ALL THINGS ARE READY, COME

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A SERMON
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"Come, for all things are now ready."
Luke 14:17

THIS invitation was first of all made to the Jews, but it seems to me to have a peculiar appropriateness to ourselves. It is later in the day than when first the Lord was here, and therefore the supper time is evidently closer at hand. The shadows lengthen, the sun of the present dispensation is nearing its setting.

By nearly nineteen hundred years has its day been shortened since first the Lord sent forth His servants at supper time. The fullness of time for the marriage supper of the Lamb must speedily arrive, and therefore it behooves us to be more than ever earnest in delivering the message to the invited guests.

And if all things could be said to be ready, even in our Savior's day, we may say it with still greater emphasis now. For when He delivered this parable the Holy Spirit was not yet given. But Pentecost has now passed, and the Spirit of God abides with us to accompany the Word, to fill it with power, and to bless our souls as we feed upon the truth. Very emphatically then at this time all things are now ready, and the supper awaits the guests.

I pray you do not begin to make excuses, but be prepared to follow us when we bid you come, to go with us when we seek to bring you in, or at least to yield to our entreaties when with all the sacred violence of love we would compel you to come in. We will not grudge the use of all the three increasing modes of persuasion so long as you are but led to "Come, for all things are now ready."

There are two things clearly in the text, and these have a close relation to one another. A plain invitation, "Come," and then a forcible argument, "for all things are ready." The argument is fetched from the divine preparations, gathered from among the dainty viands of the royal feast. "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, come to the supper."

The readiness of everything on God's part is the argument why men should come and partake of His grace. And that is the point upon which we will dwell at this time—the readiness of the feast of mercy is the reason why men should come to it at once.

I. We will begin our meditation by laying down the first statement which shall make our first division of discourse, namely, that IT IS GOD'S HABIT TO HAVE ALL THINGS READY, whether for His guests or His creatures.

You never discover Him to be behindhand in anything. When the guests come, there is not a scramble to get the table arranged and the food prepared, but the Lord has great forethought, and every little point of detail is well-arranged. "All things are ready."

It was so in creation. He did not create a single blade of grass upon the face of the earth until the soil and the atmosphere had been prepared for it, and until the kindly sun had learned to look down upon the earth. Imagine vegetation without a sun, or without the alternation of day and night. But the air was full of light, the firmament upheld the clouds, and the dry land had appeared from out of the sea, and then all things were ready for herb, and plant, and tree.

Nor did God prepare one single creature that has life, nor fowl that fly in the midst of heaven, nor fish that swim the seas, nor beast that moves on the dry land, until He had prepared its *habitat*, and made ready its appointed food.

There were no cattle before there were meadows for their grazing. No birds till there were trees for their nests, no, nor even a creeping insect till its portion of meat had been provided. No creature had to wait in a hungry mood while its food was growing—all things were ready—ready first for vegetation, and then afterwards for animal life.

As for Adam, when God came to make Him as His last and noblest work of creation, all things were ready. The garden was laid out upon the banks of flowing streams, and planted with all kinds of trees. The fruits were ripe for his diet, and the flowers in bloom for his delight. He did not come to an unfurnished house, but he entered upon a home which his Father had made pleasant and agreeable for his dwelling.

The world was first fitted up, and then the man who was to govern that world was placed in it. "All things are ready," the Lord seems to say, "Spring up, O herb yielding seed." And then, "All things are ready, come forth you roes and hinds of the field!" And then, "All things are ready, stand forth, O man, made in Mine own image!"

In after times we may gather illustrations of the same truth from the ways of God with men. The ark was first of all builded, and the various creatures were gathered into it, with all their necessary provender, for that strange voyage which they were about to take. And then the Lord said to Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark."

"All things are ready, come," was His voice to the chosen eight as they entered into the ark. There was no need to tarry any longer, every preparation was made, and therefore God shut them in. Everything is done with punctuality and exactness by the only wise God. The selfsame day that a thing is needed, it is prepared.

