

Responding to the Invitation, Part 1

Luke 14:15-20

August 22, 2021

We were in Luke 14 this morning looking at Jesus' parable of the great banquet, which some refer to as the parable of the excluded guests. It is both of those things. It's a parable of profound meaning of pointed significance. It's intended to confront the falsely assured. Those in danger of rejecting God's gracious invitation to them to come, to come. And so today, in this text, and what will cover today and next week, it will be definitely more evangelistic in its aim and its thrust, but there is much for us as believers as Christians to be confronted with and provoked with as we go through the text, you'll find the parable in Luke 14 versus 15 to 24, and because it's been a few weeks since we've been in the text, let me just bring you up to speed a little bit.

Jesus has been invited, Luke 14:1 says he's been invited to dine at the House of a ruler of the Pharisees, and it's a Sabbath day, it's after a synagogue service. So this invitation

to Jesus as a guest preacher in that synagogue is ostensibly to show honor to the guests preacher. But the Pharisees, it says in verse 1, were watching him carefully, so whatever honor is meant in the invitation, it was undermined by their true intention, which is to trip him up. Hoping to gather evidence against him.

In this case for violating Sabbath tradition set by the rabbis. Healing a man on the Sabbath, which was a no, no. So Jesus once again he looked through all that he spotted their hypocrisy. He healed the man anyway, because that is the righteous and compassionate and loving thing to do. And then he turned his attention to the lawyers and the Pharisees, those in whose company he was, and he chose to love these men as well. And he did so by telling them the truth. He did so by teaching them.

The theme of his teaching, as we have been seeing in the past couple of sections, the theme is humility and it's in view of a profound social and religious pride on behalf of his host and the guests around the table. A great pride. So when he was teaching, he started with the guests. He noticed in verse 7 it

says he noticed that they chose places of honor around the table.

So he noticed this jockeying for position, and so he told them look, don't do that. Take the lowest place at the table. Humility, not self-promotion, not self-seeking, not social posturing, humility is the path to true honor and glory. He turned his attention to his host, the man who had invited him, a ruler of the Pharisees in verses 12 to 14. And this man was a man of great stature, great wealth. He had lots of experience in hosting dinners and throwing banquets, but Jesus believed he had a few things to learn about putting together a guest list. And so he gave the man a few pointers in that regard. And he told this man to use Kingdom priorities.

In verse 13, he says, "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed [the word *makarios*] you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." That forms a segue, then into the parable that we're looking at today, the Parable of the Great Banquet. One of the guests at the table is a man sitting there, verse 15, says "he

seated near Jesus and he's hearing these things that Jesus taught and he says to Jesus, blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

You can imagine him once he gets a pause in Jesus teaching sort of taking over, clearing his throat to lifting his glass up and saying in a toast, broad smile across his face as he glibly pronounces this truism, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God." What is this about? Its true statement, right? What is he doing? Why did he say that? Where did that come from? What is this point?

Well, it's hard to know exactly getting into his brain, but let's take a moment to take score of what's happened so far in the text. Jesus just healed the man that these people planted there to entrap him. And then he proceeded to expose and confront them for it. Right after everybody sits down, takes their place at the table, Jesus points out how they sat down that they were jockeying for position. Climbing the social ladder. It's about who they sit next to.

And then Jesus turns his attention and takes aim at the host himself, corrects his sense of association, his sense of repayment. He advocates for the social pariahs, people that would never make the guest list and sit around his table. So frankly, even though there's probably a cool breeze flowing through the dining room area, things are getting a bit warm for the men around the table. A bit uncomfortable.

So this man speaks up and he tries to lighten the mood a bit. You know people like this, they always consider themselves the peacemakers, you know. So they want to find something everybody can agree on. So it's like, OK, everyone, hey Jesus, thank you for the stories, but look dinner served time to break bread together. Let's focus on the positive. Let's talk about what unites us. "Blesses is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Let's not be talking about exclusions, raise your glasses, everyone.

