

Responding to the Invitation, Part 2

Luke 14:15-20

Knowing what God has prepared for us. What God has prepared for his guests, knowing the expectation there ought to be, enjoy and delighted, receiving and accepting that invitation and running to the Kingdom. This is what makes the second point I have for you today so incredibly sad, so sad. Point number two, the coldness of man's rejection.

We see in verse 18 that there is a reversal of every plan and undermining of all preparations and undoing of every expectation with this word, "But they all alike began to make excuses." All alike. All of them alike, Jesus uses an expression there that's unique in the New Testament. It conveys a Hebrew idiom which means something like, to act in unison. And to act in concert together or act unanimously. In other words, this unanimous rejection of all those invited, because they are saying the same thing, but different ways, but saying the same

thing, this looks like a conspiracy. It's almost like they, they got together and planned, how are we going to answer this?

You will notice as we go through these verses 18 to 20, these excuses are not, I can't come because I love my sin too much. I can't come because I have someone to rob. I can't come because I'm planning on committing adultery. I can't come because I am a horrible wretched sinner and I am, I love the blackness. They're answering with respectable sins. They're answering with polite rejections. Folks, nothing's changed.

In all of human history, nothing has changed. These are the same reasons that people give today for rejecting the Gospel call, for being resistant to spiritual things, for putting off spiritual ministry. For neglecting the ministry of the church. Same reasons versus 18 to 20, "The first said to him, 'I bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'" Verse 19 "another said 'I bought five yolk of oxen and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.'" Verse 20 the third one, "Another said 'I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.'" "

So let's go back and consider him one by one, unpack it a little bit more first man says, verse 18, "I bought a field and I must go out and see it." Literally, I have need to go and see it. I have, this is a matter of necessity for me to go out and deal with this property that I just bought. So the man claims he bought a piece of properties. Seems like he's saying, it's sight unseen, which seems pretty foolish. It's like if he's willing to do that, I got some properties in Florida I'd like to talk to him about. But now, even though he bought it sight unseen, he tends to see it. Maybe it's the case, as one commentator speculates, that he did so quote, "on the condition of later inspection and approval." End quote. Okay, that's possible.

If you're elevating stuff, property, business ventures, development, over spiritual priorities, watch out. You are in the process right now of losing your soul. Whether you claim to be a Christian or not, Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions, much less the possession of possessions. Back to the man seeking an exemption. To get a glimpse of his new piece of land.

He is willing to exclude himself from his friend's goodness and kind hospitality. He's willing to make this friend bear all the inconvenience and great expense of preparation for his sorry soul. Most of all, he's willing here to insult and deeply offend a generous man that he claims is his friend. He's willing to break the relationship just to get a glimpse of the land that he already owns. He's elevating transient matters over long lasting friendship and relationship, this is absolutely tragic. Does this not go on all the time today?

Look at the second man, verse 19, "I bought five yoke of oxen, I go to examine them." Or rather, not examine them, like look at the beasts, but he's actually talking about him going to put them to the test. So he wants to yoke him up. Put a plow behind them and run them through the field. We update this a bit. I just bought a new tractor. I'm gonna go try it out. An average farmer in this day would probably own one or maybe even two yoke of oxen. A yoke of oxen, two animals yoked together, so one yoke would be two oxen. Two yoke would be four oxen. The fact that he just bought five teams of oxen, that's ten animals. This man is quite wealthy. It implies that he has plenty of

land. Other teams of oxen, as well. He's got servants enough to run all the teams. This may even imply that he just procured more land, and that's why he needs more, extra teams and needs more teams to plow in order to keep the land productive. Accrue wealth and all the rest.

Notice the second man doesn't even bother with the pretense of necessity like the first guy. He didn't say, I need to go test them, he just simply says, I bought the animals. I'm going to test them. Period. It's like who can argue with that right? I'm working. I got money to make. I got bills to pay. You know there's you know how many people I employ. How many families depend on me? All this food to put on lots of tables. There's your answer, I'm busy.

Once again, gotta ask the question, could he not have tested his, his oxen at another time? Couldn't he have sent his servants to go test the oxen, just give him a report when he comes back? No, not this guy. And you know the type. He's a self made man. He didn't trust anybody else's judgments. He trusts his own judgment. That's how he made his money; trusting himself. He

doesn't sit around trusting the judgment of other people. He's gonna go out, do it, look at it himself and give his own stamp of approval and deploy.

This is the typical workaholic, isn't it? This guy trusting him, in himself. He refuses to trust others. He, if it's gonna be done right, he's gotta do it himself. Even if a job done right comes at the expense, possibly, of keeping his word. Even if it comes at the expense of having to renege on the promise to attend his friend's banquet, which is going to cost him the friendship. He's calculating that, he says, I don't care. It's only about him anyway. He's content with himself. What use are friends, they just get in the way. Banqueting? That's just more time away from making more money.