Take another event in providence, such as the going down of Israel into Egypt. God had determined that Jacob and his seed should sojourn awhile in the land of Ham, but how wisely He prepared the whole matter. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, and Joseph was there upon the throne clothed with power to nourish them through the famine.

He had been there years before, all in good time to store the wheat while the seven years of plenty lasted, that they might be well-fed during the seven years of famine. Goshen also was at the disposal of Joseph, so that the flocks and herds of Israel might dwell in that fat land. Not into Egypt shall God's Israel go till all things are ready. And when all things are ready they will come out again with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

So it was when the tribes migrated into Canaan itself. God took them not to the promised land until all things were ready. They were made to wait for the fitting time, for the Lord said, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Not till the inhabitants of the land had passed the bounds of mercy, and were condemned to die, were the Israelites brought upon the scene to be at once their executioners and successors.

And when the tribes came to the river Jordan, God had prepared everything for them, for He had sent the hornet before them to drive out the people, and a pestilence also, for the spies said, "It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." The Lord God had gone before them to fight their battles before they came, and to prepare a place for them, so that when they entered they dwelt in houses which they had not built, and they gathered the fruit of olives which they had not planted.

They came to a land that flowed with milk and honey, a land in a fine cultivated condition, and not a wilderness which with hard labor must be reclaimed. Israel came to a country which was as the garden of the Lord, whose fruit might at once be enjoyed, for they ate of the old corn of the land almost as soon as they passed the Jordan. So you see, "All things are ready" is a proclamation which the Lord has often in spirit made to those whom He chooses to bless.

Now the fact that in the great Gospel supper all things are ready teaches us, first, that *God's thoughts go before men's comings.* "Come, *for* all things are ready." Not, "If you come, all things will be ready," but "They are ready, and therefore come."

Grace is first, and man at his best follows its footsteps. Long before we ever thought of God, He thought of us. Yea, before we had a being and ere time itself began, in the bosom of the Eternal there were thoughts of love towards those for whom the table of His mercy is now spread. He had planned and arranged everything in His august mind from of old.

He had indeed foreknown and predestinated all the provisions and all the guests of His supper. All things were settled in His eternal covenant and purpose or ever the earth was. Never think, oh sinner, that you can outstrip the love of God. It is at the end of the race before you are at the beginning. God has completed before you have begun.

His thoughts are before ours, and *so are His acts,* for He does not say, "All things are planned and arranged," but "All things are ready." Jesus, the great sacrifice, is slain. The fountain for our cleansing is filled with blood. The Holy Spirit has been given. The Word by which we are to be instructed is in our hands, and the light which will illuminate that sacred page is promised us through the Holy Ghost.

Things promised ought to encourage us to come to Christ, but things already given ought to be irresistible attractions. All things are already completed by the sacred Trinity before we come to cry for mercy. This should make us very hopeful and eager in our approaches to the Lord. Come, sinner. Come at once. This ought to encourage you, since all that God has to do in your salvation is done before you have a thought of Him or turn one foot towards His abode. All things are ready. Come!

This also proves how welcome those are who come. If you are invited to see a friend, and when you reach the place, you find the door locked, and after knocking many times no one answers, for there is no one at home, you reckon that there is some mistake, or that the invitation was not a sincere one.

Even if your host should come to the door and let you in, but should evidently be embarrassed, for there is no meal provided, and he has made no arrangements for your rest at night, you soon detect it, and like a wise man you quickly move off somewhere else, for if you had been welcome, things would have been prepared for you.

But oh, poor soul, if you come to God, all things are ready for your entertainment.

"Spread for thee the festal board,
With His richest dainties stored."

The couch of rest and quietness is prepared for you. All things are ready. How freely does JEHOVAH welcome you, how genuine is the invitation, how sincere the desire that you should come to feast with Him.

So much upon our first remark. It is the habit of the Lord to have all things ready for His guests.

II. Our second statement is that THIS READINESS SHOULD BE AN ARGUMENT THAT HIS SAINTS SHOULD COME continually to Him and find grace to help in every time of need.