Whatever his intent was, the effect is to blunt the sharp thrust of Jesus' teaching. To file down any of the hard sharp edges that might potentially offend or even worse, bring conviction. People like that, as I said, fancy themselves as

peacemakers. But they are acting glib and superficial, and in doing so they are undermining the work of, the good work of, conviction, in the hope that it will bring lifesaving repentance.

So whether it's through ignorance or hypocrisy, this man is doing the devil's work. And notice the man assumed like everybody else around the table that he would be eating bread in the Kingdom. He's gonna be there. Well, Jesus is about to challenge that assumption, in the form of yet another parable. Take a look at Luke 14. We'll just start there in verse 16.

Jesus said to the man, the man who spoke up, but he's speaking so that everybody can hear. "A man once gave a banquet, a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet, he sent his servant to say, to those who had been invited, come, for everything is now ready. But they all like began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I've bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.'

“So the servant came and reported these things to his master, and then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ The master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’”

Several things to point out before we dive into some of the details here. I just want you to notice a couple of high level observations here. First, this is just to clarify the spiritual significance of this parable that Jesus tells you.

Understand he's not speaking on purely a earthly level. Whatever he says down here at this level where we live and move and have our being, he's speaking of something greater, something of great spiritual significance. Jesus intends to connect this parable to the blessedness that he mentioned in

verse 14, and also the resurrection of the just. In fact, the man's comment makes a, a bridge, a segue, between what he said in verse 14, and what he's saying here in verses 16 and following.

This man's comment in verse 15 about eating bread in the Kingdom is what prompts the parable. So the banquet that Jesus speaks of is a metaphor for the Kingdom of God. The man who's doing the inviting, he represents God the Father. The servant stands for all of God's servants sent throughout the ages to invite sinners into God's Kingdom.

So that's broad level view of what Jesus is doing with this parable. Second thing, this parable takes the abstract concept of the call to salvation, call into the Kingdom, and turns it into a very concrete picture. Something people can imagine something people can have a sense of reality about. This theme of the general call to salvation, that is a, a widespread, indiscriminate invitation to all, inviting all to enter into the Kingdom. This is the theme that's underlying all of Jesus' teaching here from verse 7 onward.

In fact, the word translated, ever since verse 7, translated as invite or invited, it's from verse 7 on. Repeated use of this word, it's the Greek verb *kaleo*, which means to call in many texts. It's used, it's translated just that way, to call. Some form of the verb *kaleo* is used no less than twelve times between verse 7 and verse 24. Six times in verses 7 to 11. Three times in verses 12 to 14 and another three times in this parable. Verse 16, 17 and verse 24 as well. So it's about invitations to, the parable's about invitations to meals and banquets that's natural to the setting.

They're all sitting at a meal and they're talking about a banquet, so that's very natural. But the deeper significance is to illustrate the most important invitation of all. It's not any earthly banquet. It's to enter into the Kingdom of God. This is about salvation. That's the third thing. Jesus is talking about one kind of call, and it is the call to salvation. This is an evangelistic call. It is an appeal to sinners to listen and heed God's invitation to come into the Kingdom. This is a call that has been issued to the nation of Israel many times over the years.

In many forms, in many occasions, many ways. It's been the abiding preoccupation of Jesus' ministry as we have seen. All through Luke's gospel, it's a call with one aim with one intention, that is to bring sinners into the Kingdom through spiritual salvation. Responding to the call involves turning away from the things of this world in order to turn toward and enter into the Kingdom of God.

The nation of Israel has been especially privileged to hear this gracious call of God. And the nation of Israel has also been quite remarkable in its stubbornness to heed the call. As we read in Romans chapter 10. In fact, if we're just looking ahead, Jesus begins a parable in verse 16. He tells of a man planning a great banquet and he's inviting many. It represents that standing invitation to the nation of Israel that has come throughout the centuries through the prophets. By the time the banquet is ready, verse 17, God sends out his servant to announce that it's ready. And no, it's the servant, that's John the Baptist, that's Jesus Christ. This is the messianic pronouncement. They come to the nation and say, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. It's here."