So many people today are like these first two men. Giving all kinds of lame excuses to justify preferring temporal things over eternal things and, and all guarantee they're polite about it. But they expect others around them to understand. To adjust, to make way to make allowances for them. They presume upon others because they are selfish. Because they're self-centered.

They're self-serving and they don't care if people get offended and hurt.

Temporal matters in this life. They're going to be one day dead and buried just like these aging bodies are gonna one day be dead and buried. Don't be too busy. Buying, selling, seeing, testing, making money don't be so busy with all that did you don't notice that life is ebbing away.

Don't live a life of offense to God who has given you your life and enabled you to acquire property and gave you that occupation and gave you the means to fulfill that occupation. The means to accrue wealth, to feed you, and to feed others. But he didn't give any of that to you to define you. Be careful that your heart is not filled with thorns, as Jesus described it over Luke 8:14, "choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life." Listen, these excuses may sound noble, all about being responsible, hardworking, earning to provide and protect, provide for, protect others that own, maybe even be polite. "Please excuse me," sounds humble. But in reality, this is a,

living to avoid that careful look in the mirror of God's penetrating word.

Which is like a scalpel. Like a two-edged sword opening up the soul to see how that covetousness has metastasized invading every part of the personality, and enslaving the soul. Don't be that person. There's a third man, verse 20, who says, "I've married a wife and therefore I cannot come." On the surface, this might seem to be the noblest excuse of all. I mean, what man should not prefer his wife? Can I get an "amen" ladies? But notice, he considers that a reason for not coming to a banquet. As scripture attests from time to time behind a husband's bad actions, think Ahab and Jezebel, there may be an ungodly and irascible wife.

So maybe this young husband didn't know how to deal with his young wife's immature protests, We just got married, don't leave. You could feel the pressure, can't you? Don't leave. Those puppy dog eyes, with tears coming down, you're gonna leave me. We may be able to understand that, maybe even sympathize a bit, but the Lord, the Lord does not understand. The Lord does

not sympathize with this kind of sympathy, preferring any human being over God and his gracious call, even if it's a beloved spouse. Beloved, it's sin. It's the very essence of idolatry to put anything, anything in front of God.

Look ahead. Verse 26, Luke 14:26, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” Listen, nothing is to stand between us and Christ. Nothing is to have a claim on our hearts and on our affections other than God and his Christ. And it's in the context of loving God and loving Christ and loving his word that we love everybody else.

The vertical is priority. And the horizontal only makes sense in that vertical priority. This young husband ought to have followed through on his promise to attend. His word is his bond, and he did promise to attend. So at the risk of offending a new wife, he could take her with. He could drop her off at her mom's house. He could find a number of reasons or a number of ways to mitigate her pain and her sadness and sorrow. She'll get

over it. But keeping his word to the man he promised, that is vital. And when we transfer this into the spiritual realm and think about this being a Gospel call, thinking about this as an invitation into the kingdom. An invitation to be about the kingdom things. And how many Christians do I find compromised by a complaining spouse.

Folks think about these three excuses: property, work, family. Those are the excuses that are so often used to throw off the scent of anyone, any Christian, any well-meaning loving Christian who is coming to ask about someone's spiritual condition. I hear this all the time. And it's not only unbelievers who do this, this claiming great responsibility, too busy with work, devotion to family, religious people do this too. Even professing evangelical Christians do this. I hear it all the time. I'm sure many of you hear the same thing as well.

And my concern is that there are some here who think things like this and remain at a distance, and they're so blind to the habit that they think Jesus in this passage is talking about somebody else. Let the crosshairs of what Jesus is saying, his

penetrating bullets that he's firing here, let them go squarely on your own chest. At least ask the questions. What about you, friend? Are you too preoccupied with your property, and your stuff? Your work, your professional life, your family commitments, are you so preoccupied that you give scant attention to your soul? Is your soul choked by the cares and the riches and pleasures of this life? As you neglect the life to come?

Are you too busy for church life, and so busy that you can only attend Sunday morning meetings and have little to no involvement in the church life after that? Are you ministering in any meaningful way? Giving yourself for the good of others, especially giving yourself when it hurts, and it means pain and blowback. Do you actually love people? Or do you just serve on your own terms?

Be careful about answering these questions for yourself. Take an inventory of your time and attention throughout the week. See where you're spending time and energy and resources. Open your life up to scrutiny, asking others. Asking maybe

several others. People you know will tell you the truth to give you honest feedback.

Don't begin to say, This passage, pastor, this passage isn't about church attendance and church involvement. This is about the Gospel call. It's about entering the kingdom. I've said, Yes to salvation. I'm not in any danger. Listen, those who have said, yes to the kingdom, they are those who are now single minded in their focus. Seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness, knowing that all those other things will be added to them as well. Matthew 6:33.

They have a new nature, and that new nature created by God, brand new, new creations in Christ, that new nature is compelled from the inside to live that way. It's not coerced from the outside, reminded yes, but never coerced. There is an inward longing and a true believer to seek God's kingdom first and his righteousness first, and to give themselves to the kingdom ministry and kingdom work.