O children of God, I will lift the parable away from the immediate use which the Savior made of it to employ it for your good. You know, beloved, that whenever the Lord Jesus Christ invites His people to come to Him, and to taste of His bounty, all things are ready.

It was a beautiful scene by the sea of Tiberias when the Lord spake to those who had been toiling on the lake at fishing, and said to them, "Come and dine." They were willing enough to dine, but they were busy dragging to the shore those great fishes. Remember, when they did land, they found the invitation to be no vain one, for it is written, "They saw a fire of coals there and fish laid thereon, and bread."

How the coals came there, and the fish, and the bread, the evangelist does not tell us, but our Lord would not have asked them to dinner if He had not been able to give them a warm reception. There was the fire of coals, and the fish laid thereon and bread. Whenever therefore your Lord and Master, by His blessed Spirit, calls you to come near to Him, you may be quite sure that all things are ready for your immediate enjoyment.

You need never pause or hesitate, but approach Him without delay. I want to caution you against replying, "But Lord, I do not feel ready." That is most true, but that is not an argument which you should

use to excuse yourself in holding back. It is *His* readiness that is the main thing, not yours, and as all things are ready, do you come whether you feel ready or not.

I have heard of some Christians who have said, "I do not feel in a proper frame of mind to pray." My brother, pray till you do. Some have said, "I do not think I shall go up to the house of God today. I feel so unhappy, so cast down." When should you go so much as then, in order that you may find comfort?

"Still," says one, "you would not have me sing a hymn when of heavy heart?" Ay, would I not, I would indeed, I would have you sing yourself up from the depths of the sea where all God's billows have gone over you.

David full often did so. When he began a Psalm in the deeps, and then gradually rose, and rose, and rose, till he was in a perfect rapture of delight before the Psalm was over. All things are ready with your Lord, therefore do come whether you happen to be ready or not.

Note the times when this truth ought to have power with you. All things are ready, therefore come to *the storehouse of divine promise*. Are you in spiritual poverty? Come and take what God has provided for you, for all things are yours, and all the blessings of the everlasting hills belong to all the people of God.

Are you needing strength? There is a promise, "As thy days so shall thy strength be." It is ready, come and take it. Are you wanting consolation? Do you not know that all things are ready for your comfort, that two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, are already set before you? Come you, and take your solace.

Ay, remember that all that God has promised belongs to all those who believe the promise, and that you may therefore come at all times, however deep your need, and if you have but faith you shall find the special supply for the special want. All things are ready, therefore come with holy confidence, and take what is ripe enough to gather, ripe for you.

Come next to *the Mercy Seat* in prayer, all things are ready there. The mercy seat is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ. The veil also is rent in twain, and from between the cherubim JEHOVAH'S glory now shines forth with mildest radiance. Let us therefore come with boldness unto the throne of the heavenly grace, because everything there is ready for the pleading suppliant.

You have no need to bring anything with you there. You have no need of making preparations other than the Holy Spirit waits to give you in the form of groanings which cannot be uttered. Come, child of God, notwithstanding your carelessness and indifference, or whatever it may be you have to complain of, for though you be unready, the throne of grace is ready, and therefore draw near to it, and find the grace you need.

If at this time we feel strong promptings towards *communion* with Christ, what a blessing it is that Christ is always ready to commune with His people. "Behold," says He, "I stand at the door and knock." We think that we stand at the door and knock, but it is scarcely so. The greater truth with regard to His people is that Jesus asks for fellowship with us and tells us that if we open the door—and that is all He bids His people do—He will enter in and sup with them, and they with Him.

Suppose there is no supper, He will provide it—He has all things ready. The Master says, "Where is the guest chamber?" He does not say, "Where is the feast?" If Your heart will be the guest chamber, He will provide the supper, and you shall sup with Him and He with you.

At whose door did Christ knock according to the Scriptures? It was at the door of the Laodicean church, at the door of the very church concerning which He had said, "Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Therefore, you poor Laodicean believers that are here this morning, if you have any promptings towards Christ, arise, for all things are ready and or ever you are aware, your soul shall be as the chariots of Amminadab. He is ready to receive us to His heart of hearts. How sweetly this ought to constrain us to fly into the arms of Jesus.