Sadly, when Jesus came to announce the commencement of the feast, those who represented Israel, the scribes, the Pharisees, the elders, the chief priests, Jesus says about them and all who follow them, in verse 24, none of those men who are invited shall taste my banquet. So God's rejection, of the nation of Israel in Jesus Day, that opens a new window of opportunity. It opens a doorway, a pathway. And that's where you and I come into this parable.

Fourth, look at how this parable anticipates us. You and me. It means that this Gospel call, this invitation to enter into the Kingdom, this is for us today. This is for us right now. As God turns away from those who reject his invitation, namely, the nation of Israel there in Jesus' day, he turns his attention to others starting in verse 21. He starts with the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, who were in the streets and the lanes of the city. So the city representing Jewish nation.

These are the social outcasts of popular Judaism. These are the ones who will not make it onto the guest list of people like this Pharisee, and then God sends his servant to the Gentiles

and verse 23. Those who are outside the city, that's us, we're pictured there as vagrants in the countryside. Those who are kind of hanging out along the highways and sleeping underneath the hedges, that's us. That's how they picture the Gentile nations.

So the import of that is. Are you my friend, whether you name the name of Christ today or not. Whether you call yourself a Christian or you don't. Whether you are fully assured or whether you have doubts. What Jesus teaches in this parable confronts us all. This is an opportunity for you to confront and expose and turn from any blinding religious pride.

Religious pride gives a false sense of assurance. It twists and distorts the barometer by which we measure how we're doing. The metrics, it distorts it all. It sets in a worldly minded lethargy that ultimately can prove damning to the soul. If that happens in an unbeliever, obviously damning to the soul that happens in someone who professes to be a believer and it never changes. Well, it may prove that that person was never a Christian at all.

So look. There's opportunity to learn from this text, to learn from Jesus and what he says here, never to reject the goodness of God. Illustrated so, so clearly in the call of the Gospel, his goodness to offer us salvation. Calling us to enter into the Kingdom to participate then in the Gospel work. Let us never reject that, beloved, because that's rejecting the goodness of God.

Instead, let us be humble, soft hearted, heeding the Gospel call, listening to the demands, the implications of the Gospel that come through Jesus and his apostles all through the New Testament. Let us pursue his Kingdom and his righteousness with a God-fearing single-minded passion of zealous worshippers of the living God. That's my prayer for all of us today. As we come through this text as we listen to this sermon.

So three points for today and the first point is this, you can write this down, the goodness of God's salvation. Number one, let's look at the goodness of God's salvation. If you want to, you can write the goodness of God's invitation. His invitation is to salvation, so I just cut to the chase. The goodness of God's salvation. Look back at 6, at verse 16. And let's see the

goodness of God represented by him extending an invitation to his banquet in the Kingdom

Jesus says, verse 16, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many." The man giving a great banquet, who's that? Jesus isn't talking about some anonymous non-descriptive man. The man stands for God. In the glory of his goodness, in the glory of his greatness. In his magnanimous generosity, his great wealth. The man stands for God in his goodness.

Now look down in verse 21 and it makes it plain. Jesus refers to this man as master. This is the word *kyrios* or Lord, it's a designation that he also uses in verse 22 where the ESV translate *kyrios* as "Sir." That's unfortunate, I think. Then verse 23, again it's master, *kyrios*. Also look at verse 21 where Jesus uses a term to describe this man who's doing the inviting, the host. He is using the term their *oikodespotes*, master of the house. You can hear *oikos*, the word for house and *despotes* which is despot you understand, master.

That highlights the sovereignty, but the sovereignty over this household, which is really the Kingdom. It's also referring to his benevolence. It's referring to him as the dispenser of the goodness and the riches and the bounty of this house. It's made even clearer in the banquet metaphor. A metaphor that was well known among the Jews as this inaugural banquet of the Messianic Age that's described in Isaiah 25 verse 6. Where Isaiah says this, "The Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine, well refined."

