

Message #72

Luke 14:15-24

When I was working my way through school in 1979, I was a shipping clerk, with the job of stocking, packing and shipping books. My boss asked me if I would like to go with him and some other men to see the University of Michigan football game in Ann Arbor. I said sure. So I went. It was one of the most exciting games in history. They were playing Indiana and it came down to the last 6 seconds of the game and the quarterback hit Anthony Carter and he outran everyone for a game winning touchdown. Carter said it was the greatest moment of his entire football career, including the pros. Bob Ufer, the announcer, said it was the greatest play he ever saw. In fact, he was crying.

As we were driving back to Grand Rapids, my boss told me that he was thrilled with the game and thrilled I went. He had actually invited several people to go who could not go. Well the next day was Sunday and I was at church and some of the people who had been invited to go said they were sorry they missed the game. One of them said, "Had I known the game would have ended like that, I would have gone and not missed it"

We suspect there will be many in eternity who will say about the same thing. If I had only realized heaven would be a place so great, I would not have missed it. I would have believed on Jesus Christ and have really committed my life to Jesus Christ.

If I had only known that honor in heaven would be so great and so final I would not have wasted my life and would have really got serious about God and His word. There will be many upstanding religious people who will miss heaven. There will be many religious leaders who will burn forever. They would not personally invite Jesus Christ into their lives. They will have their excuses.

Excuse makers do not impress Jesus Christ. Those who make excuses as to why they cannot totally commit their lives to the Lord or why they cannot really follow Jesus Christ or live for Him need to take a serious look at this text. What we see is this:

THOSE WHO WILL WIND UP ENJOYING INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD FOR ALL ETERNITY AS HONORED GUESTS WILL BE THOSE WHO DID NOT MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST AND COMMITTING THEIR LIVES TO HIM ON EARTH.

One may project himself to be very religious, but if one makes excuses for not believing in Jesus Christ, one cannot and will not be saved. **The primary issue in this text is actually getting into the Kingdom of God.** Christ wanted to make it clear that many would not be in the Kingdom of God, who thought they would be, because they make excuses for not believing in Jesus Christ.

There are three main narrative parts to this discussion:

**NARRATIVE PART #1 – Religious play actors assume they are automatically right with God.
14:15**

Let's remind ourselves that the word "Pharisee" comes from a Greek word that means to act out a part or to play act. Several Pharisees and Scribes were at this meal (14:1, 3).

Christ was in the home of a Pharisaical leader and He was not impressed with what He saw. In fact, the house was full of these Pharisaical spies who were trying to trap Christ (14:1). Christ was not intimidated by these boys in any way. He did not back down and He addressed them directly.

They had been sitting there listening to Christ rebuke them by telling them they cared more about religion than they did people (14:1-6), they cared more about themselves than they did others (14:7-11) and they cared more about certain people, but not all people (14:12-14). Christ closed the section by saying the one who was willing to be different on earth would be blessed in eternity.

When He completed this discussion, one of the Pharisees, who had been listening, and heard him mention the "resurrection of the righteous" (v. 14), responded in **verse 15** by saying, "It will be blessed for everyone who is in the Kingdom of God." One of the Pharisees said, "Yes what a blessing it will be when we are all there in the kingdom of God fellowshiping together."

This Pharisee assumes that he is right with God and he assumes that he is going into the Kingdom because of His religion, not because of his relationship with Jesus Christ. This Pharisee assumes he will be one who is at the table as an honored guest in the Kingdom.

But Augustine really gets at the heart of this when he said, "This man should have closed his mouth and opened his heart."

God does not want people to play act in religion. He wants people who love Him in their hearts. Religious play acting will never bring anyone into intimate fellowship with God. It will only bring one to the judgment of God.

One another occasion, Jesus said, "For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20).

Now keep in mind that the Pharisees were very religious. They were people who revered the law of God. They talked like they were right with God, they acted like they were right with God, they looked like they were right with God, but they were not right with God in their hearts.

God sees the hearts. We cannot assume that everyone who comes to church and who is active in church and who looks and acts as if they are right with God really is. If one is not developing a true, close relationship with Christ, he is a spiritual loser and will be an eternal loser.

NARRATIVE PART #2 – Religious play actors make excuses for why they are not right with God. **14:16-20**

The key word of the section is the word “excuse” (**14:18, 19**). It is a Greek word that means to beg off, to refuse, to avoid and to give an excuse. Play actors are always making excuses as to why they cannot fully give themselves to believing in and following Jesus Christ.

At the real heart of this is the fact that the Pharisee loves religion more than Jesus Christ. Pharisees love their faulty religion more than truth.

So what Christ does is compare the entrance into His kingdom with having a meal. The meal pictures intimate fellowship and a very enjoyable experience.

Christ says there was a man who was having a big dinner and he sent His servant to invite those who had been invited to come (**v. 16**). The invitation is to “come for everything is ready now” (**v. 17**).

When Christ says everything is ready now, He means everything is ready now to have intimate fellowship with Him that would lead them to all the blessings in the Kingdom. He did not mean that all of the full glamour of the Kingdom was ready because He had already told them that that would not be enjoyed until after His resurrection at the resurrection of the righteous (**Luke 14:14**).

So the invitation is to come into a relationship with and have intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ here and now, which will guarantee a wonderful future position of honor in the Kingdom. The table is now prepared and many were being invited to come and enjoy wonderful fellowship with Him.