I think the same thought ought to cross our minds with regard to *every daily duty*. We wake up in the morning, but we do not know exactly what lies before us, for God's providence has constantly new revelations. But I like to think in the morning that all things are ready for my pathway through the day,

that if I will go out to serve God in my ministry, He has prepared some ear into which I am to drop a gracious word, and some heart in the furrows of which I shall sow some blessed seed effectually.

Behold, all providence with its mighty wheels is co-working with the servant of the living God. Only go forward in zeal and confidence, my brother, and you shall find that every step of your way is ready for you. Your Master has trodden the road, and marked out for you the houses of refreshment where you are to tarry till you shall come to the celestial city itself, and the hallowed spots where you shall bring glory to His blessed name. For a useful life all things are ready for us.

Yes, and if beyond the daily service of life, we should feel a prompting to aspire to a *higher degree of holiness*—if we want to grow in grace, and reach the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus—all things are ready for us. No Christian can have a sacred ambition after holiness which the Lord is not prepared to fulfill.

You that will to be like your Master, you that desire to make a self-sacrifice that will show the power of His grace in you—the Holy Spirit waits to help you—all things shall work for you, for all things are ready. Come therefore without fear.

One of these days it may be that you and I shall either be grown very old, or else disease will lay hold upon us, and we shall lie upon the sick bed watching and waiting for our Master's coming. Then there shall suddenly appear a messenger from Him who will bring us this word, "All things are ready, come unto the supper," and closing our eyes on earth, we shall open them in heaven, and see what He has done, who so sweetly said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Oh, it will be a joyous moment when we shall hear the summons, "All things are ready, quit your house of clay, your farm, your merchandise, and even her who lies in your bosom, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and you must be there. Therefore, rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. The winter is over and past, the time of the singing of birds is come for you, all things are ready, come!"

I feel tempted to linger here, but I must tear myself away from this point to pass on to the next.

III. THE PERFECT READINESS OF THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY IS EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO BE A STRONG ARGUMENT WITH SINNERS WHY THEY SHOULD COME AT ONCE.

To the sinner, then, do I address myself. Soul, do you desire eternal life? Is there within your spirit a hungering and a thirsting after such things as may satisfy your spirit, and make you live forever? Then hearken while the Master's servant gives you the invitation.

"Come, for *all things* are ready"—all, not some, but all. There is nothing that you can need between here and heaven but what is provided in Jesus Christ, in His person and in His work. All things are ready—life for your death, forgiveness for your sin, cleansing for your filth, clothing for your nakedness, joy for your sorrow, strength for your weakness—yea, more than all that ever you can want is stored up in the boundless nature and work of Christ.

You must not say, "I cannot come because I have not this or have not that." Are you to prepare the feast? Are you to provide anything? Are you the purveyor of even so much as the salt or the water? You know not your true condition, or you would not dream of such a thing. The great Householder Himself has provided the whole of the feast—you have nothing to do with the provision but to partake of it.

If you lack, come and take what you lack. The greater your need, the greater reason why you should come where all things that your need can possibly want will at once be supplied. If you are so needy that you have nothing good at all about you, all things are ready. What would you provide when God has provided all things?

Superfluity of naughtiness would it be if you were to think of adding to His "all things." It would be but a presumptuous competing with the provisions of the great King, and this He will not endure. All that you want—I can but repeat the words—between the gates of hell, where you now lie, and the gates of heaven, to which grace will bring you if you believe—all is provided and prepared in Jesus Christ the Savior.

And all things are *ready*, dwell on that word. The oxen and the fatlings were killed. What is more, they were prepared to be eaten, they were ready to be feasted on, they smoked on the board. It is something when the king gives orders for the slaughter of so many bullocks for the feast, but the feast is not ready then.

And when beneath the blade the victims fall, and they are stripped and hung up ready for the fire, there is something done, but they are not ready. It is when the meat is served hot and steaming upon the table, and all that is wanted is brought forth and laid in proper order for the banquet—it is then that all things are ready, and this is the case now.

