

The Invitation
April 11, 2010

Let's look at a parable in **Luke 14:15-24**. Jesus is sharing a parable in a Pharisee's home. **Verse 15:** "Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!'" **Verse 16:** "Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many.'" **Verse 17:** "And sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited."

The invitation to the supper had already been sent out, but a servant is going now to those invited telling them personally, "**Come, for all things are now ready.**" Everything was finished. There was nothing else left to be done.

Verse 18: "But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'" **Verse 19:** "And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.'" **Verse 20:** "Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'" This man didn't ask to be excused. He told him he wasn't coming.

Verse 21: "So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'" This servant knew his master's heart so well that he had already done it.

Verse 22: "And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'" **Verse 23:** "Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'" **Verse 24:** "For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."

This invitation is to an elaborate party. We Americans think an elaborate party is ordering pizza and watching television with a group of friends. You can hardly get people today to come together for fellowship, but this is a great party. It's a mega banquet. The invitations had already been sent out, and it was to be a lavish party.

Verse 16 says that the invitation was extended and many were invited, but the invitation was **selective**. Many were invited, but they were all Jews.

When Jesus was telling this parable in a Pharisee's home, they knew exactly what He was talking about. These Jews knew that Jesus was talking about them. They had been the ones invited to the Lord's feast. They were the selective group, the house of Israel.

In **Matthew 15**, Jesus is talking to a Gentile woman whose daughter is demon-possessed. This mother comes to the Lord for Him to deliver her daughter from these demons, and in **Verse 24 Jesus said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."** So, this invitation was sent to the Jews.

Romans 1:16 says the gospel was preached first of all to the Jews. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. They turned from Jesus, and because the Jews said no, He came after us (the Gentiles)! So, in the beginning, this invitation was **selective** (to the Jews), but it was also **simple**. In Verse 17 it says, "Come, for all things are now ready."

In coming to Jesus, everything has been taken care of. We want people to clean themselves up and then come to Jesus; but you need to come the way you are, bring all your baggage and all your sins, and let the Lord save you. When the Lord saves you, then He will shave you too! Come just the way you are, and He will clean you up.

This invitation is so simple. Come, come now, because everything is ready. When Jesus died on the cross He said, "It is finished." It had been planned for thousands of years for Christ to come. He came. He lived. He died, was crucified, was buried, and rose again. Everything is finished. It's all ready. All you have to do is come to Him.

The invitation was evaded. All they had to do was come, lay aside everything and come. Verse 18 says, "But they all with one accord began to make excuses." Jesus is letting them know that, in God's sight, the Jews had become **complacent**. When Jesus spoke these words, there was a temple, and inside that temple there supposedly was an ark of the covenant. They projected to the people that inside that temple was the Holy of Holies, and the glory of God dwelled there, but they had grown **complacent**. They were **calloused and careless** toward God.

Have you noticed how people come into God's house today? Not much effort is put into coming into God's house today. People take communion like it's nothing. They don't examine themselves or even think about what they are doing. The Jews had become **calloused, complacent**, and in their walk with God they were **careless**.

We want revival, but it has to begin in US. This great move of God is going to be in His church, and it has to start with ME! We are so good at seeing a splinter in someone else's eye, when we have a railroad tie in our own eye.

When the servant comes back to the master's house, **the excuses are examined**. Do you know where excuses started? They started in the Garden of Eden. When God said, "Adam, what is going on?" Adam said, "Well, it's the woman you gave me!" Read the Book. Then God asked Eve what was going on, and she blamed the snake. That is where excuses started. Let's look at them.

There were 3 flimsy, feeble excuses given for not coming to the party. I see this parable not only speaking to the church world of today, but it also speaks to sinners. The excuse sinners give is that they would go to church, but the church is full of hypocrites; but when I ask the Christian to serve the Lord, they say they don't have the time. You have the same amount of time I have, and I realize everybody is busy. **So, the church makes excuses for not serving God, and the sinner makes excuses for not coming to God.**

The first excuse was **the business man's excuse**. In Verse 18, the first man said that he had bought a piece of land. He bought a piece of land without seeing it first. He is obviously a wealthy man. This man was so materially minded that it controlled him, and he was **too busy making a living** without really living. He was prosperous and popular. He was polished and polite. He was respectful and refined, but he had a flimsy excuse.

