

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*A King Gave a Great Banquet and Invited Many.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's gospel verse by verse and we find ourselves at chapter 14, verses 15-24.

Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word.

Luke 14:15 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" **16** But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. **17** 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.' **18** But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' **19** And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' **20** And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' **21** So the servant came and reported these things to his master. 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.' **22** And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' **23** And 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. **24** For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

You may be seated. Let's pray.

Here are the most outrageous excuses I could find that people gave to avoid work, as well as the journals they're found in:

1. In 1982 the Canadian Medical Association reported Bingo Brain, which is the headache associated with carbon monoxide intoxication occurring after spending long hours in smoke filled bingo halls.
2. In 1956 the Journal of the American Medical Association reported Espresso Wrist, which is pain caused by espresso machine operators from strong wrist motions required to operate the equipment. Do we have any espresso makers here? Is strong wrist motion required?
3. In 1965 the British Medical Association Journal reported Flip-Flop Dermatitis, which is a skin disease on the feet from wearing rubber flip-flops. I've worn flip flops much of my life, and God has graciously protected me from this infirmity.
4. The New England Medical Journal reported three different excuses worth mentioning:
 - a. Disco Digit, reported in 1979, which is a sore finger caused from snapping fingers while dancing.ⁱ
 - b. Jeans Folliculitis, reported in 1981, which is an irritation of the hair follicles from the waist to the knees caused by wearing too-tight jeans. A warning for all of you skinny-jean wearers!
 - c. Ice Cream Frostbite, reported in 1982, which is – not surprisingly – frostbite on the lips from prolonged contact with ice cream.
5. Here are a few others: Joystick Digit, Knife Sharpeners Cramp, Label Lickers Tongue, Money Counters Cramp, Electronic Space-War Video Game Epilepsy, and – my personal favorite – Television Legs, which is the loss of normal flexibility in your legs from being slumped in a chair too long watching television. It can also result in blood clots!ⁱⁱ

Now briefly look at **verse 18**...

But they all alike began to make excuses.

The guests in this morning's verses made ridiculous excuses too as we'll see. But they didn't miss out on work. They missed out on something much more serious.

Briefly look at verse 15...

Luke 14:15 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

This religious leader heard Jesus talk about eating bread in the kingdom of God, and he got excited because what did he think?

He thought he would be there!

He’s in for a shock, because Jesus preached the following parable to let the religious leader know he – and others like him – won’t be there. That’s the context for this parable.

Look at **verse 16**...

Luke 14:16 But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

The **man** is God the Father and the **great banquet** is the marriage supper for His Son. In the New Testament, Jesus is the Groom, and the Church is His Bride, so it’s fitting that when Jesus is united with the church, it’s pictured as a wedding feast.ⁱⁱⁱ

Because the great banquet is associated with salvation, we should understand this parable illustrates the invitation to be saved. To be invited to this banquet is to be invited into the kingdom of God itself.

Now let me explain something important to you about the way formal suppers, like this great banquet, would occur in Jesus’s day...

There were always two invitations.

First, an invitation with the day of the banquet would be sent months ahead of time so the guests could mark their calendars. This is like our “Save the date” invitations. The invited guests would RSVP, indicating their commitment to attend. Then the host would know how many guests to expect.

As you can imagine, food preparation was different in Jesus’s day than in our day, so it was hard to know exactly when the food would be ready. And there was no refrigeration, so everything had to be eaten soon after it was prepared.

When the food was ready servants were sent out to invite everyone to come. This was the second invitation.

The first invitation was in **verse 16**, and the second invitation, announcing that everything is ready, is in **verse 17**...

Luke 14:17 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.’

And this brings us to Lesson one...

Lesson One: The preparations are finished for our great banquet too.

Let me ask you to think about something...

How does the king look?

He looks gracious!

He seems to want nothing more than to bless His people. He makes the offer attractive. He lets the invited know all the work is done. They don't have to do anything but show up.

It's a wonderful picture of our salvation and how all the preparations have been made for us. The Lord has done all the work. If you write in your Bible you can circle the words **everything is now ready** and write, "It is finished."

We have received the same invitation. It is as though God said, "*Come to my banquet. Everything is ready for you. There is a wonderful feast waiting. You don't have to do anything. I have done all the work. You just need to accept.*"

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Now let me put this parable in its historical context...