At this very moment you will find the feast to be in the best possible condition. It was never better and never can be better than it is now. All things are ready, just in the exact condition that you need them to be, just in such condition as shall be best for your soul's comfort and enjoyment. All things are ready. Nothing needs to be further mellowed or sweetened. Everything is at the best that eternal love can make it.

But notice the word "now." "All things are *now* ready"—just now—at this moment. At feasts, you know, the good housewife is often troubled if the guests come late. She would be sorry if they came half-an-hour too soon, but half-an-hour too late spoils everything, and in what a state of fret and worry she is if, when all things are *now* ready, her friends still delay.

Leave food at the fire awhile, and it does not seem to be "now ready," but something more than ready, and even spoiled. So does the great Householder lay stress upon this, all things are *now* ready, therefore come at once. He does not say that if you will tarry for another seven years, all things will then be ready—God grant that long before that space of time you may have got beyond the needs of persuasion by having become a taster of the feast, but He does say that all things are ready now, just now.

Just now that your heart is so heavy, and your mind is so careless, that your spirit is so wandering—all things are ready now. Just now, though you have never thought of these things before, but dropped in this morning to see this large assembly with no motive whatever as to your own salvation, yet all things are ready *now*.

Though your sins are as the stars of heaven, and your soul trembles under an awful foreboding of coming judgment, yet, "all things are now ready." After all your rejections of Christ, after the many invitations that have been thrown away upon you, come you to the supper.

And if they are ready *now*, the argument is come *now*, while still all things are ready. While the Spirit lingers and still does strives with men. While mercy's gates still stand wide open that, "Whosoever will may come." While life and health and reason still are spared to you, and the ministering voice that bids you come can still be heard, come now, come at once—all things are ready—come! Delay is as unreasonable as it is wicked now that all things are ready.

Notice that all things were ready for those who were bidden. They did not come, but they were not mocked when they were bidden to come. The fact of all things being ready proved that the invitation was a sincere one, although it was a rejected one.

There are some who will not have us give an invitation to any but to those whom we believe are sure to come, nay, in a measure have come. That is to say, they make a minister to be a mere superfluity. Why need he come and invite those who have already begun to come? But we believe it to be our duty and our privilege to invite the whole mass of mankind, and even those who will not come.

If we knew they would not come, we should not therefore exempt them from the bidding—for the servant was sent to bid them to the wedding who, nevertheless, all with one consent began to make excuse. They were invited, and earnestly invited, and all things were ready, though they came not.

O my dear hearers, if you do not come to Christ you will perish, but you will never be able to say you were not bidden, and that there was nothing ready for you. No, there stands the feast all spread, and you are sincerely and honestly bidden to come. God grant that you may come, and come at once.

IV. Now I am going to pass on to my fourth and last point, which may God bless to the comfort of some seeking soul. THIS TEXT DISPOSES OF A GREAT DEAL OF TALK ABOUT THE SINNER'S READINESS OR UNREADINESS, because if the reason why a sinner is to come is because all things are ready, then it is idle for him to say, "But I am not ready."

It is clear that all the readiness required on man's part is a willingness to come, and receive the blessing which God had provided. There is nothing else necessary. If men are willing to come, they may come, they will come. Where the Lord has been pleased to touch their will so that man has a desire towards Christ, where the heart really hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that is all the readiness which is wanted.

All the fitness He requires is that first you feel your need of Him (and that He gives you), and that secondly, in feeling your need of Him, you are willing to come to Him. Willingness to come is everything. A readiness to believe in Jesus, a willingness to cast the soul on Him, a preparedness to accept Him just as He is, because you feel that He is just the Savior that you need—that is all.

There was no other readiness, there could have been none in the case of those who were poor and blind, and halt, and maimed, yet came to the feast. The text does not say, "You are ready, therefore come." That is a legal way of putting the Gospel. But it says, "All things are ready, the Gospel is ready, therefore you are to come." As for *your* readiness, all the readiness that is possibly wanted is a readiness which the Spirit gives us, namely, willingness to come to Jesus.