The second excuse was **the worker's excuse**. In Verse 19, this man said he had bought some oxen and had to go and test them. That's like buying a vehicle without test-driving it. In that day, no man in his right mind would buy a team of oxen without making sure he was getting what he paid for.

This man was expanding his business. No doubt he had other oxen, but he lost sight of the most important thing: the master. He was advancing in his profession. His workload kept him busy, but now he had no time for the Lord.

The third excuse was **the newlywed's excuse**. His excuse was that he had gotten married. He is in love. He's caught up in personal relationships. Let me tell you what has happened in the church world today. We have people who can't make it to church on Sunday because they have little league baseball and cheerleading practice. They have so many outside activities that they can't fit church in on Sunday! Their personal

family relationships are number one.

Well, look at what **Verse 26** says. It says you can't love your father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters more than you love God if you are to be His disciple. You have to put God first and foremost! God is not against our families. He is not against our making money and being successful in business. What He is against is when we put everything in front of Him.

Isn't it amazing that most people come to Jesus when they are in a crisis? Old-timers called salvation "a crisis experience," and some of you know what I'm talking about. Blue skies don't bring people to Jesus. It seems like when we're successful, we forget God. When God examines our excuses, our excuses are exposed as foolish and unreasonable, and they won't hold water in serving the Master (Jesus).

The master became angry when the people wouldn't come to the party. When he hears their feeble excuses, he is enraged. Then the invitation was expanded. The invitation now goes out to the Gentiles. **Matthew 11:28** says, "**Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**"

It also says in **John 7:37**, "**If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.**" When you realize the world can't satisfy you, you need to come to Jesus. There is hardly a week that goes by that we don't counsel a family in crisis. Divorce is rampant in the church. Peoples' lives are disintegrating around them, and Jesus says, "Come."

In the days when Christ was on this planet, if someone was disabled they could not come to the temple. They couldn't even come through the gates of the temple; but when the master began to expand the invitation in **Verse 21**, the first thing he said was, "**Bring in the maimed, the lame, the poor, and the blind.**" We think we have to be perfect in order to come to Jesus.

People that are maimed are twisted in their minds. The blind are those whose lives are in darkness. The lame are those that cannot help themselves. They have to have someone get them where they need to go. These are the left out, the looked over, the lonely, and the lost; but God gives everyone an invitation to come.

God loves you, and God wants you to come to Christ; but if you don't come, He will be angry. He will be angry at your rejecting His Son who gave His life for you. That is what He will be angry about, and His wrath will be poured out on everyone at the end who has rejected Christ.

The key is that you have to get in. Your excuses are feeble and flimsy. Throw away your excuses and come to Christ. Go for God! Find the purpose and reason you were born on this planet. Satan has tried to sabotage your destiny, but God can pick you up from any place along life's journey, clean you up, and get you on the right path. Jesus said, "If you will come to Me, I will give you life and that more abundantly." Abundant means "life to the fullest."

What was the **desire behind the invitation** when it was expanded? It's found in Verse 23. The master wanted his house full, and **God wants His church to be filled up** and impact the community. Empty churches are a disgrace to God.

The master told his servant to go into the city. That's the local community, and when he had done that, he said now expand it to the highways. The highways are the freeways that connect to the other cities. Then he said to go into the hedges. That's the country. The **demand of the invitation** was to go wherever there were people and compel them to come, and compel means "to persuade or to entice."

Jesus said, "If you will follow Me, I will make you fishers of men." What He was saying was, "I will teach you how to fish for souls." When you're fishing, the objective is to bring the fish alive into the boat. You dangle the bait in front of the fish, and the fish go after it; not knowing that when they go for the bait, they get hooked and brought in. He tells us to persuade them. You bait the hook.

There are so many ways that we can persuade people to come, and we have to reach every age bracket. When trying to draw people in, you have to use every means possible. When people come to church, you have to have something for them.

Look at **Revelation 19:9**. "**Blessed are those who are called (invited) to the marriage supper of the Lamb.**" His name is Jesus. We are heading toward a banquet, and the only way to get into the banquet is to throw away your excuses and come to Jesus.