

Excuses

(Luke 14:18-20)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

The commanding officer was furious when nine GI's who had been out on passes failed to show up for morning roll call. Not until 7 p.m. did the first man straggle in. "I'm sorry, sir," the soldier explained, "but I had a date and lost track of time, and I missed the bus back. Being determined to get in on time, I hired a cab. Halfway here, the cab broke down. I went to a farmhouse and persuaded the farmer to sell me a horse. I was riding to camp when the animal fell over dead. I walked the last ten miles, and just got here."

Though skeptical, the colonel let the young man off with a reprimand. However, after him, seven other stragglers in a row came in with the same story—had a date, missed the bus, hired a cab, cab broke down bought a horse, and the horse fell over dead, etc.

By the time the ninth man reported in, the colonel had grown weary of it. "Okay," he growled, "now what happened to you?"

"Sir, I had this date and missed the bus back, so I hired a cab." "Wait!" the colonel screeched at him. "Don't tell me the cab broke down." "No, sir," replied the soldier. "The cab didn't break down. It was just that there were so many dead horses in the road, we had trouble getting through."

Now these men gave a lot of excuses for not being at roll call. However, if we are not careful, we can give a lot of excuses for not being saved, faithful and obedient to God, changing our lives, serving the Lord, and really living as God wants us to live. But we need to change our mind on the matter of excuses. We need to be stronger than our excuses.

Tony Dungy said:

"No excuses. No explanations."

- Some people who are struggling with certain sins often say, "I can't help it, God made me this way." They blame God for their out-of-control sexual and sinful drives. Of course, this is nothing but a lie and an excuse to sin.

- Others claim that they are too busy to attend church faithfully.
- Others come along and say they can't give sacrificially to God's work because they are too poor.
- Then there are those who say, "I have the liberty to do this and therefore I'm going to do it." They actually use what they consider to be "liberty" as an excuse to sin and disobey God!
- Others might say, "I'm praying about it." Of course, this can be an excuse to procrastinate doing what you already know is the right thing to do.
- Others conclude, "I'm waiting for better conditions to develop. I am waiting for the right time." Beloved, now is the time to do what is right and obey God. No later! If you wait for perfect conditions and a better time, you will never obey God and get things done.



Ecclesiastes 11:4

"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

In other words, if you make excuses for not doing what is honoring to God, then don't expect a harvest to true blessing reward at the end of your journey.

Making excuses like, "I'll do what is right when things straighten out in my life" or "I'll get back on track later on when there is not so much pressure on my life" will not hold up at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Paul served the Lord in spite of great affliction and difficulty. He did not cave to the pressure. He says in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those

things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” Don’t tell me you cannot serve and obey God during tough times. Paul, as he was filled with the Spirit of God, experienced unbelievable hardships, but he kept doing what was right, serving the Lord, obeying the will of the Lord.

Paul did not give excuses to stop obeying God when tough times came along life’s pathway. He kept right on obeying God to the fullest extent and in the Spirit’s power (Eph. 5:18). This reminds us that it’s never right to do wrong! In fact, it’s never right to do wrong in order to do right. You might think it’s safer to disobey God and ignore what He wants you to do. Paul certainly could have been tempted to follow this type of reasoning with all of the persecution he faced. But he realized that trying to live in the bubble zone of safety would take him away from obeying God.

When we start asking, “Is it safe to follow God’s will, then we can be sure that we have fallen into one of the devil’s tricks and snares (Eph. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Tim. 3:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). We need to keep unmasking Satan’s lies that he places in our minds for his lies will result in excuses for not obeying God and simply doing what is right. Here a few signs that stuck out to me! They tell the true story!



Folks, we cannot wiggle out of obedience unless we make excuses and excuses reveal that we have taken the bait of Satan and been captured by the methodology and schemes of the Evil One who is attempting to bring spiritual defiance, disobedience, and defeat into our lives.

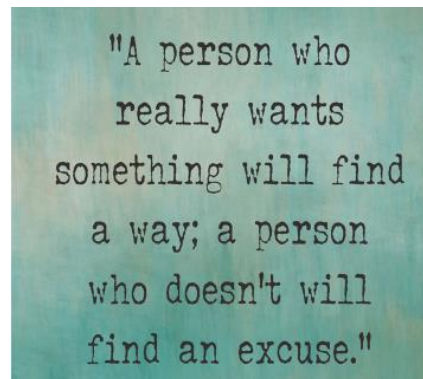
We can conjure up many excuses to get our way in life instead of following God and His way. But you cannot expect spiritual results and God’s true direction in life when making excuses! We need to find a way to obey God – not make an excuse to disobey God. I want all of us to take a close look at ourselves. If we are disobedient to God in some specific area, it’s probably because we have made an excuse!

Genesis 3:12-13 is the first example of those who gave excuses:

“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me (blaming God), she gave me (blaming the woman) of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me (blaming the devil – “the devil made me do it” philosophy), and I did eat.”

Adam blamed God and Eve and Eve blamed the devil! These were nothing more than excuses for their failures and sins. Let’s stop all of this nonsense! Stop passing the buck as we say. And stop deceiving yourself. Stop sanctifying your disobedience. If you sin and are disobedient, admit it, and don’t try and cover it up with your poor and lame excuses.

There are many excuses that we can give to God so we can have it our way or do our own thing. But let us remember one thing, they are only excuses! And excuses won’t hold up at the Judgment Seat of Christ.



"A person who really wants something will find a way; a person who doesn't will find an excuse."

2 Corinthians 5:10

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive (as a payment, which pertains to the loss or gaining of reward) the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.”

Payday is coming! Excuses will not stand the test at the Judgment Seat of Christ. They will burn up as wood, hay, and stubble! We need to practice that the Bible calls the renovation of our thinking habits so we might stop the excuses and get back to obedience.

Romans 12:2

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind (the metamorphosis or renovation of our thinking), that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Someone remarked:

“Love for the Lord and others will find a way. Indifference will find an excuse.”

We should never be a product of our circumstances but a product of our decisions to obey Christ and do what is right. Let me tell you that excuses will change nothing, but they will make everyone feel better! We can make excuses for not following God's will. In fact, the unsaved give excuses for not following God's will which pertains to God's plan of salvation for their lives (2 Pet. 3:9). But Christians also give many excuses for not following God's plan for their lives, which is to serve and live for Christ faithfully. Excuses are used by Christians who do not want to really serve the Lord faithfully and remain committed to the things that are most important in life. We must beware of trying to sidestep God's will by creating excuses which are designed to sanctify our disobedience and lack of commitment to the Lord.

Jesus spoke about those who make excuses in Luke's gospel record.



Luke 14:18-19 is our main text and says:

"And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused."

In this parable of the wedding feast, we discover how people can make excuse to avoid God's will. Every person in this parable began to make excuses! Are you one of them?

Billy Sunday defined an excuse as:
"The skin of a reason stuffed with a lie."

Truthfully, there is no excuse for not doing God's will and what is right for our lives – there are only reasons stuffed with lies! It's amazing the excuses that Christians can give to get away from obeying God and living effectively for Him and His cause. It's also amazing the excuses unsaved people give for not getting saved. We want to investigate these excuses in this study and stop making excuses. This means we must see our excuses as diversions from God's will and purpose for our lives and admit when we have made an excuse for not doing God's will.