Now notice that the unreadiness of those who were bidden arose out of their possessions and out of their abilities. One would not come because he had bought a piece of land. What a great heap Satan casts up between the soul and the Savior! What with worldly possessions and good deeds, he builds an earthwork of huge dimensions between the sinner and his Lord.

Some gentlemen have too many acres ever to come to Christ. They think too much of the world to think much of Him. Many have too many fields of good works in which there are growing crops in which they pride themselves, and these cause them to feel that they are persons of great importance.

Many a man cannot come to Christ for all things because he has so much already. Others of them could not come because they had so much to do, and could do it well—one had bought five yoke of oxen. He was going to prove them. A strong man, quite able for ploughing, the reason why he did not come was because he had so much ability.

Thousands are kept away from grace by what they have and by what they can do. Emptiness is more preparatory to a feast than fullness. How often does it happen that poverty and inability even help to lead the soul to Christ. When a man thinks himself to be rich he will not come to the Savior. When a man dreams that he is able at any time to repent and believe, and to do everything for himself that is wanted, he is not likely to come, and by a simple faith repose in Christ. It is not what you have not, but what you have that keeps many of you from Christ.

Sinful self is a devil, but righteous self is seven devils. The man who feels himself guilty may for a while be kept away by his guilt. But the man who is self-righteous will never come. Until the Lord has taken his pride away from him, he will still refuse the feast of free grace. The possession of abilities and honors and riches keep men from coming to the Redeemer.

But on the other hand, personal condition does not constitute an unfitness for coming to Christ, for the sad condition of those who became guests did not debar them from the supper. Some were *poor*, and doubtless wretched and ragged—they had not a penny to bless themselves with, as we say. Their garments were tattered, perhaps worse. They were filthy. They were not fit to be near respectable people—they would certainly be no credit to my Lord's table.

But those who went to bring them in did not search their pockets, nor look at their coats, but they fetched them in. They were poor, but the messengers were told to bring in the poor, and therefore brought them. Their poverty did not prevent their being ready. And oh, poor soul, if you be literally poor, or spiritually poor, neither sort of poverty can constitute an unfitness for divine mercy.

"The poorer the wretch the welcomer here."

If you are brought to your last penny, yea, if that is spent, and if you have pawned all, and you are left in debt over head and ears, and think that there is nothing for you but to be laid by the heels in prison forever, nevertheless, you may come, poverty and all.

Another class of them were *maimed*, and so were not very comely in appearance—an arm had been lopped off, or an eye had been gouged out. One had lost a nose, and another a leg. They were in all stages and shapes of dismemberment. Sometimes we turn our heads away, and feel that we would rather give anything than look upon beggars who show their wounds, and describe how they were maimed.

But it did not matter how badly they were disfigured—they were brought in and not one of them was repulsed because of the ugly cuts he had received. So, poor soul, however Satan may have torn and lopped you, and into whatsoever condition he may have brought you, so that you feel ashamed to live, nevertheless, this is no unfitness for coming. Just as you are, you may come to His table of grace. Moral disfigurements are soon rectified when Jesus takes the character in hand. Come to Him, however sadly you are injured by sin.

There were others who were *halt*, that is to say, they had lost a leg, or it was of no use to them, and they could not come except they had a crutch and crawled or hopped upon it, but nevertheless, that was no reason why they were not welcome. Ah, if you find it difficult to believe, it is no reason why you should not come and receive the grand absolution which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon you. Lame with doubting and distrusting, nevertheless, come to the supper and say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Others were *blind* people, and when they were told to come they could not see the way, but in that case the messenger was not told to tell them to come, he was commanded to bring them, and a blind man can come if he is brought. All that was wanted was willingness to be led by the hand in the right direction.

Now, you that cannot fully understand the Gospel as you desire to do, that are puzzled and muddled, give your hand into the hand of Jesus, and be willing to be led, be willing to believe what you cannot comprehend, and to grasp in confidence that which you are not able yet to measure with your understanding. The blind, however ignorant or uninstructed they are, shall not be kept away because of that.

