

work.” Sounds like another good excuse. But in the end it too holds no water.

Excuses are deadly things. They reveal our true priorities. I cannot come because I have bought a field. I cannot come because I just purchased five yoke of oxen, or I cannot come because I just got married. Surely these excuses serve to accuse us as they reveal what is truly important to us.

Yet the banquet hall must be full. So this text doesn't just speak to those who are in danger of ignoring God's gracious invitation; it speaks to us who, by God's grace, are already seated at the banquet. Jesus said that after the three men in the parable rejected the banquet invitation the master was angry but not discouraged. He sent his servant out to lead the lame and the blind into the banquet hall. Even when that was done there was still room. So the master sent his servant out again this time to the highways and the byways. This shows how much God wants all to be saved and that his banquet hall is huge. In fact there is room for all for Jesus paid for everyone's sin. But how does that invitation get delivered? Not through angels but through us. We are the heralds of the gospel!

We are those people who Jesus invites to the great banquet, but we are also the people who continue to extend his invitation to others. For the Lord is throwing a banquet and we are all invited! Ya'll Come!

O Lord, heavenly Father, You care for all people and You have given us a marvelous invitation to attend Your Heavenly banquet. As the hymn writer reminds us – “This is the Feast of Victory for our Lord.” Help us to see in Jesus Your invitation so that we do not make excuses for reasons not to attend, but we may with gratitude come to this great feast in Your eternal Kingdom. Amen.

THE LAMPLIGHTER



THEME: Jesus Spoke to Them in Parables – “YA’LL Come!”

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.' {16} Jesus replied: 'A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. {17} At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' {18} '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.' {19} 'Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' {20} 'Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' {21} '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.' {22} 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' {23} '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. {24} I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.' {25} (Luke 14:15-24 NIV)

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Dear Fellow Guests of the Heavenly Banquet,

This is the time of the year for invitations. Students graduating from school may invite you to their celebration. You may receive an invitation for a retirement party. You may even receive an invitation from a neighbor hosting a patio party to celebrate the end of winter and the beginning of people coming out of their homes to enjoy the new life of spring. In our text above Jesus speaks of the invitation sent to those who are invited to be a guest at a great banquet, but as we have been taught, parables are “earthly stories with heavenly meanings.”

So what is this heavenly meaning? The answer to this can be found in the prompter of this lesson. A man, who was also a guest of the Pharisee hosting this particular gathering, states: “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of God.” It causes me to wonder if this man had his “end times” hat on and was looking at some point in the future. This leads Jesus to teach an important lesson to his fellow guests. Like a concerned parent teaching one of life’s important lessons to their child, we call these teachable moments. We take advantage of these opportunities to instruct our child and so does Jesus.

He states that a certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. As is even customary today we RSVP so that the host may know how many people will be in attendance. For this reason he prepares enough food to feed all his guests, but then some decided at the last moment not to attend. Two refuse for material reasons and ask that they may be excused. The third is blunt or perhaps even rude and rejects the invitation for family reasons without asking to be excused. He simply said, “I cannot come.” All of their excuses are absurd.

Who would buy a piece of property without knowing all the facts ahead of time? A sound business man would not buy real estate without knowing its history, who owned it previously, how much rainfall does this land receive, what its average yield each harvest. What sound business man would buy five yoke of oxen sight unseen? None! The new owner would have tried them out before. And who is the newly wed that chose to refuse a free meal and great food?

While we may look at their reasons as flimsy at best, what are some of the excuses we/people have today? Or to place ourselves in the shoes of our nursing home residents, what might be some of their excuses for refusing the invitation? At first glance our many excuses may seem legitimate and even righteous. “I have to skip church so I can work and provide for my family!” What could be more God-pleasing than taking care of your family’s needs? But perhaps we have let our wants become needs and so we have to work all the time to pay for newer cars, bigger homes, satellite TV, and faster Internet access. “We just don’t have time for family devotions!” Again that sounds like a fair excuse for not eating the Bread of Life from the Word of Life on a daily basis. But what could be a more important use of our time than the study of God’s Word. “If I stay for Bible class and Sunday school over half the day will be lost. I have a lot of stuff to do.” Sure there may be times when we have things to do. The last thing we want to do is make the study of God’s Word an obligation or a rule. But is a football game, or a movie, a Sunday afternoon nap, really a higher priority than eating more of God’s spiritual food? “Sunday is my only day to sleep in and I need Sunday to get ready for another busy week at