

***Outflow: Come to the Party***  
***Luke 14:15-24***  
**January 31, 2010**  
**Hoyt Byrum**

Good morning. The woman you just heard from in the video represents, in many ways, the thinking present in our culture today. She said:

I'm waiting for the real deal to come along.  
I'm sad. I haven't found what I'm searching for.

Her perceptions about Christians were articulated when she said:

I haven't found anyone who embodies the Christian life.  
I have found Christians to be:  
    Shallow  
    Cruel  
    Petty

Christianity is a religion of conformists. They want you to be like everyone else:

Over-committed  
    Church on Sundays  
    Meetings at 6:00 PM  
    Meetings at 7:00 PM

Christianity doesn't work.

If I found someone who had something that worked – wonderful.

What, or who is this woman searching for? She is searching for YOU!

As you know, our entire church is studying the book *Outflow*. The central message of this study is that our lives are to be so filled with the Spirit of God that the joy and love of God flows naturally out of us and it touches and ministers to others in powerful and beneficial ways. This morning I want to highlight, as a way of introducing us to this study, the ways God desires to work in us so that we can overflow with His love to others.

First, **God wants you to respond to His invitation to join him at the party.** He is throwing a party and you are invited to be there so you can bask in His goodness, His joy, and His provision. In Luke 14:15-24 Jesus tells the Pharisees a parable that goes like this.

*<sup>15</sup>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.' "

A life that overflows with the love and joy of God begins with understanding that what God is inviting us to when He says "Come to Me" is a celebration – a banquet – a party. Have you responded by saying "Yes" to His invitation or have you inappropriately thought that if you come to Jesus you are being invited to a labor camp?

Secondly, the work God desires to do within us is to **turn our sadness into celebration**. In Luke 7:11-16 Jesus tells another parable.

<sup>11</sup> Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. <sup>12</sup> As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. <sup>13</sup> When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

<sup>14</sup> Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" <sup>15</sup> The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

<sup>16</sup> They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people."

God not only wants to invite us to the banquet table where the party is ongoing and celebration is the norm, He wants to reach into our pain and sadness which results from living in a fallen world and transform our sadness into dancing. This is a work of the Spirit. The Spirit of God connects His good news with the bad news in our lives and we are a people who can demonstrate to the world that we, through His power, can transform tragedy into triumph and with that transformation overflow with joy in the midst of terrible circumstances.

Third, **God wants to turn our emptiness into an abundant life.** Placing your hope in this world's treasures will lead to spiritual despair. Even the good things God provides can be void of pleasure because there is one who wants to steal and rob from us. Jesus says in John 10:10

*<sup>10</sup> "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they<sup>(A)</sup> may have life, and have it abundantly.*

Abundance is like a truck on its way to the market that is so filled with oranges that some of them fall off the stack and onto the road because the truck just can't contain all of them within its boundaries. With what does God want us to overflow? With the fruit of the Spirit of course: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness ... We are to overflow with an abundance of these qualities because this is the abundant life He brings to us when we are centered on Him.

There is no greater testimony to this reality in the Bible than that recorded in II Corinthians 8:2

*<sup>2</sup> Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.*

God's Spirit can produce this kind of abundant joy even in the most difficult of circumstances.

And finally, **God wants to transform our self-focused lives into outward-focused lives.** We Christians are often guilty of seeking God only for our own blessings. But God wants to bless us so we can be a blessing to others. This was His promise to Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel. In Deuteronomy 12:2 and 3 we read:

*<sup>2</sup> "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

This has been God's plan since Abraham – to bless His children so that they can be outward-focused with those blessings and take them to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. What exactly does that mean for us today? Maybe the best illustration of this principle is a four-tiered fountain.

In a four-tiered fountain, the water bubbles up from the center and overflows at the top of the fountain and that represents the Spirit of God welling up within us and spilling out into the first tier. The first tier represents our own lives and in the biblical text it is Jerusalem. God wants to bless us and bring His joy to us so that we are filled with His presence and His provisions. When our tier is filled to overflowing, it naturally spills out to the second tier which represents our family and is called Judea. When we have poured ourselves into our families with the love of Christ, there is still enough to flow into the lives of those we encounter in our community around us. This community is our Samaria, a place where there is hardship everywhere and parched souls waiting for us to bring the living water to them.

And finally we still have enough living water to splash into the base of the fountain, the ends of the earth. We do this individually as well as collectively. We, the church, are to overflow to the ends of the earth with the good news that bubbles up from within us and extends to those in far-away places.

This journey we are on for the next five weeks will challenge us to be the people of God so we can do the work of God. Stay close to the source of living water, Jesus the Christ, by embracing the work of the Spirit in your life and let your life so overflow with His love that all around you will become drenched in God's unending love. Amen.