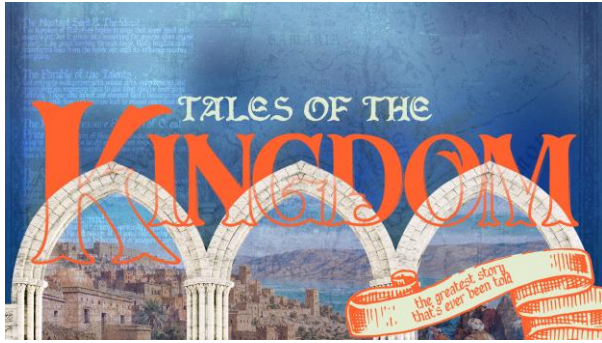




STUDY GUIDE: August 9, 2026
Message Series: Tales of the Kingdom
Message Title: Accept the Invitation
Teaching Pastor: Bryan Pope

Warm-Up / Icebreaker (10 min.)

If you received an invitation to any event in the world—a championship game, dinner with your favorite celebrity, the Masters, or a royal banquet—which would you choose and why?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank You for inviting us into a relationship with You—not because of anything we've earned, but because of Your incredible grace. Open our hearts today as we study Your Word. Help us recognize the excuses that keep us from fully following You, and remind us that Your invitation is still extended to each of us. Give us ears to hear, hearts to receive, and courage to respond. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Get Started: (30 min.)

- Have you ever received an invitation that made you feel especially honored or included? What made it so meaningful?

Read Luke 14:15–24.

- Pastor Bryan described the first invitation as making the "guest list" and the second invitation as the reminder that everything was ready. Why do you think the invited guests suddenly began making excuses?
- What kinds of excuses keep people today from fully accepting or following Jesus' invitation?

"The invitation was exclusive—not because of who we were, but because we accepted the invitation." — Pastor Bryan Pope

Read John 1:11.

- Jesus came to His own people, yet many rejected Him. Why do you think it's sometimes easier to admire Jesus than to surrender your life to Him?

"God doesn't keep graded guest lists. Every person who accepts His invitation has equal value in His Kingdom." — Pastor Bryan Pope

- Jesus completely changed the guest list by inviting the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. What is your reaction to this and why do you think He did this?

"This tale of the kingdom was a wake-up call for the hearers at the dinner that night. Their ideas of the Kingdom of God were being dissolved and replaced with the truth. Jesus had come for everyone; there was a new plan, a new promise. Access to the Kingdom, all it required was accepting the invitation, not a party invitation, an invitation to be in community and communion with God himself. An invitation to enjoy a full life that God was offering." — Pastor Bryan Pope

Reflect and Commit: (30 min.)

Read Matthew 11:4–5.

- Jesus pointed to transformed lives as evidence that God's Kingdom had arrived. Where have you seen God's transforming work—in your own life or in someone else's?

Read Isaiah 55:1–3.

"God wants a full house; there is always room for one more." — Pastor Bryan Pope

- Pastor Bryan challenged us to consider whether distractions—not necessarily sinful things, but even good things—can keep us from fully embracing God's invitation. What "good things" have the potential to compete for first place in your life?

Read Romans 15:7.

- Have you ever felt left out or overlooked? How did that experience shape the way you include others today?
- Since we've all been welcomed by Christ, how can our group become more intentional about inviting and welcoming people who may feel overlooked, disconnected, or unworthy?
- Who is one person God may be prompting you to invite—not just to church, but into relationship, community, or a conversation about faith—this week?

Gather Prayer Requests (5–10 min.)

Pray:

Father, thank You for inviting us into Your family through Jesus. Thank You that no one is beyond Your grace and that Your invitation is extended to everyone. Forgive us for the excuses we've made and the distractions we've allowed to pull us away from You. Help us respond with grateful hearts and obedient lives. Fill us with Your love so that we become people who joyfully invite others to experience the hope, grace, and belonging found in Your Kingdom. Give us courage this week to accept Your invitation daily and to extend that same invitation to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.