One major league pitcher said:

“I’ve got no excuses. I made a bad pitch.”

You know, if something is important to you, you will make the time. If it’s not important, you will make an excuse!

Both unsaved and saved people make excuses for not following God’s will.

Let’s get the background of this chapter and place it in its Biblical setting and context. We will move from the prophetic background to the practical teaching of this parable that Jesus presented to the disciples. Jesus had been offering His promised Kingdom to the Jewish people. The setting of the Gospels primarily have to do with Christ’s offer of His earthly theocracy or covenanted Kingdom. If we understand this, it will save us from much confusion when reading through the gospel accounts.

Luke 14:15

“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”

All the parables that Jesus taught, and the contextual setting of the Gospel accounts, deal with Christ’s kingdom that Jesus was offering to the Jews. The Jews were looking for a coming King to be born in answer to the promise of the Davidic Covenant.

Acts 1:6 says:

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

The Jews did not allegorize their covenant promises. They knew that the prophecies predicted a coming King that would reign over them. The parable of the wedding supper or feast fits into this context of the King’s return (the Second Coming) and His desire to invite His people (the Jews) into the Millennial Kingdom.

The “great supper” (vs. 16) prophetically points to the feast that will be on earth during the Millennium. In Revelation 19:9 it is called “the marriage supper of the

Lamb” which will occur on earth and not in Heaven, according to the prophetic texts. A supper! I often say, in that coming day it will be “All day singing and dinner on the ground!”

In this same context, Jesus taught about the Jewish people as honored guests entering the future kingdom and once again pictures the earthly kingdom as a great feast shared with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets (Luke 13:28-30). The earthly theocracy (Millennial Kingdom) was pictured as a feast on earth and it will be this and much more! The world is moving toward this great era (the fulness of times) in God’s dispensational program (Eph. 1:10). We will get there! Praise the Lord. All will be made right when the King finally brings in His earthly kingdom and rule over planet earth.

According to Luke 14:15, one of the guests at the dinner where Jesus was dining expressed a blessing on everyone, who would eat in the future kingdom. “And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”

This person was assuming that all the Jewish people would be present at the banquet and enter the earthly kingdom. So, Jesus took the opportunity to use the feast motif to explain that many of the Jewish people would not be present in God’s earthly kingdom when it would be established on the earth. Why? It’s because they rejected His message which He gave to enter the kingdom!

Matthew 4:17 reveals Christ’s message:

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The Jews did not like the idea of having to repent of their sins and prepare themselves for entrance into Christ’s earthly kingdom. They figured that they were good enough to enter the earthly kingdom the way they were since they were Abraham’s descendents. The whole ideal of repenting over one’s sins to enter the kingdom was not in the mind of many Jews.

Jesus also taught in John 3:5:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

The message of being “born again” to enter the earthly kingdom or theocracy that Jesus was offering did not set well with self-righteous Jews of Jesus’ day and time. They wanted political deliverance over Rome but not spiritual deliverance from their sins. For these reasons, many Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, Savior, King, and the offer of His kingdom which were presented together as one package (John 1:12, 29).

The verses of the banquet motif (Luke 14:16-20) in their context are teaching that Israel, or the Jews in Jesus’ day, rejected Christ’s qualifications and message regarding entrance into the earthly kingdom. And what was true in Jesus’ day when He offered the kingdom to the Jews will also be true in the future when He returns at His Second Coming. This section of Scripture has a prophetic significance in relation to Christ’s Second Coming. The excuses of these people represent Israel’s rejection of Christ as their Messiah, Savior, King, and His Messianic Kingdom offer to them. What happened historically during Jesus’s day will also happen prophetically at the Second Coming.

Imagine rejecting an invite to our Shady Maple Smorgasbord! This is what it will be like when Jesus returns in His Second Coming. There will be some Jews who will reject the invitation of salvation and entrance into the earthly kingdom. They will have many excuses for doing so but their excuses will not hold water.

Let’s get the overall picture of this earthly banquet. The host in the parable represents Christ. He has invited many guests (His Jewish people) to enter His earthly kingdom. However, all those guests (Israel) which were invited began to give excuses for not attending the banquet or feast which represents how many Jews rejected Christ’s offer of the kingdom during Jesus’ day. The same will happen at the Second Coming when Christ returns to earth.

Luke 14:21-24

“So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city (Jerusalem), and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind (representing the Jews during Jesus’ day who recognize their need to repent and be saved). And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may

be filled (representing the Gentiles during the Church Age). For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper” (the original Jewish people who rejected the Messiah).

In their context, these verses reveal how Christ would turn away from the Jews temporarily (this envisions the Church Age), but someday ultimately offer His kingdom to another generation of Jews who would receive Him as their Messiah, Savior, and King. I want us to note some important phrases in this section of Scripture.

The first one is found in verse 21 where it mentions the “poor, blind, maimed.” Jesus was referring to those members of the Jewish community (perhaps the outskirts of the city) who were considered inferior and ceremonially unclean as was the man with dropsy He had just healed (vv. 2-4). Jesus was teaching that only those Jews who realize they are spiritually unclean before God will repent of their sins and enter the kingdom.

The second important thought is found in verse 22 where it states, “and yet there is room.” This means there is room for many to enter the earthly theocracy. By way of application, it reminds me that there is still room at the cross for you, if you are not saved. Jesus opened His arms wide during His days on earth to invite people to salvation and entrance into the kingdom, Today He is opening His arms wide for you to come to Him today in faith and receive His free gift of salvation. In fact, He opened His arms wide and spread them out on the cross for you and me! “And yet there is room!” There is room at the cross for you to be saved!

“Though millions have found him a friend
And have turned from the sins they have sinned
The Savior still waits to open the gates
And welcome a sinner before it's too late.
There's room at the cross for you
There's room at the cross for you
Though millions have come, there's still room for one
Yes there's room at the cross for you.”

In verse 23 we discover the purpose for the invitation of inviting all people (the great Gentile masses) to share in this earthly feast. The guests were invited so the

“house may be filled.” The house refers to the earthly Millennial Kingdom. Christ, who is represented as the banquet host, reminds the Jews that none of the originally invited Jewish guests in Jesus’ day would get a taste of His banquet (the joy and blessing of the earthly kingdom). Their excuses for rejecting Christ as their personal Messiah and King would keep them from entering the Kingdom.

Luke 14:24 are the saddest words of the Bible:

“For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden (the Jews in Christ’s day who rejected Him) shall taste of my supper.”

Imagine missing supper! This banquet motif reinforced Christ’s previous teaching that He would abandon Jerusalem and the Jews of His day and they would not enter the earthly kingdom.

Jesus taught the same thing in Luke 13:34-35:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house (the nation of Israel) is left unto you desolate (deserted and abandoned): and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until *the time* come when ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Most of the Jews (the nation as a whole) rejected Christ at first coming but many Jews will accept Him as their personal Messiah at the Second Coming.

Matthew 21:43 is similar in tone:

“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation (another born-again nation of Jews) bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

These are important, pivotal dispensational passages. It reminds us how God would set aside His plan for the Jews and temporarily postpone His earthly kingdom program until another generation of Jews receives Him as their Messiah and Lord. Israel is on hold today but not abandoned and forgotten (Rom. 11:1). The parable of the banquet reinforces the truth of God’s kingdom program with Israel being temporarily set aside but reinstated at the second Coming.