That's the millennial banquet. And that's the picture that would come to the Jewish mind as Jesus delivers this parable, he delivers it right on the heels of the man's comment about eating bread in the Kingdom, so that's what they're thinking. That's what's in their minds. In fact, the same verb that's used in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 25:6 translated "The Lord of hosts will make a feast." It's the verb *poieo* in the Greek. It's the same verb Jesus uses here. It's not a man once gave a great banquet, aorist tense, finite past action. It's rather a certain man was making a great banquet, imperfect tense, ongoing action. In the past, he's busy in the past, with his large demand for preparations, he's making all the necessary preparations to get

ready for this great, great banquet, where many are going to come.

Preparations obviously think about some of that and what it would take to host a great feast like that. I mean, think about a, a dinner party that you throw at a holiday or something like that, and how much work goes into that. You've got maybe family numbering in the dozen, two dozen range. Think about hundreds. Think about thousands. What are you gonna do then when you call those people to your house?

They would, they would call to mind for them, as they're listening to this all the Pharisees, scribes around the table listening to Jesus. They knew preparations involved processing grains, to make all kinds of breads and pastries and little delights, snacks. Involved the milking of cows to get the milk and the cream, and especially as Julia Childs tells us, the butter. Everything tastes better with, loaded with butter.

It meant selecting, slaughtering all kinds, various kinds of animals, providing the guests with a variety of meats to

choose from. Like one of those Brazilian barbecues, or you keep putting the flags up, you know, and different kinds of meat keep coming to the table, but it meant pressing olives to extract the oil to cook all kinds of those foods in that rich olive oil. It involved tapping the caskets, in which the wine had been aging, aging, aging, waiting for the time, set by the master to pull it out of the casket, pour it into the glass and serve it to the guests.

Preparations involve preparing accommodations for traveling guests, so boarding, caring for the guests' animals. Cleaning, preparing comfortable rooms for overnight guests, taking care of any other logistics that might come up during a prolonged feast like this one. Oh, and at the end of verse 16, preparations involved inviting the guests. In fact, that was among the very earliest of the preparations the host had to know from very early on how much of everything to provide. So invitations had to go out early, in order for the RSVP's to come in. In order that he may commence with all the rest of the preparations.

Notice this isn't just any banquet. It's a great banquet. It's supplied by the great wealth of the host, all for the

purpose of giving a gift of good things from the table over and over and over to the many, many people invited to this share in that table. Jesus, he's brief here, but he is alluding to a scene of great plenty. Of comfort of great satisfaction. Of rich contentment of great rejoicing. Stop for a moment and think about this picture, Jesus is giving ever so briefly, but a picture of the Kingdom of God.

This is where Jesus has gone, according to John 14:2-3, he's gone to prepare a place for his people. Come again and take us to be there. Consider the place that we will one day enjoy. Sitting around the table as it's inaugurated in the millennial Kingdom. Think of the delights that are going to penetrate to the deepest places of our souls. Using all the God designed avenues in the human nature, the human essence to delight us. Physical senses and nonphysical perception alike. Material pathways to joy and blessing and satisfaction, but also immaterial pathways of contemplation of deep reflection, of satisfaction, intellectually, spiritually, fully and completely satisfied. Nothing lacking, physically and spiritually.

Dig into your, past childhood memories. I hope some of you have some of these and you can imagine the very, may be the very best Christmas celebration ever. Like a little kid, think of that. The warmth of the home. Think about the, the sense of security you have in the home. The good smells coming out of the kitchen. The vibrant tastes that explode in your mouth, or the goodies that mom and grandma have made and all of, all of Mom's sisters hovering in the kitchen making, just coming out with cookies and pastries and all that stuff. And there's, there's the just the satisfaction of being in that home, and in that environment and being in the company of your relatives, all those people who, who love you and being a little kid, you're still cute, you know, so they're fawning over you. Everything you do is wonderful and funny and delightful.