But you will notice in **verse 18** that “all” began to make excuses. These people were all play actors. Every one of them had some excuse why they could not really believe in Jesus Christ and commit themselves to Jesus Christ. **These were all people who really expected to be highly honored in the Kingdom. They reject the King, but fully expect they will be honored in the Kingdom of the King.**

I love what one commentator said, they all “snub” the invitation. They came up with three excuses, which all begin with a noun that begins with the letter “P”:

Excuse #1 - The excuse of property. **14:18**

Now we start to get a glimpse of the real heart of a Pharisee. His property took priority over Jesus Christ. Christ is saying you need to follow me right now and have fellowship with Me right now and this guy is saying well I have made some property business deal that comes first.

This is a bizarre excuse. The guy had not even seen the property. So his excuse is, I can't follow you now because I need to look at a property I have never seen, that I bought.

Now I don't know if the guy is even telling the truth. This may be just some invented lying excuse. I don't know too many business deals in which a guy buys a property he has never seen. If in fact he hadn't seen the land, then it shows the kind of money he must have had because he could just purchase unseen land.

So to this phony, a little land in this life was more important than his eternal status in the next life. This man's idol was his land and it meant more to him than Jesus Christ. I am not sure we are far removed from that today. If you ask most people whether or not they want to go to heaven and be highly rewarded, most say absolutely. But if you ask those same people if they will come and pray and study God's word, many have too much going on.

I literally knew a man who stopped going to church because he wanted to spend more time building a house on weekends. He built a beauty, but he is dead now and I wonder what eternity looks like for him?

Excuse #2 - The excuse of possessions. 14:19

Another excuse for not committing a life to Jesus Christ was I have made a purchase of five yoke of oxen and I need to go try them out. This guy was very rich and he must have owned a lot of acres.

Now this meal is taking place on the Sabbath day (14:1). They were the men who accused Christ of healing on the Sabbath. Again this shows the extreme wealth of a Pharisee who can buy five yoke of oxen without even trying them. This would be like buying five tractors.

These were the key religious leaders whose business meant more to them than their relationship with God.

There are many who care more about their business than they do God. I know of a business man who actually goes to a specific church because it is good for his business. The church is not feeding him or his family the word of God. But he goes because it is good for business.

So he is spiritually starving himself and family because business is good. In eternity, he will lose.

Frankly, we must all check our priorities. We must always make sure that our love for the Lord and our love for the Word take priority. Because if a house or a business or education comes first, we are making an eternal mistake.

Excuse #3 - The excuse of people. **14:20**

Here is an excuse that most people would totally and completely support. In fact, most would be impressed with this excuse. This would certainly be applauded by those groups who promote family. This person could not fully commit himself to Jesus Christ because of his family. He had a wife and he could not follow Jesus Christ. His view is my new wife must come first above a commitment to Jesus Christ.

I am convinced God is fed up with this excuse and it has not changed much in 2,000 years. Many use the family as an excuse for no commitment to Jesus Christ. But I tell you this on the authority of the word of God; you stay home from worshipping God and use your family as an excuse and when you get into eternity you will lose big time.

Jesus Christ will never honor one who puts Him second to a wife or family.

I heard a famous man of God say, “There used to be a time in Christian homes that if an anniversary or birthday fell on a night of church worship service, the people loved to be in church worshipping God. Today, it is rare. If an anniversary or birthday falls on a weekend, Jesus Christ always comes in second.”

NARRATIVE PART #3 – Religious play actors will never have intimate fellowship with God.
14:21-24

The last verse of this section, **verse 24**, is really the culmination of this section and it specifically states that play actors will never enjoy intimate fellowship with God and will not even be at the meal table.

Jesus says to go out and invite the broken and bruised. Go out and “bring them in from the fields of sin.”

Look carefully at the list of people who end up in the Kingdom and end up honored. See yourself in this list. There were the people that the Pharisees taught were sinful people who weren’t right with God. It turns out they are ones right with God and the Pharisees aren’t.

Group #1 - The poor will be there. **14:21a**

These were people who did not have much money, property or possessions.

Group #2 - The crippled will be there. **14:21b**

These were people who were mangled and had not been able to move right in life.

Group #3 - The blind will be there. **14:21c**

These were the people who could not see.

Group #4 - The lame will be there. **14:21d**

These were the people who could not walk.

We may remember that the religious Pharisee would never think of inviting these kinds of people to a meal (**14:12**). The Pharisees were the upper class and Jesus says my people will be those of the lower class. They will be the ones who will be in My kingdom, fellowshiping with Me.

For the most part these were outcasts who didn't have a lot of money or land. They didn't have many friends and family. But they had a heart that was willing to believe in Jesus Christ. From the world's perspective, they were nobodies but from Christ's perspective, they were rich.

In **verses 22-24** we have a look at the entire scope of God's plan:

- 1) Jesus Christ first came to the proud Jews and they rejected Him.
- 2) Jesus Christ reached out to the hurting, sinful Jews and many received Him.
- 3) Jesus Christ reached out to the Gentiles and many received Him.

This passage invites sinners to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Don't make excuses. Come today. You cannot save yourself from your sins by your works and religion, but you will damn yourself by your works and religion.

You are invited to come to have wonderful relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ. Will you come?