The Jewish people in Jesus' day originally had been offered a share of the kingdom but they had rejected it (John 1:12). Therefore, Jesus was going to take away this kingdom offer from the Jews during His earthly ministry. However, one day in the future Jesus would give the kingdom to another generation of Jews who would accept Him as their Messiah and Savior.

Romans 11:26 gives this prophetic promise:

“And so all Israel (the believing remnant of Israel) shall be saved (and constitute a born again nation of Jews): as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (the unsaved Jews will not enter into the earthly kingdom).

Note: “They all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:18). The excuses that the Jews gave during Jesus' day seemed like good excuses to them (the same will be true at the Second Coming), but they were inadequate for refusing His kingdom offer. Nothing was more important than accepting Christ's as their Messiah and the offer of the kingdom since a person's entire destiny rests on His response to this offer.

Now that we understand the setting of this parable of the wedding feast and its historical and prophetic significance, we can begin to look at the practical significance it has for us today.

Have you heard of the ten most used excuses?

1. I forgot.
2. I did not see the speed limit sign.
3. I didn't think it was that important.
4. Wait until the boss comes back and ask him.
5. I borrowed it and forget to return it.
6. That's the way we've always done it.
7. That's not in my department.
8. Something came up.
9. I'm waiting for an O.K.
10. In my defense, I was left unsupervised.

It's time to apply the excuse part of this parable to our lives today. We need to bring it up to date. People can make similar excuses that we see in these verses. The Jews are not alone in making excuses to avoid God's will. There are excuses that unsaved people make to avoid salvation but there are also excuses that God's own children make to bypass God's will. This is what we want to see in the remainder of this study which I've entitled, "Excuses."

If you are without salvation, like the unsaved Jews in Jesus day, you too can give many excuses for not receiving Christ as your Savior. Some people will tell you, "I'll wait until I'm older and have sown my oats." Many will say, "I'm young and have many years ahead of me to think about spiritual things." Others will tell you, "I'm not ready to repent of my sin." "I am a fairly good person. Surely God will not judge me in hell with the bad people." Some will also remark, "I don't believe in God." Still others conclude, "I have plenty of time." You know, in hell, none of these excuses will matter! Excuses will not bring salvation into your life. Only belief in Jesus Christ can save you (Acts 16:31).

The unsaved of today still use the same lame excuses that the Jews gave for not being saved and prepared for eternity. But sadly, Christians can also give excuses for not serving the Lord faithfully and living for Him. For those of us who are saved, we too can give many excuses why we don't follow the Lord's will for our lives. As a secondary application, we are also going to compare Luke 14:18-20 to our lives as Christians.

The Jews (God's chosen people) were not interested in kingdom living and enjoying the feast that Jesus (the King) had for them, but we as Christians must be interested in living the Christian life today. In short, we must be interested in the King's business!

"I am a stranger here, within a foreign land
My home is far away, upon a golden strand
Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea
I'm here on business for the King!"

I was looking at some books that were written about excuses. Here are some titles: "1,001 Excuses – How to Get Out of ... and Away With... Anything"; "The Book of Big Excuses"; "The Little Book of Big Excuses"; "Complete Excuses

Handbook”; “The Ultimate Excuse Handbook” and “SpongeBob’s Book of Excuses.” These are actually books written on excuses. Have you been making excuses for your lack of commitment to God? Have you been trying to create excuses for being disobedient to God in some area of your life? In the parable of the feast Jesus portrayed how Israel made excuses for not receiving Him as the Messiah. In the remaining part of our study, we are going to see these excuses and also apply them to our own Christian lives.

Once again, both unsaved and saved people make excuses for not following God’s will. Three excuses are given. Let’s look at the three excuses that are given for not doing God’s will.

a. Material Excuse (money excuse)

Luke 14:18

“And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.”



“I pray thee have me excused.” Doesn’t this sound spiritual and sanctimonious? Sometimes we make our excuses sound spiritual so that we deceive ourselves into thinking that we are doing what is absolutely right when in fact we are doing what is absolutely wrong! Praying about something is not necessary when it’s an excuse! Excuses get in the way of obedience. What we need to be praying for is God’s forgiveness for making excuses to sanctify our disobedience.

This person excused himself because he had bought a field and he wanted to go and see it. This is really a lame excuse. He could go see his purchase any time. It did not have to get in the way of him attending the banquet. He should have gone and seen it before purchasing it. This is what a person normally does. However, this individual was putting the love of material things ahead of the gracious invitation - “I have just bought a piece of ground and I cannot wait to see it!”

➤ Application to the unsaved

This is the primary application of the parable since it is speaking to unsaved people. When it comes to materialism (“I bought a piece of ground”) and money,

we can be sure that unsaved people are filling their pockets with money and going to hell! One of the excuses given for not entering the feast was a monetary excuse. Many unsaved people today feel comfortable with their money and material things. It gives them a sense of security and therefore they don't feel a need to be saved. This is a terrible delusion on their part. Money deceives people. It becomes a blindfold to them. A love for money and drive for material things keeps people from humbling themselves and expressing utter dependence upon Christ to be their Savior.

You cannot buy your way into Heaven!

Jesus taught in Luke 18:25:

“For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Jesus is speaking in a hyperbole and almost a humorous way. Of course, a camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle. But it would be easier for a camel to do this than for a rich person to see his sinfulness before God, his need for salvation, and to repent of his sin of covetousness.

I once heard Donald Trump say that he actually believed this verse was true! Money and materialism keep people from getting saved. If a person believes they have everything they need in this life, then why would they want Christ? Material things become a barrier to the salvation of the soul. They keep people from expressing faith and dependence upon Christ for the salvation of their soul.

A person's confidence in material things to solve all of their problems, along with their covetous love for money, keeps them from repenting and expressing faith in Christ alone to be their Savior.

Luke 18:22-23 reveals this:

“Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.”

Of course, this man did not need to sell everything that he had in order to be saved (this would be legalism or works on steroids!). It's very clear that Jesus asks the man to sell his material things in order to reveal the covetous nature of his heart and his refusal to repent of this sin.

James 5:1-3 gives a solemn warning about riches and people who depend upon them and use them as an excuse to bypass salvation. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries (the calamities, ruin and judgment of hell) that shall come upon *you*. Your riches are corrupted (rotted), and your garments are motheaten (chewed up by moths). Your gold and silver is cankered (corroded); and the rust (corrosion) of them shall be a witness against you (on Judgment Day), and shall eat your flesh (bodies) as it were fire (riches will be their executioner on the Day of Judgment). Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" (the period of time before Jesus returns).

James is contrasting the godless, unsaved rich people with the "brethren" (vs. 7). Verses 1-6 are a strong interjection and condemnation of the unsaved. These rich individuals are not addressed as "brothers" as God's people are repeatedly addressed in the epistle (1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12). Furthermore, the unsaved are called to "weep and wail" because of the judgment they are going to pass through someday. This depicts the reaction of wicked and unsaved people when they are faced with God's righteous judgment.

