

The Gospel According to
Luke

“Trivial Pursuits”

Chapter 14:15-24

Introduction

If you run-out of excuses for missing a day of work, you might want to try one of these:

1. The Canadian Medical Association (1982) reported **Bingo Brain**. It's the headache associated with carbon monoxide intoxication which occurs after spending long hours in smoke filled bingo halls.
2. The New England Medical Journal reported **Disco Digit**. It is a sore finger caused from snapping fingers while dancing.
3. The Journal of the American Medical Association (1956) reported **Espresso Wrist**. It is pain suffered by espresso machine operators from strong wrist motions required to operate the equipment.
4. The British Medical Association Journal (1965) reported **Flip-Flop Dermatitis**. It's a skin disease on the feet from wearing rubber flip-flops.
5. **Ice Cream Frostbite**, reported in the New England Medical Journal (1982), is frostbite on the lips from prolonged contact with ice cream.
6. Again, reported in the New England Medical Journal (1981), you might have **Jeans Folliculitis**. It is irritation of the hair follicles from the waist down to the knees caused by wearing too-tight jeans.
7. Other real, reported, medical excuses include **Joystick Digit**, **Knife Sharpeners Cramp**, **Label Lickers Tongue**, **Money Counters Cramp**, **Electronic Space-War Video Game Epilepsy**, and **Television Legs** – which is the loss of normal flexibility of the legs from being slumped in a chair in front of the TV too long!

Jesus told a parable about a wedding supper to which all the invited guests offered various excuses. In their case, they would not simply

miss out on supper; **they would miss out on salvation!** The supper represented an invitation to receive eternal life, enter the kingdom of God on earth, and then spend eternity with the Lord in heaven.

God has issued a universal invitation, to **whosoever will** come and receive salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. We call it the Gospel. Many people still offer excuses when they are confronted with the Gospel invitation to receive Jesus Christ.

Excuses are inexcusable. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Your Excuses Expose You, and #2 Your Excuses Exclude You.

#1 Your Excuses Expose You (v15-20)

As we pick up our story, Jesus is in the middle of a difficult dinner. It was the Sabbath, and He had just performed a healing. It was a 'work' that outraged the religious Pharisees dining with Him. Jesus had further offended them by pointing-out their bad spiritual manners: The guests scrambled for the best seats, and the host only invited people who could reciprocate.

The atmosphere around the table was tense. All of a sudden, to break the tension, we read in verse fifteen,

[Luke 14:15](#) Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed *is* he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

We can't know this man's motives:

1. His motives may have been good. He may have been ministered to by Jesus' description of the coming kingdom, and realized the privilege of being in it.
2. His motives may have been bad. He may have been proclaiming his belief that, as a religious Jew, he had reservations for the kingdom.

Motives are tough to determine. We need to quit assigning motives to the things people say and do until we're sure where they are coming from.

Whatever this man's motives, his statement was true. It will be a blessing to **eat bread in the kingdom of God**. It's not just that they have really good Italian focaccia bread and excellent balsamic dipping sauces! While I think we *will* be eating in the kingdom on earth and in eternity, the image of a wedding supper is used to represent the joyous atmosphere of spiritual satisfaction and fellowship we will share with the Lord in the future, at His coming. It pictures for you that all of your appetites will be fully satisfied.

The statement was true; but exactly who would be at the supper in the kingdom? The Jews having supper with Jesus, and especially the Pharisees, believed they had table reservations in the kingdom of God. By *birth* and *background*, they believed they were secure. They were not secure, not at all; in fact, they would be excluded because of their own excuses.

With compassion, Jesus began to examine their excuses, and thereby expose their hearts.

Luke 14:16 Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many,

Luke 14:17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'

It will help if you understand Jewish culture and customs with regard to invitations to a formal supper. There were always two invitations to the supper; there were two stages of inviting guests:

1. First, a formal invitation would be issued, stating the day of the supper. The invited guests would R.S.V.P., indicating their decision to definitely attend. The host would then know exactly how many guests to prepare for.
2. On the day of the supper, a servant or servants would be sent out to announce that the supper was ready, and for the invited guests to come.

Every one of the invited guests said they would come. The host had therefore gone to great effort and expense to prepare a magnificent feast for them.

Let's pause and put this into a historical and prophetic context. God had promised His chosen people, the Jews, a kingdom on earth. His first invitation to them was through the Law and the Prophets – the Hebrew Scriptures we call the Old Testament.

The kingdom was now ready! So God sent John the Baptist, and Jesus, to invite the Jews to “*Come.*” The Jews had accepted the first invitation; but they were excusing themselves from the second.

Have you ever accepted an invitation, then discovered something (or someone) about the event that made you want to excuse yourself? The Jews discovered that Jesus was *not* the Messiah they wanted. They wanted a conquering king, not a suffering Savior. They were saying, “*No,*” to His offer of the kingdom on earth, with Jesus ruling and reigning. From God's perspective, they were excusing themselves from His offer of the kingdom.

Back to the parable, Jesus described a series of excuses:

Luke 14:18 But they all with one *accord* began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’

Luke 14:19 And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’

Luke 14:20 Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’

By the way: When did the words, “*Excuse me,*” become an excuse for all manner of rudeness?

These three inexcusable excuses pretty much summarize all the excuses people might make for rejecting God's offer of salvation. They represent three categories: Your *stuff*, your *success*, and your *spouse*.