If you write in your bible:

- First, circle the words **sent his servant to call** and write "Old Testament prophets"
- Second, circle the words **those who had been invited** and write "Jews."

God promised the kingdom of God to the Jews:

- He sent the first invitation to them through the Old Testament prophets.
- Jesus brought the kingdom of God from heaven to earth, so now the **banquet** is ready and he sends the second invitation, through John the Baptist and Jesus to invite them to the banquet...which is really to say to invite them to be part of the kingdom of God.

But...

When Jesus came, he wasn't what the Jews wanted. They wanted:

- The deliverer like Moses
- The military leader like David
- The rich, famous ruler like Solomon

But He wouldn't look like this until His Second Coming.

So their response...

Luke 14:18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' 20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

We know Jesus used hyperbole – or exaggeration – to make His points:

- Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye when there's a plank in your own eye?
- Hate your father and mother
- Cut off your hand and pluck out your eye
- A camel goes through the eye of a needle

He said absurd things to make a point, and believe it or not, this parable is another example.

Why is that?

Because nobody would ever decline a wedding, and especially not for these reasons. Instead, people would be thrilled to attend...and this brings us to lesson 2...

Lesson Two: There's no good reason to reject the invitation to the great banquet.

Briefly look back at **verse 18**. There are two things I'd like you to notice...

First, notice the word **excuses**.

Sometimes when people tell us their reasons for not doing things we have to wonder if they're being honest or making excuses.

But we don't have to wonder here! God's Word tells us they are making excuses.

Second, notice the word **make**.

Excuses have to be made. They aren't true, so they have to be created.

The people in Jesus's day typically worked six long, 12-hour days, followed by one day off, and then it began again the next week. Life was short, difficult, and compared to our lives, largely uneventful.

So everyone wanted to attend weddings. They were large parties and one of the only times people could relax and be fed by someone else. For most, a wedding would be the highlight of the year. And if it was the king's son's wedding, it was – literally – a once-in-a-lifetime event.

The idea that someone wouldn't attend is absurd.

Now I was thinking that it's difficult for us to picture just how absurd it was for these people to make excuses. So, I thought we could act this out this morning to give you a better idea. Fortunately, we have some talented young actors who are willing to give you an idea what this would look like!

Rhea: "Hello, I'm the servant of the king. He prepared an extravagant banquet for his son's wedding. I know the three of you have been looking forward to it just like everyone else. It is going to be amazing. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Nobody in their right mind would want to miss it. You were invited a while ago, you accepted, and now I'm excited to let you know everything is ready, and it's time for you to come."

Clara: "Ummm...I can't go. There's this property that I bought with a mansion, and I have to go take care of it."

Rhea: "You have got to be kidding me. You're going to skip the banquet to go to this property? You can't go some other time or get someone else to go for you?"

Clara: "No, I have to go right now. There's no other time I can go and nobody else will do it for me."

Samuel: "You're not going to believe this, but I just bought these expensive turbocharged oxen for my farm, and I have to go examine them to make sure they're good."

Rhea: "You already bought them, and now you're going to examine them? That doesn't even make sense. Who examines animals – I mean turbocharged oxen – AFTER buying them?"

Samuel: "I do. I'd like to stay and talk longer, but I have to get going. My animals are calling me."

Ricky: "I just got married, and because of that I can't come."

Rhea: "You can't come because you got married? Why should that stop you? Just bring her. I mean, how much does she eat?"

Ricky: "She's afraid there might be bacon and the food won't be gluten-free."

Rhea: "There won't be any bacon, because pig lives matter, and there will be gluten free options, because gluten lives matter."

Ricky: "Well, in Leviticus it says that men are excused from military service after getting married, so I can't come."

Rhea: "This isn't military service! You're going to a banquet, not a battle. Wouldn't your wife want to attend something like this?"

Ricky: "No, she's very introverted. She doesn't like to be around people. The wife's-a-calling."

So as ridiculous as these people sound to us is how ridiculous the people in Jesus's parable sounded to the people in his day.

And what is the application?

