persuade as many as they could.

You know what that tells us? Jesus' disciples have a role in bringing people to God. Does God draw and save? Yes. But faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Romans 10). Jesus says, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Jesus is building His church. But watch this: **Jesus doesn't build His church despite us, but through us.** This is why He says, "Go into all the world and make disciples, baptize them, teach them to obey my commands." (Matthew 28:18-20) We are the vessels He uses.

2. God wants His house filled with guests to enjoy the feast.

The Lord delights in showing grace and mercy to sinners. He delights in lavishing kindness and love on the least deserving. But we cannot reject His offers of grace and love. We must come. We come with humility and repentance. We believe by faith. God wants His house filled. Now, I'm a big proponent in the sovereignty of God and trust He will bring in all that He has determined to bring in. But I don't know who they are. You don't know who they are. So we don't discriminate or become selective. We invite and compel as many as we can. We plant and water, and let God bring the growth. So whether you put greater emphasis on the sovereignty of God or on the responsibility of man, it leads to the same actions: compel them in because God wants His house full.

I remember when we started this church 20 years ago, there wasn't a full house. There were some Sundays in the gym of West Elementary when the service started and I wondered if I was going to be preaching to the tech booth and my family that day. I learned to close my eyes during worship because it was too depressing to open them sometimes. Now, to be clear, our mission at TJC is not just about numbers...but I will say this without blushing: we care about numbers...because numbers represent people and people matter to God. God wants His house filled. He cares about numbers. He didn't want an empty, half-attended banquet. As long as we have

breath and life and existence individually and as a church, we should be servants of the Master, compelling people to come into the Father's House.

Use our invite cards to invite people to come to TJC for a Sunday gathering. God wants His house filled. We're challenging everyone to get 5 people to come to church with you this year.

We both witness outside the church and invite into the church. We compel them in. We persuade.

One of the great examples of this in Scripture is in John 4. Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at a well. We learn from the story that she's been married 4x and is living with a man now who she's not married to. She's at the well during the time of day where she wouldn't encounter other women, likely because she is an object of scorn. Jesus knows her. He knows her story because He's God Almighty in the flesh. She tries to divert His questions by bringing up a theological argument about worship. But he keeps driving it closer to real heart issues. He then reveals to her that He is the Messiah. She immediately runs into town and begins to spread the word. The result? Many Samaritans believed as a result of her testimony. Jesus ended staying two days with them teaching the Word and many more came to believe.

Every single person who believed in that village is a descendant from her testimony. Regardless of the mistakes of her life to that point, when she met Jesus, and became a witness to Him, her influence left an eternal mark on them. That's the power of what being a witness can mean for us too. We can have a massive impact on generations after us through our testimony. When we go to others and compel them to come in, it carries a generational impact.

STORY: In 1849, a French immigrant started a bakery in the heart of San Francisco. Today the bakery still exists. It is known for its sourdough that dates all the way back to 1849. The yeast begets yeast which continues the same sourdough for 175 years. But there is even more to this story. When a baker kneads the dough, traces of their DNA get baked into the bread. The DNA traces remain fertile forever. And it's baked into every loaf of bread from that point on. Bread today is not only from that original batch of yeast, it contains the DNA from anyone and everyone that has ever kneaded that mother dough.

Friends, each of us are the same. We are the byproduct of the DNA of many people's influence on our lives. And it's not just biological DNA, it's the friendships, mentors, and those who have had an impact on us. When I think about my life and faith, I'm 15% the influence of my grandmother, I'm 25% the influence of my mom and dad, I'm 25% the influence of my wife. I could keep going, and of course the %s are not exact, but you get the point. The "DNA" of others is on me. And each of us can be that to others if we would submit ourselves to the Lord and be willing servants that compel others in.

Christians, three action steps:

- 1. Pray for the Lord to use you.**
- 2. Pray for specific unchurched and unbelievers.**
- 3. Step out in faith.** (to invite or have gospel conversations)

Close:

For those in the room today who have not yet surrendered your life to Christ, don't delay. The banquet is ready for you and the master of the banquet has invited you to come. Don't keep letting excuses keep you from knowing the grace and forgiveness you need. Don't be like the people in the parable who made excuses. Call upon Christ. He came into the world to save sinners. There's only one name under Heaven by which men must be saved: Jesus. I urge you to come today.

PRAY



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **DISCUSS**

1: The Invitation and the Excuses – Read: Luke 14:16–20

What kinds of excuses keep people today from responding to God's invitation, and how might we gently challenge those excuses? Before we answer that, what were some excuses we used to make for those who stayed away from church & Christ before now?

Leader Note: Keep the focus outward, not judgmental. Avoid turning this into self-righteous critique.

2: Handling Rejection Faithfully – Read: Luke 14:18–20; Luke 10:10–11

Some reject the invitation, and Jesus instructs His disciples how to respond. How should Christians process rejection without becoming discouraged, defensive, or disengaged from the mission? To remove the fear of rejection, share stories in the group of rejection so we can normalize this feeling.

Leader Note: This is a huge excuse on why we don't share. Let this discussion build off of discussion 1.

3: Compel Them to Come In – Read: 2 Corinthians 5:11

What does it mean to "compel" or "persuade" people toward Christ in a way that is faithful and loving, not manipulative? Can anyone share a story where a faithful servant persuaded you with an invitation like this? Can anyone share a story where manipulation was involved in an invitation?

Leader Note: Clarify that persuasion is relational and truthful, empowered by love and conviction.

4: Others Influence in our Lives – Read: John 4: 28-42

The joy of Christ is contagious and begets joy as yeast begets yeast. Who are the top influences in your faith because they are constantly sharing the joys, truth, and wisdom Christ is giving them?

Leader Note: Encourage authenticity. God uses obedience, not perfection.

5: God Works Through His People – Read: Romans 10:14–15

If we were to be honest about making ourselves available for God to work through us, how would we measure our personal faithfulness in this area? We know God chooses to use ordinary believers to bring others to faith, are we stepping into that responsibility intentionally? When is the last time we have opened our mouth about the Gospel with the intention to invite into community & salvation?

Leader Note: Fire your group up to Reap the Harvest

6: Identity of the Invited – Read: Luke 14:21

We see the master sends for the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. What does this passage teach us about who feels welcome in God's Kingdom and how might churches unintentionally communicate the opposite?

Leader Note: Move the discussion toward humility and hospitality, not criticism. This is about posture, not policy.

7: Legacy Beyond Our Lifetime – Read: Psalm 145:4

How does Scripture reshape the way we think about influence, legacy, and faithfulness when we may never see the full fruit of our obedience? When inviting someone to participate in the life of Christ, do we often see the generations coming after them potentially being impacted with one invitation?

Leader Note: Tie this to the 20-year celebration and long-view discipleship. Faithfulness outlives visibility.

LOOK AHEAD



- **BUILD UP | SEND OUT**

- How are you making yourself known at church this week?
- How are you growing to know Christ better this week?
- How are you making Christ known this week?

- **PRAYER**

- **Pray over any request from your group members.**
- **Pray for our team:** Shawn Casto- Sending Pastor/Elder
- **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
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- **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Browns
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>