Think about this. Riches rot or decay ("riches are corrupted") and fine clothes may be chewed up by moths ("your garments are motheaten"). Furthermore, gold and silver can also lose its value or worth. Although pure gold and silver does not rust, they can become corroded as the words "cankered" and "rust" mean in this context. Gold can darken and silver tarnishes which diminishes the value of these metals. There is also some evidence that suggests the coinage of James' day was not pure but contained alloys and could literally rust under proper circumstances. It could rust as iron would rust.

Whatever the case might be, the story portrayed here is NOT "rags to riches" (a good ending) but "riches to rags" (a terrible ending). This is because wealth can keep people from repenting and turning to Christ in faith for their salvation. Their love for riches and security in material wealth can keep these people from placing faith in Christ for salvation.

Riches can take a person down – right down into hell. This occurs when riches get in the way of a person receiving Christ as Savior. This text reveals the end of all those who put their faith in riches instead of Jesus Christ. Covetousness can overtake our hearts and keep us from repenting of our sins and trusting Christ, as we have seen with the rich man Jesus addressed during His earthly ministry (Luke 18:22). Wealth deceives us of our need for Christ and salvation.

The corroded wealth “shall be a witness against you” (James 5:3). It’s here that wealth is pictured as prosecuting attorney of the unsaved in the Day of Judgment (the Great White Throne Judgment), Their rotted and corroded riches will testify against them and demonstrate that they trusted in fleeting riches instead of the Son of God for their Savior.

The text also states that their corroded wealth shall eat their flesh (body) “as it were fire” (James 5:3). Some suggest that James was referring to 70 A.D., not many years after this letter was written, when the Roman army utterly destroyed the city of Jerusalem. All the Jews of that city perished together with their wealth. Their bodies were burned at this time. However, there is no reason to confine this to a specific temporal time of cataclysm or judgment.

Those who interpret this verse in this way try to get around the fact of eternal judgment! James is speaking about mortal bodies existing in their final state of suffering throughout eternity. The corrosion which tarnishes and destroys the money of rich people shall in the future devour or torture their physical bodies (fleshes) in eternal judgment. This means that their wealth will ultimately bring God’s wrath against them which is being compared here to fire (“as fire”). Elsewhere the Bible teaches that “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). This speaks of how God is a God of vengeance that knows how to judge people eternally in hell.

The idea that the corrosion of their wealth will eat the flesh of the rich “like fire” (like a burning fire) is a graphic way of declaring that their greed will result in their own spiritual destruction. Their rotted or tarnished wealth will not only prosecute them (be a witness against them on Judgment Day), but it will also someday bring God’s wrath against them, which is here compared to fire.

Fire (“like fire”) is used here as a symbol of the fast, fatal, and inescapable wrath of God’s coming judgment and it is used this way in other passages. For instance, Jesus will return “in flaming fire” (an express His wrath and vengeance) to judge the lost (2 Thess. 2:8). God’s judgment is compared to a sweeping fire of God’s wrath that comes upon the unsaved. Even though God’s judgment is “like fire” (being compared to fire) this is no way denies the literalness of hell’s fire. This is because many other passages teach that people will suffer God’s vengeance in a place where there is some type of literal fire such as the Lake of Fire (Luke 3:17; Rev. 20:11-15).

There will be some kind of burning, literal fire, that consumes and tortures the flesh (bodies) of the wicked. This passage among others reveals that hell will be a place of physical torment. One of the most fearful realities in all of Scripture is the truth that hell is a place of conscious (Luke 16:23–24), bodily (Matt. 5:29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Rev. 14:9–10; 19:20; 20:15), eternal (Matt. 3:12; 25:41; Mark 9:43–48; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:11) punishment.

You know, if the Supreme Court of the United States could vote on it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment. They would. They would say, “God can’t do that; that’s un-American. There can be no such thing as hell.” But they don’t understand the righteous purity, justice and character of God. God is too good to not punish sin!

James finally says: “Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days” (James 5:3). This could be used as a Christmas message with all the materialism being promoted during this season. In essence, this means that these wicked rich people hoarded treasures, causing them to reject Christ as Savior, which will ultimately bring God’s fiery judgment against them in hell. Material excuses will mean nothing on the Day of Judgment! In fact, the materialism of the unsaved will act as a prosecuting attorney against them and bring God’s judgment upon them.

Many years ago, I remember hearing Donald Trump in an interview talk about a particular building and the joy that he found in building structures. He said that when he looks at a building it brings him a sense of calmness and stability to his life for his buildings are structures that are for the most part permanent. Friend, all your buildings, riches, and wealth will mean nothing to you when you are in hell! They will actually become a witness of your covetousness, greed, and

unrepentant heart toward God. In the end, God will bring His fiery judgment upon you because of your confidence and security in riches instead of placing your confidence or trust in Christ to be your Savior.

Riches will not be an adequate excuse for you when you stand before God on Judgment Day. Your riches and covetousness will actually become a witness against you.

Someone said:

“Find a way – not an excuse.”

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven (John 14:6). There really is no excuse for you to die and go to hell. If you will place your faith in Christ, there will not be weeping and howling but rejoicing and gladness for you.

II. Application to the saved.



Luke 14:18 again reads:

“The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.”

There is a secondary application we can develop from this parable of the wedding feast that relates to Christians. As we read this text of Scripture, we can easily see how Christians can also make material excuses for not obeying God, serving Him, and doing what is right.

Revelation 3:17 is a prime example of a material excuse in the context of the Christian life: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

If we are not careful, we can become like the Laodicean Christians who lived materialistic lives (had everything they needed) and felt no real need to repent of their sin and become obedient to God (Rev. 3:19). Their excuse for not being

faithful to God's will and purpose for their lives was due to their wealth or materialism. Yes, they may have not needed anything from a material perspective but they surely needed to return to a spiritual life of commitment to God, His Word, and His will. In one sense, their materialistic outlook on life lulled them to sleep regarding the most important things in life and kept them from obeying God's will. So, whether realizing it or not, the "I have need of nothing" mentality is really a blind excuse which centered upon their spiritual decline to spiritual living and commitment to God.

Material excuses (jobs, making money, maintaining our homes) are lame excuses Christians give for not serving the Lord. The individual had purchased a piece of ground and wanted to go see it. In the East, the purchasing of property is often a long and complicated process, and the man would have had many opportunities to examine the land he was buying. In fact, anybody who purchases land that he has never examined is certainly taking a chance. Since most banquets were held in the evening, the man had little daylight left even for a quick investigation. This was nothing more than an excuse to ignore the Master's will and desire. An excuse is exactly that – an excuse.

Love for materialism kept this man from doing God's will. Materialism is something that can steal our time and devotion away from the Lord who is to be our Master.

1 Timothy 6:10

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Money is not the root of all evil. The love of money is the root of all evil. We don't have to be rich to love money and pursue it as our main goal in life.