The absurdity of these people not wanting to attend this wedding is a picture of the absurdity of people not wanting to enter the kingdom of heaven. Who WOULDN'T want to accept the Gospel, be forgiven, and go to heaven instead of hell?

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We could wonder why an invitation as wonderful as the gospel would be rejected, and these excuses give us the answer.

Or another way to say it is...

If Christianity is good and true, why wouldn't more people put their faith in Christ?

We get the answer – or answers – in this parable!

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And here's something to consider...

Of all the excuses people could give for rejecting the gospel, why these three? Did Jesus randomly choose these excuses, or are they significant?

I think they're significant, and many other commentators do as well. I think these excuses are the main excuses people make when rejecting the gospel.

Because these excuses are important, let's look at each of them...

Luke 14:18b The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'

This man knew the date of the supper, and he committed to attend, but now he put a higher priority on completing this real estate deal.

And this brings us to the first excuse...

Lesson Three: The three main excuses for rejecting the invitation are our (part one) possessions.

When we buy something new, we are often consumed with it. Preoccupation with material things is a common excuse for not following Jesus.

There are two examples of this excuse in the Gospels ...

First, there's the third soil. The seed lands among the thorns and Jesus said...

Matthew 13:22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Second, there is the rich young ruler:

- He wanted to go to heaven.
- He looked sincere.
- He was interested in spiritual matters

But he wasn't willing to part with his possessions.

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Plenty of people make this excuse today:

- *I'm too busy buying things right.*
- *There are too many things I want.*
- *If I follow Christ, I'll have to give up these things that I enjoy.*
- *I don't have time for God, because I'm too busy with my stuff:*
 - *I've got this boat...*
 - *I've got this trailer...*
 - *I've got this timeshare...*
 - *I can't be going to church, because I have to use these things.*

There's nothing wrong with having a boat, trailer, or timeshare. Many people have great possessions and use them to serve God and others. But there's something wrong when they stand between us and God.

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The second excuse...

Luke 14:19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.'

Oxen were not used for pleasure. They were used for work. Although I could imagine Samuel Criss trying to use turbocharged oxen for pleasure.

This excuse represents the person who idolizes his job...and it brings us to the second excuse...

Lesson Three: The three main excuses for rejecting the invitation are our (part two) work.

These people might not be atheists or antagonistic to the Lord. They might even say nice things about Him. But they won't make time for Him, because of their work.

If they're honest, they would say things like:

- *I'm too busy making money.*
- *I've got to get ahead in my job.*
- *I'm worried about this next promotion.*
- *I've got to complete this project.*
- *I have to make another sale.*
- *I must keep expanding my business.*
- *I have to reach out to this person to get my next business connection.*

They also accepted the invitation ahead of time and could have planned for it. The oxen could wait. But work is more important to them.

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The third and final excuse...

Luke 14:20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

Although a wife is mentioned, the idea is earthly relationships are more important than a relationship with God. And this brings us to the next excuse...

Lesson Three: The three main excuses for rejecting the invitation are our (part three) relationships.

Notice the first two people said, "Please have me excused," but this man didn't say that.

I think that's because it seems honorable to put our spouse or family members first. Then we don't even have to ask to be excused. We simply mention them and that's enough. It's like the trump card. People lay it down and you can't argue with them.

That's why this is the noblest looking excuse. We can easily condemn people who put possessions or jobs ahead of Christ, but when people put family relationships ahead of Christ it seems reasonable.

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But briefly look at **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, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

I don't want to spend much time on this verse because we will look at it next sermon, but I will point out that it is telling us we must choose Christ over even our own parents, spouse, or children.

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Now look how the king responds...

Luke 14:21a So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry

This is a pretty long verse with two parts, so I'm going to break it in half and look at this part first.

If you're a Christian who has accepted the invitation to the banquet, you should see yourself like the servant, responsible with inviting others.

This is exactly what we're doing when we share the Gospel: we're inviting people to the wedding of God's Son. We're telling people, *“Everything is ready. He prepared everything. All the work has been done. It is finished. God is inviting you to his banquet. He has a wonderful feast for you. All you need to do is accept the invitation.”*

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And something that can encourage us in our evangelism is considering how people responded to the servant's efforts. Here's another way to say it: did he look successful?

Basically, he looked like a big failure.