Your stuff is the subject of Excuse #1:

'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' I've heard it said that this man was claiming to have purchased land without ever seeing it – indicating he might be lying. Let's give him, and the other two guys, the benefit of the doubt, and say that they are all telling the truth. In this first case, it may be that he had purchased the land, but now it was time for the final inspection – what we might today call the “walk-thru.” The point is that he knew the day of the supper, and had committed to attend, but now he put a higher priority on completing this real estate deal.

This excuse summarizes the love of material things that hinders many people from acting upon God's invitation to salvation. You're too busy for God because you're always taking care of your stuff! You are acquiring and accumulating things that you believe will satisfy you; but, in the end, you will miss the only thing that will ultimately bring satisfaction – a personal relationship with Jesus.

Your success is the subject of Excuse #2:

And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Again, let's assume he was telling the truth. He also knew the day of the supper, and had committed to it. The oxen could wait. Plus, his statement shows he was already on his way to test them when the servant found him. In other words, he had no intention of attending the supper.

This excuse summarizes the drive for success in your occupation and career. It's a picture of every one who has no time for God because they are too busy with their own earthly business.

Your spouse is the subject of Excuse #3:

Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' This is a noble excuse, in that often women were not invited to suppers – only the men. So this guy seemed to be putting his wife and family first.

But remember: He had already accepted the invitation, and was now rejecting it. If he put his spouse first, he would not have accepted in the first place; nor shamed her by refusing to attend.

Although it specifically mentions his spouse, we could easily expand this to include the whole family. This excuse summarizes all the people who have no time for God because of their family activities – *which often do not involve the whole family!* This guy, unlike the others, didn't even ask to be excused. It was as if the mention of his wife, his family, was sufficient. When people give the excuse of family, it's like the final word. We're hesitant to tell them that family can only be first when Jesus is first in their life.

All of these things are trivial pursuits when compared to eternal life. If that seems a little cold or harsh, let me put it another way: Your stuff, and your success, and even your spouse and family, are best when you put Jesus first.

The excuses people make expose one or more of these trivial pursuits. When good things keep you from the best thing, they become bad things. What they needed to realize and understand was that,

#2 Your Excuses Exclude You (v21-24)

Luke 14:21 *So that servant came and reported these things to his master...*

Sometimes our service doesn't seem very successful. It is, if it is obedient and done as unto the Lord. Faithfulness, not results, are what matter to God.

Luke 14:21 *...Then the master of the house, being angry...*

Stop there for a moment. Does God get angry? No, He doesn't – and that's *not* what the Word says. He heard the report, and **being angry**, He acted accordingly. It is God's nature to **be** angry with sin.

...[He] said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'

This would be absolutely unheard of in Jewish culture. These people were the outcasts, considered spiritual unclean; they were *never* invited to suppers! In the context of the greater meaning of the

parable, these were the common Jews who the religious Pharisees and Scribes felt would *never* make it in to the kingdom.

Luke 14:22 And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'

Luke 14:23 Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.

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. There would be Jews; but also Samaritans and Gentiles. The invitation was being extended to anyone and everyone – to **whosoever** would come.

The mention of **hedges** indicates the scope of the search. The servant was to go into the **hedges**, where folks were sheltering for the night, if necessary to extend the invitation.

Let me say something about the word, **compel**. It is a servant who was sent out to **compel** – not a soldier. We do not **compel** people into the kingdom of God by force of *arms*, but by fervent *argument*. The kind of people being invited to the ready feast would need a lot of convincing! The **poor**, the **maimed**, the **blind**, **Samaritans**, and **Gentiles**, were not used to such a gracious invitation.

Do you realize that this is exactly what happened in Church history? The Jews officially and nationally rejected the invitation of the kingdom; so, in the Book of Acts, the invitation was extended beyond Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. It was extended to all people everywhere – from every nation, tribe, and tongue. **And it still is!**

God desires His **house be filled**. He is not willing any should perish, but that all would come to repentance. Heaven is a big place! There's plenty of room there.

What about the Jews who were first invited?

Luke 14:24 For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

This doesn't mean that Jews cannot be saved. It means that the nation of Israel, in the first century, would not experience the kingdom on earth. The kingdom on earth would be delayed while the invitation would go out to everyone, everywhere – Jew and Gentile.

There is a very important Bible principle behind this parable:

1. If you are saved, it is because you responded to the free invitation.
2. If you remain lost, it is your own fault, because you made excuses.

God has made every provision for salvation. He spared not His own Son, Who died so that you might have eternal life. The Father is ready to receive all who come to Him. There is an infinite willingness in God to save **whosoever** will believe in Jesus. Everyone is invited; but not everyone elects to accept the invitation.

Applying the Word

If you have never responded to the invitation by receiving Jesus as your Savior, I would ask you this: *“What is your inexcusable excuse?”*

Excuses are as deadly as the worst immorality.

If you are a believer... **You** are the servant who is to **compel** people to come in and receive salvation. God desires His **house** be **filled**.

In your compelling, remember that a relationship with Jesus is a *feast*, not a *funeral*. You are not inviting people to give-up anything; you are inviting them to gain everything!

We need a lot more joy as believers. We need to be enjoying Jesus Christ ourselves as we **compel** others to meet Him.