We are those who sell possessions and give to the needy, Luke 12:33, “providing for ourselves money bags that don't grow old. With a treasure in the heavens that never fails, where neither moth destroys no thief can steal.” We're people that are devoted to good works, coerced from the outside, no, compelled from the inside. It rejoices the heart to do that. We obey the voice of the risen Christ. We obey the voice of Christ through his holy apostles, working to build the only institution that Jesus bought with his own blood.

The church that he builds by his Spirit and by his word, that's what we're about, because we're kingdom citizens. Listen, God will not excuse the absence, or any indolence, no matter the excuse. God will not accept excuses, especially when so gracious an invitation is on offer to feast on his goodness and his bounty around his table in the kingdom.

That brings us to a final point, point number three. The firmness of God's indignation. The first part of verse 21, let's get the master's reaction to these three representative excuses that everyone was making. Servant, deployed by the Master, heard

these, all these excuses and he came back, verse 21, “he came back, arrived and reported these things to his master and then the master of the house,” what? “became angry.”

Angry seems maybe a bit mild. We can pass over very quickly the verb, *orgizomai*. It's to become furious. It's to be enraged. It's a sentiment that's fixed upon those who reject the Gospel offer. No one should make the grave mistake of ignoring such anger, such fury, such rage, and wrath because, listen, this doesn't come from any human being.

This comes from the power of the true and living God; the just judge of all flesh. The righteous vindicator of all unrighteousness. God does not put up with excuses, even ones that are ostensibly wholesome and seem reasonable to us, like being responsible property owners, and committed to, committed and productive workers and attentive fathers and husbands and mothers and, and all that.

It is, if it is even remotely true, as Tristram said, that “the Arab tribes consider the refusal of the second summons to be on par with the declaration for war.” We can chalk that up maybe to the passionate display a hot-blooded people, but how much greater is God's passion for his glory? Do we dare spurn his overtures of grace? Do we think we can get away with insulting his kindness and not pay a price for it?

Albert Barnes put it this way, “So foolish as well as wicked is the conduct of the sinner, so trifling is his excuse for not repenting and turning to God, that it is no wonder if God cannot look upon their conduct but with abhorrence.” David says in Psalm 7:11, “God is a righteous judge, a God who feels indignation every day.” I like the King James better. “God is angry with the wicked every day.” That is his fixed orientation toward the wicked. That does not change until they are brought out of that condition and put into Christ. His fixed orientation is wrath.

As Paul said in Romans chapter 1, that “the wrath of God abides over all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” So

what's gonna happen to these polite but wicked men sitting around the table with Jesus listening to all this? What's gonna happen to all these who are hardworking family men invited to God's banquet but refused to come, refused salvation, refused to enter the kingdom?

Man, the reprisal is so severe. Because God's indignation is firm, because the offense against his glory is great. His kindness cannot be spurned without great consequence. Turn over to Matthew, just quickly as we close here. Turn to Matthew 22:2, because in Matthew 22:1 and following Jesus there is telling a similar parable. Use the same imagery of the banquet. But he tells the parable there in that context, closer to his crucifixion.

And he speaks those word on the streets of Jerusalem, very close to his crucifixion, and he's speaking those words amid great hostility. And he says to the people verse 2, Matthew 22, “The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast. But they would not come again. He sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those were invited,

“See, I've prepared my dinner, my oxen, my fat calves have been slaughtered. Everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”

“But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants treated them shamefully and killed them.” Verse 7, “The king was angry and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.” Jesus is saying this in Jerusalem. This happened quite literally, A.D. 70, when the Roman general Titus sacked Jerusalem. It resulted in the death of one point one million Jews. The graver concern is what happened to those one point one million Jews, once they stepped over the threshold from this life to that one.

Once they departed from all the things that they were treasuring on this earth like property and work and family, all the things that were the substance of their excuses. They entered into the presence of the God, whose invitation they had spurned. What happens then? This is why, going back to Luke 14, end of the parable. Luke 14:24 as he draws the parable to a close, he makes a very pointed application to the dinner party.

We can imagine him looking around the table and he's looking directly into these men's eyes, looking at him eyeball to eyeball, and he says without blinking, "I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

It's a harrowing thought, isn't it? JC Ryle has it exactly right when he summarizes in this way, "It is not ignorance of religion that ruins most people souls. It is a lack of will to use knowledge or perhaps love of this present world. It is not open profligacy that fills Hell. It is excessive attention to things which in themselves are lawful. It is not avowed dislike of the Gospel which is so much to be feared. It is that procrastinating excuse making spirit, which is always ready with a reason why Christ cannot be served today. Let the words of our Lord on this subject sink down into our hearts. Infidelity and immorality no doubt slay their thousands, but decent, plausible, smooth spoken excuses slay their tens of thousands." End quote.

Beware folks of making polite excuses, for spiritual indolence, for spiritual neglect. As Paul warns us in Romans 2:4, "don't presume on the riches of God's kindness and

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forbearance and patience.” Don't wait another moment. Get your soul right with God.