But he wasn't, for two reasons...

First, he was faithful. He invited. He wasn't responsible with the responses. God doesn't hold us accountable for people's rejections. They aren't evidences of our faithfulness. Our faithfulness, versus results, is what matters to God.

Second, he wasn't a failure because the people weren't really rejecting him. Every single time throughout human history that the gospel has been shared and rejected, there has always only been one person rejected and that's God.

And that's also why we read that the king was **angry**.

Notice he didn't feel bad for the servant and say, *“Oh that must've been so discouraging to go to all those people and have them reject you.”*

The king was angry, because he knew he was being rejected!

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Look at the rest of the verse to see how the king further responds...

Luke 14:21a 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.’

Have you ever prepared a meal, but the people you invited couldn’t come? You don’t want all the preparation to be in vain, so you scramble to find another family to come over. You don’t want to have cleaned your house for nothing.

That’s kind of what’s happening here...

The King loves his son. He wants him to have a great celebration. If these people don’t want to come, then he will find others to take their place.

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But now we see another absurd part of the parable...

The king invited **the poor, crippled, blind, and lame**. He invited all the Mephibosheths of the world like we read about last week.

When people heard this, they would roll their eyes or scoff, because there’s no way a king would ever invite these people.

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In the context of the parable in Jesus’s day, these were the common Jews. It would be offensive to the religious leaders that they would enter the kingdom, but the religious leaders would be excluded.

But that pales in comparison to the offense they take at the king’s next invitation...

Luke 14:22 And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ 23 And 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.

The highways were populated by travelers from all over. The hedges provided shelter for them as they stopped to rest or sleep along the way.

The mention of hedges indicates the scope of the search. The king went to great lengths to find people to attend. This is the whosoever of **John 3:16**.

Specifically this is the Gentiles attending, which would be an affront to the religious leaders.

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Notice the words: **compel people to come**.

The servant had to convince them to come, because they were **poor, maimed, blind, and crippled**. They wouldn’t believe they were welcome. No king would want them at his great banquet, but this is exactly who the king invited.

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Look at the last verse this morning for a dramatic shift...

Luke 14:24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.”

Did you notice the change that occurred with this verse?

Previously the banquet had been the banquet of the king in the parable, but now Jesus says **my banquet** so we understand this has always been about salvation.

When Jesus says, “**For I tell you**,” this is the plural form of you, such as if I said, “I am talking to all of YOU.”

Jesus isn't only talking to the people at the dinner at the religious leader's house. He speaking to all of us,

And because Jesus is speaking to all of us, let me conclude with one final lesson that ties all this together...

Lesson Four: There is still room at the great banquet for those who won't make excuses.

Briefly look back at **verse 15** to see what caused Jesus to preach this parable in the first place...

Luke 14:15 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

Here's what's interesting to me...

The focus of the parable is the excuses people make to avoid attending the great banquet...but this man wasn't making excuses! He wanted to attend the great banquet and THOUGHT he would be there! Jesus preached this parable to correct his thinking.

We can understand people who made excuses being excluded from the banquet, but why would someone who wanted to attend be excluded? Was the King really sending away people who wanted to attend?

Yes!

People can only attend the great banquet through the King's Son. To reject the Son is to reject the banquet, and the religious leader rejected Christ. In doing so, he also prevented himself from attending.

Briefly look back at **verse 13**...

Luke 14:13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.

This is exactly what God has done. Spiritually speaking, he has invited **the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind**. He has invited all of the Mephibosheths of the world. This is us.

Look at the end of **verse 22**...

Still there is room.

This is my invitation to you today: still there is room to attend the great banquet for those who won't make excuses, but instead repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ.

I will be up front after service, and if you have any questions about anything I've shared, or I can pray for you in any way I would consider it a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.

ⁱ <https://boingboing.net/2021/07/27/disco-felon-medical-condition-caused-by.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://time.com/5023129/tv-blood-clots/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Numerous places in Scripture associate this great banquet with salvation:

- **Matthew 22:2 The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.**
- **At the Last Supper in Mark 14:25 Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."**

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- **Luke 22:29-30 I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom.”**
 - **Revelation 19:7, 9 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife (the Church) has made herself ready...Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”**