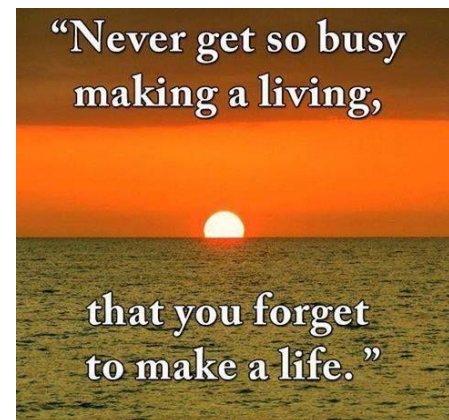
We may both see a 20-dollar bill lying on the road. There is no harm in that 20-dollar bill. But if we fight each other to get it, then we have allowed it to overcome our hearts. The point is this, as Christians we can love money more than Christ and lose our reputation of our Christian lives. If our main ambition in life is only to make money and get to the next plateau, then our love for material wealth will keep us from doing what is right and can actually detour our lives from doing

God's will. An overpowering and all-consuming desire to accumulate riches has come between many Christians and Christ.

Jesus said in Luke 12:15

"...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Materialism is not what living the Christian life is about. It's about loving God, serving Him, and being obedient to His will for your life. It's enjoying His presence and being content with what you possess. Things are just things! Stuff is just stuff! I find less and less value in material things as I grow older in the Lord. Material things do not ring my bell. They do not interest me. Fame and fortune do not thrill me.



Of course, we all possess things. There is nothing wrong with this. What's wrong is when things possess us and keep us from following God's will. Our wealth, homes, cars, and material things can keep us from doing God's will, being obedient to Him, and serving Him.

Jesus also taught in Matthew 6:19-20:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Someone said:

"It's good to have the things that money can buy, provided we don't lose the things that money can't buy!"

Riches cannot buy you peace, contentment, and most of all they cannot buy you eternal reward!

It is said that when one of the Vanderbilts was dying, the family was waiting in an outer room. When the lawyer and the doctor came out, one of the more

outspoken members of the family stepped up to the lawyer and asked, “How much did he leave?” The lawyer replied, “He left it all. He didn’t take any of it with him.”

The Bible does not discourage saving or even investing; but it does condemn hoarding. We are to use our money to win the lost and get the Lord’s work done! Hoarding it will not bring us eternal reward. As our parable suggests, we need to be busy in the King’s business! One important area is that we do not become covetous with our money but give to God’s work and ministry.

“Once there was a Baptist who had a pious look.
He had been totally immersed except his pocketbook.
He put a dollar in the plate and sang with might and main.
When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain.”

Now, I think that there are some Christians who can identify with this today. They claim to be saved and yet somehow their conversion experience has never reached their pocketbook. Beloved, don’t let your wealth stagnate. Don’t leave it behind for the Antichrist to confiscate after the Rapture. Use it for the Lord and His honor and glory.

b. Marketing (business excuse – Luke 14:19)

Luke 14:19

“And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove (examine and test) them: I pray thee have me excused.”

Marketing Excuse
(Business Excuse)

**BUSY IS NEVER A VALID
EXCUSE. EITHER YOU
CARE ENOUGH TO MAKE
THE TIME, OR YOU DON'T.**

Again, we hear the sanctimonious note in this excuse – “I pray thee have me excused.” We often try to sanctify our excuses! Here is the typical business excuse. In other words, “I’m too busy with my business and work and do not have time to attend the banquet.” Many people hide behind their marketing or business excuse for not doing God’s will. This fellow bought oxen but needed to

go and “prove” or examine or test them. Imagine making a big purchase like this without even seeing the animals. That’s like buying a used car on the internet and

then going to pick it up. When you get there, you discover there are scratches and dents that you did not see on the car and you also find out it has some mechanical problems.

In this next excuse, Jesus pictures those who put jobs, occupations, or business ahead of the call of God.

I. Application to the unsaved

Unsaved people are working themselves into hell! They are too busy to consider the need of their soul. They are working themselves to the grave and ultimately to the judgment of an everlasting hell. They continue their daily business routine and move about in the business world never considering their need to be saved. Some people are too busy to be saved! What a tragedy! They are so involved in their business, financial gain, and the stock markets that they neglect the most important thing – the salvation of their soul.

When sharing the Gospel with a man, he responded with these words: “I work hard and take care of my family.” This was the essence of his salvation. He used his business and work as an EXCUSE to reject Christ but still go to Heaven. The business excuse of jobs, a fast-paced society, paying bills, keeping up the house payments come in the way of a person being saved. The marketing road is actually an empty and lonely road, and it leads to neglect of one’s soul and salvation.

Jesus taught about this in Luke 12:16-21:

“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

You might say that this man was in the construction business. He had so much material gain that he kept busy building bigger barns to store his wealth. At the end of the madness of his materialistic days on earth and lucrative business enterprise he would discover that he came up empty regarding the salvation of his own soul. He had earthly riches but was not “rich toward God” which means he had not taken time to discover the true riches of the forgiveness of sins before God and to find acceptance before God’s throne.

Marketing for this man meant to build bigger barns to hold his grain. But in the midst of all his marketing he neglected the most important thing which was salvation of his soul! His business enterprise and making money absorbed his life and caused him to neglect Christ as the only way to contentment in life and more importantly the only way to Heaven (Acts 4:12).

The Bible does not condemn us for having wealth but hoarding wealth and allowing wealth and business to become our god at the expense of neglecting our own soul.

Jesus taught in Mark 8:36:

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

So much for business and wealth! We might profit materially in this life but not profit spiritually in the next life. If we die and go to hell because of our neglect of Christ’s salvation offer, then all of our business transactions in this life will mean absolutely nothing.

Charlemagne gave instructions that when he died, he should be buried seated in the royal posture of a ruling monarch on a throne. Then he directed that the Gospels should be laid on his knees, his sword beside him, the imperial crown on his head, and the royal mantle on his shoulders. And his body remained in this position for 180 years. About 1,000 A.D., the tomb was opened by the Emperor Otho. They found the skeleton of Charlemagne, dissolved and dismembered into various hideous postures. The skull was still wearing the crown. And the bony finger of the skeleton was pointing to the verse of Scripture, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matt. 16:26).

II. Application to the saved

Luke 14:19 against states:

“And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove (examine or test) them: I pray thee have me excused.”



Some Christians might conclude, “My job keeps me from attending church regularly.” “I’m too busy to help in the church ministry.” But there is a Biblical reality chasing after us that we must all face and it’s this: “There is always time to God’s will!” We need to stop burying our spiritual potential and lack of obedience to God under the dirt of excuses. If we are too busy to do what is right, then we are too busy!

Yes, the business excuse is often used by Christians for not being faithful to God – His work, Word, ways, and His House (church attendance). Again, this man purchased five yoke of oxen and needed to go and examine them and make sure they were fit and prepared for the job. His statement “I go to prove them” suggests he was already on his way. His mind was already made up! This is what happens to us when we begin to make excuses. We make up our minds by believing that our excuses are valid and in doing so we avoid God’s will for our lives.

I need to go and check out my oxen. What a mirage! What a meaningless excuse. The oxen would be there tomorrow. What is important is that you obey God today! Again, this is the person who puts jobs, occupations, or business ahead of the will of God. This is a common sin among God’s people today. They would rather work around God’s will than do God’s will. This individual had his mind made up. He was not going to the supper for he had business commitments. Is this a picture of your life? Are you this person in the parable? Have you been too busy to follow God’s will for your life? Has your business excuse gotten in the way of your obedience to God?