Then there were the men in the *highways*. I suppose they were beggars. And the men in the *hedges*, I suppose they were hiding, and were probably thieves. But nevertheless, they were told to come, and though they were highwaymen and hedge-birds, even that did not prevent their coming and finding welcome.

Though outcasts, offcasts, spiritual gypsies, people that nobody cared for, yet, whatever they might be, that was not the question—they were to come because all things were ready. Come in rags, come in filth, come maimed, come covered with sores, come in all sorts of filthiness and abomination, yet because all things are ready they were to be brought or to be compelled to come in.

Now, lastly, I think it was the very thing, which in any one of these people looked like unfitness, which was a help to them. It is a great truth that what we regard as unfitness is often our truest fitness. I want you to notice these poor, blind, and halt people.

Some of those who were invited would not come because they had bought some land, or five yoke of oxen, but when the messenger went up to the poor man in rags and said, "Come to the supper," it is quite clear he would not say he had bought a field or oxen, for he could not do it. He had not a penny to do the thing with, so that he was clean delivered from that temptation.

And when a man is invited to come to Christ and he says, "I do not want Him, I have a righteousness of my own," he will stay away. But when the Lord Jesus came along to me, I never was tempted in that way, because I had no righteousness of my own, and could not have made one if I had tried. I know some here who could not patch up a garment of righteousness if they were to put all their rags

together—and this is a great help to their receiving the Lord Jesus. What a blessedness it is to have such a sense of soul poverty that you will never stay away from Christ because of what you possess.

Then, next, some could not come because they had married a wife. Now, I think it is very likely that these people who were maimed and cut about were so injured that they had no wife, and perhaps could not get anybody to have them. Well then, they had not that temptation to stay away. They were too maimed to attract the eye of anybody who was looking for beauty, and therefore they were not tempted that way.

But they found at the ever-blessed supper of the Lamb an everlasting wedlock, which was infinitely better. Thus do souls lose earthly joys and comforts, and by the loss they gain supremely—they are thus made willing to close in with Christ, and find a higher comfort and a higher joy. That maiming which looked like unfitness turned out to be fitness.

One excuse made was, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." The halt could not do that. When the messenger touched the lame man on the shoulder and said, "Come," he could not say, "I am going out tonight to plough with my new teams." He had never been over the clods ever since he had lost his leg, poor soul, so that he could not make such an excuse.

The blind man could not say, "I have bought a piece of land and I must go see it." He was free from all the lusts of the eye, and so far was all the more ready to be led to the supper. When a soul feels its own sinfulness, and wretchedness, and lost estate, it thinks itself unfit to come to Christ, but this is an assistance to it, since it prevents its looking to anything else but Christ, kills its excuses, and makes it free to accept salvation by grace.

But how about the men that were in the highway? Well, it seems to me that they were already on the road, and at least out of their houses, if they had any. If they were out there begging, they were the more ready to accept an invitation to a meal of victuals, for it was that they were singing for. A man who is out of the house of his own self-righteousness, though he be a great sinner, is in a more favorable position, and more likely to come to Christ than he who prides himself in his supposed self-righteousness.

As for those who were under the hedges, well, they had no house of their own, and so they were all the more likely to come and fill God's house. Men do not take to hedges to sleep under them as long as they have even a hovel where they may rest their head.

But oh, poor soul, when you are driven to such distress that you would fain hide under any hedge, when you have nothing left but a fearful looking for of judgment, when you think yourself to be an outlaw and an outcast before God, left to wander like Cain, a waif and stray, lost to all good, you are the very man to come to Christ.

Come out of your hedges, then. I am looking for you. Though you hide yourselves away, yet God's own Spirit will discover you, and bring you I trust this very morning to feed on love divine. Trust Jesus Christ, that is all, just as you are, with all your unfitness and unreadiness. Take what God has made ready for you, the precious blood to cleanse you, a robe of righteousness to cover you, eternal joy to be your portion.

Receive the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Oh receive it now. God grant you may, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 14:12-35

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
909, 504, 488 (v. 3-8)

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