The physical elements in those memories that we have and they combine with, and they enrich, and they strengthen all the nonphysical experiences, those intangibles, that remain with us as precious memories of our past. All of that is just a faint, faint whisper of what God is preparing for us. To us, beloved, those who are in Christ, the physical pictures, sure enough, are going to come true in that millennial Kingdom here on this earth, inasmuch as we are physical beings designed to live and

inhabit a physical world. That is not a mistake of God to make us physical and spiritual creatures.

So those physical realities will come true, but the spiritual real, realities that all those things represent, far greater. Far more glorious. They're impossible to comprehend fully now, but because we have such a faint experience of all that now think about it. Eternal life is nothing less than God sharing with us his very nature. His salvation is about God communicating himself and his communicable attributes to us, his creatures. The full bounty of God's own personal blessedness. What theologians refer to as divine complacency doesn't mean God is complacent and inactive. Complacency, by complacency, we are referring to, theologians are referring to, God's self-satisfaction, his perfect satisfaction, his self-desire.

That is to say that God is completely and perfectly delighted with himself and in himself. Why would he not be? He is the only perfect being. It is his essence to be perfection itself. This is God's delight in being God. It's his supreme delight and happiness in his own being, and God is preparing to communicate that level of divine blessedness to us, in us. He's

sharing himself with us. He's communing with us, and communicating to us a continuous, unbroken stream of holy delight.

That is divine love. That is what compels him to create in the first place. It's all love driven. It's to share, it's to convey blessedness. This is what the invitation is to. This is what the invitation is for, this call of salvation. To castaway all sin. All lying promises of the devil, all deceitful temptations, all counterfeit delights that do nothing but degrade and destroy the soul. Turn from sin, and to embrace the God who created us, who loves us who calls us to himself.

To come home, and partake of his banquet, the feast at his table, and to find in him eternal rest. This Gospel call is an invitation to participate in the goodness of God in his salvation. It's to humble yourself, verse 10, and let God lift you up to that. It's a call to associate with the lowly honoring them by associating with them, verse 14, so that you are blessed, *makarios*. *Makarios*, sharing in that delight of God himself, and all of it repaid at the resurrection, with that. Now that is what it means to respond to the invitation, and

Jesus summarized the response in verse 11. Humble yourself and let God exalt you in his own time. Humble yourself.

So the invitation set before them, the scribes, the Pharisees, chief priests, the elders of Israel. Together they comprise the spiritual leadership of the nation. Together they claim, they claim, to be the true friends of the host. The divine host of the Kingdom banquet. True friends of God himself. That's what they claim for themselves. So, verse 17 they have accepted the invitation. They've said yes will come. Verse 17 says, "At the time of the banquet, the man sent his servant to say to those who had been invited." And by the way, they had received that invitation, and they had accepted it. They'd RSVPed. "Come for everything is now ready."

Oh man, what a day. There's every expectation that these invited guests claiming to be friends of God, friends of the host. Every expectation that upon hearing that news, "Come for everything is now ready," they're gonna drop everything. They're going to, they've already planned for this moment. They've been anticipating it. It's in an uns, unspecified spot on their calendar. Whatever is on the calendar is gonna move because of

this. They're gonna grab their suitcases already packed and follow that servant to the great banquet.

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. 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?

Alfred Plummer puts it this way. He says "There was no variation. It was like a prearranged conspiracy. They all pleaded that they were at present too much occupied to come and there was not a single exception." End quote. They all alike, they made excuses. Jesus provides three representative illustrations of the kind of excuses that are coming out. It shows the reasons that people are giving for rejecting the call.

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 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.'"

All of them, ostensibly, on the surface, respectable reasons. None of that's sin. I've got a, I've got a property, I've got to be responsible, responsible owner. I've gotta work that day. I gotta work. I can't come. Oh, I got family commitments. Nothing's changed. Listen for those who are listening to Jesus parable. For those who are sitting there around the table with Jesus and they're, they're listening to this. They're putting themselves into the story. This is grading on their social sensibilities, as it should.