Some Christians who want to bypass God's will for their lives possess a mind that is thoroughly mixed, set, and hardened like concrete. To use a business excuse to keep us from obeying and honoring God with our life will not count when we stand before God someday. Remember, someday we will stand accountable to the Lord for the way we lived out our lives on earth. We will not be judged to see if we get into Heaven but how much reward we will receive for eternity. Stop the excuses! They will not stand up when we are examined by the Lord.

1 Corinthians 3:15 says:

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

The loss pertains to eternal reward - not eternal life. But there will be a noticeable loss of reward which we otherwise could have gained had we been faithful to God, instead of making excuses.

Spurgeon once said:

"Excuses are curses, and when you have no excuses left there will be hope for you."

Morgan once observed:

"Back of an excuse is a lack of desire."

There is no rational reason why someone would not want to be part of this feast; they just didn't want to.

The late theologian/philosopher, Francis Schaeffer, whose life and books have impacted thousands for Christ, was raised in a non-Christian home. After he became a Christian, his father did not want him to go to college and did not want him to become a minister, which young Fran felt called to be. When the moment finally came where he had to make the decision to go with what he thought God wanted or to submit to his father's wishes,

Fran asked in a strained voice, "Pop, give me a few minutes to go down in the cellar and pray." In fear and uncertainty, he went down there and wept hot tears of sorrow for his father. Then, in an act of desperate and simple faith, he did something that he would never advise anyone else to do, but what he felt was

right for him at the time: he prayed, “Oh, God, please show me.” Then he took out a coin and said, “Heads, I’ll go in spite of dad’s desires.” It was heads. Still weeping, he cried out, “God, be patient with me. If it’s tails this time, I’ll go.” Tails. The third time he pleaded, “Once, more, God. I don’t want to make a mistake with Dad upstairs. Please now, let it be heads again.” It was heads.

So he went upstairs and told his dad that he had to go. His dad looked hard at him, then went out to slam the door. But just before the door hit the frame, his voice came through, “I’ll pay for the first half year.” It was many years later that Fran’s dad became a Christian, but Fran thinks that this moment was the basis of his salvation, when Fran in effect declared, “I must follow the Lord.” (Told by Edith Schaeffer, in *The Tapestry* [Word], pp. 60-62).

As we come to our final point in our study on “Excuses” we discover the importance of following Christ wholeheartedly, taking up the cross of absolute surrender to God and doing His will for our lives.

c. Marriage (family excuse - Luke 14:20).

Marriage (Family Excuse)



Luke 14:20

“And another said, I have married a wife (taken a wife), and therefore I cannot come.”

This was a marital excuse given for not doing God’s will. This one really takes the cake, as we say. This man had married a wife and wanted to go on his honeymoon!

This excuse about marrying a wife was evidently based on Deuteronomy 24:5, where a man could stay home from war for one year, to cheer up his newlywed. However, in this case the application was certainly novel and was filled with nonsense.

Now, you can’t blame a man for wanting to go on his honeymoon, but you can blame this fellow for his deceit and poor planning. Since Jewish weddings were never surprises and involved much elaborate preparation, this man knew well in advance that he was taking a wife. He did not have to use his marriage as a sudden excuse to not come to the banquet.

The lesson is easy to understand. Family ties and marital relationships can often hinder us from doing God's will. Many times there are family relationships that get in the way and keep us from doing what God wants us to do. A wife can keep a man from following God's will or vice versa! Children can keep parents from following God's will when the kids are ruling the house!

I. Application to the unsaved

Sadly, family ties keep people from coming to faith in Christ. This is the main application in this banquet parable.

Let's reflect on this for a few moments.

- Responsibility for families keeps people from Christ.

A person's family responsibilities can occupy their time and keep them from coming into a saving relationship with Christ. There is the matter of taking care of the family, providing for the family, and spending time with the family. People can commit their time to caring for their family without taking care of their own soul!

Many men might provide for their families, go on vacations with their families, try to raise their families in a respectable manner but never step inside a Gospel preaching church, never do anything for Jesus Christ, and worst of all, never express faith in Christ. You could say that they have been family oriented but never became part of the family of God!

I'm reminded of the incident in Numbers 16:31-33, when Korah and his entire family were judged by God. "And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."

Men, if we don't come to faith in Christ, we will one day be swallowed up by God's wrath and wind up in hell! In fact, if we don't lead our children to Christ, they too, may very well wind up in hell someday! We should never be so

preoccupied with family life that we forget about the Savior who wants to enter the hearts and lives of our family.

➤ Religion of families keep people from Christ.

There are those who believe that being part of a religious family somehow gets them into Heaven. People say today, “I was born into a Catholic, Muslim, or Amish family and this is what I am and what I will always be.” Sadly, when family gets in the way of a person’s salvation, it results in an empty life and a terrible ending to one’s life.

Many people today believe that their involvement and connection to a certain distinguished family line will somehow give them an automatic entrance and ticket into Heaven. This was the problem with the Jews.

In John 8:33 the religious people said:

“We be Abraham's seed (family and lineage), and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?”

Young people sometime believe they are saved because mom and dad are saved. Their religious ties with their parent give them a false sense of security.

John 1:13 reminds us that the new birth is not tied to family relationships:

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

In John 1:13 we are informed that that new birth comes from God. It’s not “of blood” (*descent* or being tied to a religious family or heritage), nor of the will of the flesh (*desire* for salvation since there is “none that seeketh God”), nor of the will of man (*determination* of a person to be saved – since God determines when we are saved), but of God.” In other words, none of these things will bring about the new birth in our lives. It takes the power of God to bring new life into our spirit.

The message of this parable applies to all lost sinners today. What is God saying to lost sinners today? God still says, “All things are now ready. Come!” (Luke 14:17). All you need to do is come! “Whosoever will, let him come” (Rev. 22:17).

The invitation into the earthly theocracy (kingdom) also served as an invitation for sinners to respond in faith to the Messiah so they could enter the earthly kingdom. The invitation to the banquet presupposes the that a person must place their faith in the Messiah to enter the kingdom.

All one needs to do is come! A person must express faith in Jesus and in so doing they can come to the banquet. By way of application, let me convey the truth that nothing more needs be done for the salvation of your soul, since Jesus Christ finished the work of redemption when He died for you on the cross and arose from the dead.

In John 19:30 Jesus cried from the cross, “It is finished.” You can’t add anything to that – not your works, your good deeds, your church associations. All you must do is come! You must come in simple faith, trust in Jesus Christ to be your Savior, and enjoy the banquet.

The feast has been spread, the invitation is free, and you are invited to come! Yes, salvation is free. The supper is free! Just come!

Isaiah 55:1

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

God wants to see His house filled, and “yet there is room” (Luke 14:22). For the Jews, there was room or opportunity for them to be saved and enter earthly kingdom. Likewise, today there is opportunity for us to be saved and enter the blessings of salvation that God has for us. However, your excuses can keep you from what Christ is offering you (salvation and eternal life). People today make the same mistake that the Jewish people made in the parable. They DELAY in responding to the invitation of salvation by making excuses.

When reflecting on the unsaved, we as Christians are also reminded of our responsibility to share the truth with the lost. Each of us as believers today must act like this servant in this parable and herald the Gospel abroad. The Lord wants us to go into the “streets and lanes” (Luke 14:21), go into the highways and

hedges (Luke 14:23), and go into all the world (Mark 16:15) with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a message that we must share with others today.

In Jesus' day it was the message to receive Christ as Messiah and Savior so a Jewish person could enter the earthly kingdom and feast (Luke 14:17). Today it is the message to receive Christ as Savior for entrance into Heaven (John 14:6). The point is this, we must be sharing this message with everyone. In one sense, there is a feast (banquet of blessing) that the unsaved can experience when they come to faith in Christ. Think of it this way. When we invite an unsaved person to place faith in Christ, we are essentially inviting them to a feast or banquet of blessing.

Song of Solomon 2:4

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

There is a spiritual feast that awaits the unsaved! Have we been going out into the highways and byways of life? In what ways have we been communicating the truth of the Gospel to others? Have we been getting the message out? We can do this through verbal witness, through handing out Gospel tracts, through other innovative and non-worldly methods. The point of the parable is that we must compel the unsaved to come in and enjoy the banquet feast that Christ offers the unsaved.

Luke 14:23

"And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled."

This parable was the text of the last sermon D.L. Moody preached. His message was also entitled: "Excuses." It was given on November 23, 1899 in the Civic Auditorium in Kansas City, and Moody was a sick man as he preached. Moody proclaimed: "I must have souls in Kansas City." "Never, never have I wanted so much to lead men and women to Christ as I do this time!"

There was a deep throbbing in his chest, and he had to hold to the organ to keep from falling, but Moody bravely preached the Gospel; and some fifty people responded to trust Christ. The next day, Moody left for home, and a month later he died. Up to the very end, Moody was "compelling them to come in" as Luke 14:23 teaches.

II. Application to the saved

How does this marital excuse apply to the saved?

Luke 14:20

“And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”

Jesus taught that family ties can actually get in the way of a person’s discipleship.



Luke 14:26:

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

It’s interesting that in the context of making excuses Jesus follows up with His thoughts on discipleship. Why? It’s because discipleship does not allow room for excuses – not even family excuses.

The expression about “hating” family members is a Semitic expression for loving less. The term “hate” is used in a comparative sense by our Lord – not a bad ethical sense. Jesus is teaching that we are to love Him more than our families and put Him first place in our lives. The order is always Christ first and family second. Some seem to get this wrong today. They think family always comes first. But Jesus taught that this was not the case. If we don’t put Christ first then our family will not function according to God’s will and standard.

Rod Mattoon remarks in this way:

“The word ‘hate’ that is used here does not mean you are to be hateful, bitter, and angry with your family. This word is a word of contrast, emphasizing ‘position’ not ‘feelings.’ He is contrasting our attitude about Christ with respects to others. Our love for Christ is to be greater than our love for our family. Jesus Christ is to be number one in our lives. This is what Jesus is teaching here. If your love for Christ is not greater than your love for others, you cannot be His disciple. Other people will hinder you from serving Him and doing the will of God in your life.

They will distract you from obeying God if you let them. So let me ask, 'Is Jesus Christ first in your life?'

Almost everyone wants the kingdom of God, the problem is few want it first. Your purpose in life is to put the Lord first in your life in every area and decision. He is to be first in our time and in our giving. As a Christian, your life does not belong to you. Sometimes a Christian will shout, 'It's my life! Don't tell me what to do!' No, beloved, it is not your life. It belongs to the Lord and when we realize this and yield to this truth, we begin to fulfill God's purpose for our lives."

Discipleship is fundamentally a call to allegiance. Jesus is to have first place overall, including family. Following Jesus is to be the disciple's first love. This pursuit is to have priority over any family member and one's own life, which means that other concerns are to take second place to following Jesus (Luke 8:19–21; 9:59–62; 12:4, 49–53; 16:13).

In other words, we are to possess an undying commitment for Christ's cause and put Him first, so we can actually keep a Christ-centered focus in our families. If we don't put Christ first, our families will always suffer in certain ways. For instance, when we fail to put Christ first in our lives, our families lose the Christ-centered and Christ-committed approach to living. Here is the point Jesus is making. We are not to use the family excuse for not serving the Lord faithfully and obediently.

Matt Costella wrote:

"Christians are often putting family time and family activities before the things of the Lord – things such as church attendance or Bible study. Yes, Satan can use the family, as important as it is, to keep the saint from faithfully following the Savior. We must be careful not to fall prey to family idolatry. Rather, we must love God above all else."

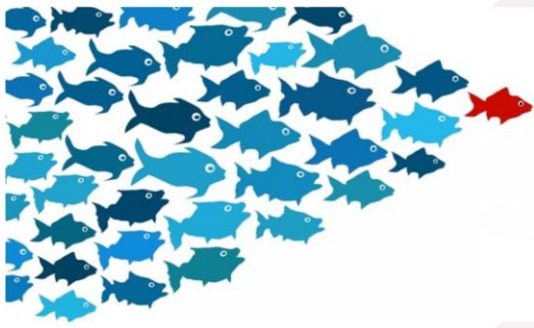
In Luke 14:27 Jesus adds these words about discipleship:

"And whosoever doth not bear (carry) his cross, and come after me (follow me), cannot be my disciple."

Following Christ and being His follower involves carrying a cross. The idea of bearing (carrying) a cross and following Christ means to daily identify with Christ by surrender to God's will, to be willing to suffer and experience shame for the cause of Christ. It means death to self, to our own plans and ambitions, and a willingness to serve the Lord as He directs and above all else (John 12:23-28). Yes,

carrying a cross means that we are willing to die in order to follow Jesus. Ultimately it involves “dying to self.” It’s a call to absolute surrender (Luke 9:24-25).

Following Christ (Full Surrender and Obedience)



A "cross" is something we willingly accept from Christ as part of His will for our lives. Yes, there is a practical sense where we must die to ourselves, our will, our sin, disobedience, our goals, our plans, and carry the cross of surrender, yielding fully to Christ, sacrificing ourselves for His cause and putting Him first in our lives (Matt. 6:33).

If you wonder if you are ready to take up your cross, consider these questions:

- ✓ Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing some of your closest friends?
- ✓ Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means alienation from your family?
- ✓ Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means the loss of your reputation?
- ✓ Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your job?
- ✓ Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your life?

“Take up thy cross and follow Me,”
I hear the blessed Savior call;
How can I make a lesser sacrifice
When Jesus gave His all?

We need to take A. W. Tozer's words to heart when he said:

“The man on the cross is facing in only one direction. He is not going back, and he has no further plans of his own.”

“The cross before me
The world behind me
No turning back
No turning back!”

Christian friend, you need to stop all of the excuses! There is a hole in the bucket of every excuse that you bring before God. The old song comes to mind:

“There's a hole in the bucket, dear Liza dear Liza
There's a hole in the bucket, dear Liza a hole
Go fix it dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry
Go fix it dear Henry, dear Henry, fix it.”

If we were really honest, there is a hole in everyone of our excuses. The only thing we can do is fix the hole! This involves confession and commitment. This is the only way to patch the hole of excuses.

Someone said:

“The person who is good at excuses is usually not good at anything else.”

Why is this? It's because excuses keep us from serving the Lord and being involved in the King's business! In a practical way, they keep us from enjoying the banquet of blessings that God has for our lives.