At the very least, the Pharisees, scribes, they're becoming at least a bit annoyed, probably somewhat irritated, probably definitely appalled, and maybe even just a bit enraged and indignant at hearing this. They know that after saying yes to the initial invitation to fail to show up after everything is

ready, serious social breach. Catastrophic insult that you don't recover from. That ends a relationship forever. Several commentators, referred to Henry Tristram's book, *Eastern Customs in Bible Lands*, and it's for good reason because he writes this, "To refuse the second summons [Which is what verse 17 indicates] To refuse the second summons would be an insult, which is equivalent among the Arab tribes to a declaration of war."

To beg off at this stage of the game, and in this way, sends a message to the hosts of cold indifference. And to such a warm hearted, generous host of that. The contrast is staggering. So even though they politely say please have me excused. This is an inexcusable offense. Even more so considering the nature of their excuses and to whom they're making them.

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 it. 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. OK, that's possible.

In either case, we're right to wonder here. Couldn't this man look at his property on a non banquet day? I mean is the banquet the only day that he has in his busy, busy schedule? What's he looking at it for anyway? I mean, what's he got to evaluate? He bought the property. He wanted it right? I mean what is he gonna do? Go there and imagine what he's gonna do with that property, how he's going to develop it, farm it, build it whatever. Such a man should heed Jesus' warning in Luke 12:15, "Take care, be on your guard against all covetousness. For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

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 have 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 internal 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 is giving 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, and 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 nor 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. Number three, the firmness of God's indignation. 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 that 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 hard working 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 do 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 forbearance and patience. Don't wait another moment. Get your soul right with God.

Our father, we turn to you in prayer after hearing from Jesus in this way. Understanding the true import of his words here, how penetrating this was to the men around that table. Now we feel like we've gotten just a little bit of a glimpse, just a taste of what they tasted, what they saw, and we're feeling it. And so we know, Father, that we don't wanna be like those who

refuse to come to the banquet. We don't want to refuse your invitation at all. We don't want to refuse any overture of your grace, your kindness, your goodness. And so Father, I just pray that you would create within every man, woman, child here, everybody hearing my voice, that you would create within them a deep sincerity of heart before you. That they do business with you, that their hearts are right before you.

Father for those who do not yet know you, I pray for your regenerating grace that you would deploy your Holy Spirit to cause them to be born again. Given a new nature, that they may put their faith in Jesus Christ. They may see him as majestic and glorious and see that whatever it takes, whatever sacrifice is required, that being around that table is the only thing that matters. And for those of us who do know you but Father, you know, because you're omniscient, because you see all things, you know what goes on in the heart. You know where there has been sloth or indolence, laziness.

Father I pray for the, for those who do, do need the conviction that you would be gracious and give the conviction by your Spirit that people would, Christians would return to the

word in much prayer, be devoted to you in pious worship. And active service, being clear minded Christians having their eyes on Heaven, have their eyes and the goodness and blessedness that is theirs because you've been pleased to grant us the Kingdom.

And Father, I pray for those sensitive souls here and there are many. Who will hear a message like this? And come under maybe a false sense of conviction. A sense that, that they are feeling guilty for no good reason. And I just pray for your the comfort of your Spirit that you would alleviate those concerns that you would encourage them in the things that they are doing for you, how they live for you day after day they live for you in the quietness of their own hearts and where no one can see in the privacy of their own minds in their homes. Where they are dedicated to you and they live in service to you outside the home. They, they give themselves, give of their time, their effort, their energy, their money, they give to you.

Father, you know that in ways that none of us do. So I pray for those who need that encouragement. By your Spirit that you grant it, and you remind them they belong to you, and this blessedness is theirs. Father, thank you so much for the Lord

Jesus Christ. He's brilliant, amazing, he's all wise. We want to receive his instruction today. Please make it so in Jesus' name, amen.