The Metropolitan Insurance Company received some unusual explanations for accidents from its automobile policyholders. The following are just few:

- “An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my car, and vanished.”
- “As I reached an intersection, a hedge sprang up, obscuring my vision.”
- “I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.”
- “The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran over him.”
- “The telephone pole was approaching fast. I attempted to swerve out of its path when it struck my front end.”
- “The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.”

These are nothing but excuses. Now think about all of the excuses we have for not being faithful to God and doing what is pleasing to Him. Will any of these excuses hold up when we stand before the Lord? As Christians and be held accountable for the way that we have lived and we will receive reward in direct proportion to how we have lived and served the Lord in this life.

Revelation 22:12 declares:

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

2 John 1:8 adds:

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought (the Biblical truths taught to the saints), but that we receive a full reward” (not losing reward which we otherwise could have gained).

The Lord is not going to have sympathy on us for allowing materialism, employment, or marriage and family to stand in the way of doing His will. In the end, all that will matter is that we have done His will and followed Him obediently and faithfully. We need to be consumed with Christ! Christ and His will must have first priority in our hearts and lives – even before our families.

Some forest workers fight fires. Others battle fast-growing plants. A Mercury News article reported that teams of volunteers are working hard to remove invasive plants from the redwood forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Workers point out that many of the non-native species they are fighting are sold in garden stores. The German ivy plant, for example, has become a serious problem in California. This fast-growing exotic house plant competes with the native species, smothering and shading everything in its path. It can completely cover and destroy a tree.

Thinking about these home-grown invaders can help us understand something even more crucial than saving trees. Jesus taught us that anything that competes with Him for our hearts can choke our spiritual lives. He taught that even the natural love of family can be dangerous and keep us from following Him (Luke 14:16-26). Our Lord demands our undivided love and loyalty.

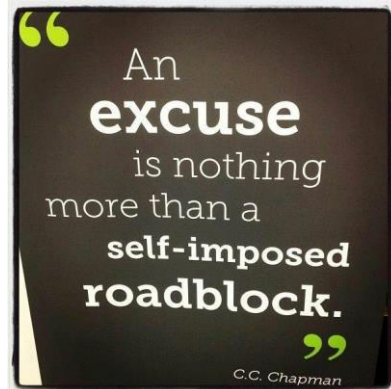
We need to remember that once we value Christ above everything else, we will learn to love our family with a deeper and healthier love. But until our ultimate loyalty is determined to follow Christ, home-grown affection for family and loyalty to family over Christ will result in us failing to follow Christ wholeheartedly.

Don't let anything compete with Christ.

“To follow Christ we must let go
Of all that we hold dear;
And once we have denied ourselves,
Our gains become more clear.”

When it comes to excuses, how about church attendance? Pastors hear a lot of excuses over the years for not attending church. I could write a book! Do you really think the Lord is going to accept your feeble excuse of having to work your life away instead of attending church and serving the Lord?

Warren Wiersbe stated: “People today make the same mistake that the people in the parable made: they delay in responding to the invitation because they settle for second best. There is certainly nothing wrong with owning a farm, examining purchases, or spending an evening with your wife. But if these good things keep you from enjoying the best things, then they become bad things. The excuse-makers were actually successful people in the eyes of their friends, but they were failures in the eyes of Jesus Christ.”



The old song puts the parable in perspective!

“Excuses, excuses, you'll hear them every day.
And the Devil he'll supply them, if from church you stay away.
When people come to know the Lord, the Devil always loses
So to keep them folks away from church, he offers them excuses.

In the summer it's too hot. And, in the winter, it's too cold.
In the spring time when the weather's just right,
You find some place else to go.
Well, it's up to the mountains or down to the beach
or to visit some old friend.

Or, to just stay home and kinda relax and hope
that some of the kin folks will start dropping in.

Well, the church benches are too hard.
And, that choir sings way too loud.
Boy, you know how nervous you get
When you're sitting in a great big crowd.
The doctor told you, 'Now, you better watch them crowds.
They'll set you back.'
But, you go to that old ball game because you say 'it helps you to relax.'

Well, a headache Sunday morning and a backache Sunday night.
But by worktime Monday morning, you're feeling quite alright.
While one of the children has a cold, 'Pneumonia, do you suppose?'
Why the whole family had to stay home, just to blow that poor kid's nose.

Well, the preacher he's too young. And, maybe he's too old.
The sermons they're not hard enough. And, maybe they're too bold.
His voice is much too quiet-like. Sometimes he gets too loud.
He needs to have more dignity. Or, else he's way too proud.

Well, the sermons they're too long. And, maybe they're too short.
He ought to preach the word with dignity instead of 'stomp and snort.'
Well, that preacher we've got must be 'the world's most stuck up man.'
Well, one of the lady's told me the other day,
"Well, he didn't even shake my hand."

Excuses, excuses, you'll hear them every day.
And the Devil he'll supply them, if from church you stay away.
When people come to know the Lord, the Devil always loses
So to keep them folks away from church, he offers them excuses."

Do you honestly think that the Lord is going to say, "Mr. so-and-so, I know you were a busy man. I can understand your predicament. You have good reason for not serving Me and being faithful."

Do you think the Lord is going to say, "I understand that you had to mow the yard and balance your books on Sunday and that you were too busy to attend church, hand out Gospel tracts, and be involved in My work." Do you really believe that

the Lord is going to say, "I understand that you had a wife or husband that was not concerned about doing God's will so that lets you off the hook? Don't worry about it."

We may give excuses for not doing God's will, but the Lord will not excuse us for not doing it! This is because if we truly want to do God's will, we will find a way to do it. Stop the excuses! Today God's people often give excuses for not evangelizing, serving the Lord faithfully, honoring their father and mother, using our gifts for the Lord, giving money to the Lord, giving their time for the Lord, or attending church faithfully.

Luke 14:18a once again reads:

"And they all with one consent began to make excuse."

God certainly does not want to hear you lame excuses. There is no excuse for not being committed to the King's business! Let's stop trying to bluff God, ourselves, and others. It won't work. Your excuses are not worth a hill of beans before God! Nor will they justify our disobedience when we give account of ourselves before God. Your excuses will catch up with you!

Many times, we reason to God that we simply ran out of time to serve Him. However, this is not the case. Again, we must remember that there is always time to do God's will! The Lord graciously gives to each one of us the same amount of time. It is what we do with our time that counts. Did it ever occur to you that not everything in your date book or on your calendar is in the will of God? Therefore, we must make time and take the time to do God's will, what we know is right, and then we will find true satisfaction and blessing in life.

This means we are to take time for devotions and worship (Psalm 119:47; Mark 1:35) and plan within our days to serve the Lord (Col. 3:24) and be obedient to what we know God wants us to do (Heb. 10:24-25). We must learn the secret of establishing right priorities in relationship to our time and not allow the secular things of life to crowd out the spiritual things of life. Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters at the same time (Matt. 6:24).

We need to be redeeming the time (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5) instead of making excuses!

“The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.”



Instead of counting the days, make your days count!

“We do not know how long we have
Till time for us is past,
So let us live as if this day
Is going to be our last.”

To spend time wisely, invest it in eternity!

And remember this:

“You only do what you want to do!”

So, stop making excuses and start making new goals and decisions that will keep you on the road of obedience, victory, and blessing.

