

**Text: Luke 14:16-24**

**Theme: "I Would, Lord, But..."**

**Date: October 21, 2007 (Pentecost 21)**

In the name of Jesus, Dear Christian friends,

*"Oh, Mom, I would carry out the garbage for you, but I'm going to be late for work if I don't get going." "Dad, I would like to mow the lawn for you, but I promised I would meet some friends at the park." "Mom, I would help you with the dishes, but I'm going to a movie with the girls and my ride is waiting for me in the driveway."*

Anyone who has been a parent has probably heard all the "I would, but..." excuses there are. We know how children make it sound like they would love to do something for their parents, but there is often some excuse why they can't. When we hear these excuse from our children we have to remember that they're not the only children that often make excuses. As children of our heavenly Father how often don't we make the same kind of excuses that our children make to us? God asks, *"Will you grow deeper in the understanding of my love for you by attending a Bible class or being more regular in your worship life?"*, and we say, *"I would, Lord, but..."* and attach all kinds of excuses why a Bible class schedule doesn't work for us or why we have a hard time being more regular in worship. God says, *"Will you put my love for you into practice by using your time and talents to serve as a Sunday School and Vacation Bible School teacher or by serving on a board or a committee in your congregation?"* and we answer, *"I would, Lord, but..."*, and we have all kinds of excuses ranging from *"Lord I'm not qualified"* to *"When I retire I'll have more time to give."* The Lord says, *"Will you be my witness and tell others the good news?"*, and we say, *"I would, Lord, but..."*

If there is any attitude that can alienate children from their heavenly Father and hurt others, it is the childish excuse, *"I would, Lord, but..."* In the word of God Jesus takes up this very subject today. In the parable of the great supper Jesus shows us the valuable invitation God is sending to us, the shame of our unreasonable excuses, and finally, the results of persisting in those excuses.

### **1. The Invitation**

Times were simple and hard when Jesus lived and walked on this earth. This was especially obvious when you sat down at the meal to eat. There wasn't a lot of food. Very rarely did you have meat and vegetables and fruits were hard to come by. Most meals consisted of simple bread and not much more. Many of the things we take for granted today were not available in Jesus' day. There were no dairy cows. There were no refrigerators. The fruits were usually dried, because there was no way of preserving them. Not only were the meals simple, but the people of Jesus' day had to work very hard for the food they did have.

It's important to remember this to understand the meaning of Jesus' parable of the great supper. If the man on the street would be granted one wish, chances are he would choose a great feast with all different kinds of rich foods. In the words of our text Jesus describes the the precious message of the gospel in terms of a great feast for the people: **A CERTAIN MAN WAS PREPARING A GREAT BANQUET AND INVITED MANY GUESTS.** The man who prepared the banquet is of course God. And the banquet is the one thing that every person needs more than anything else - the forgiveness of sins. The great banquet is the one thing every person wants more than anything else - everlasting life, to live forever in heaven with Jesus. The banquet is the one thing that you and I long for day after day – spiritual happiness. The banquet is eternal joy in heaven.

The invitation to the banquet is the gospel, the good news about Jesus. Notice that the banquet is free. Nobody has to do anything to earn forgiveness, eternal life and spiritual joy. This banquet is free to all people because Jesus earned it for all with his perfect life and innocent death on the cross. He paid the price for us with his blood and righteousness. The Bible says, *"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* In another place the Bible says, *"It is by grace you have been saved through faith, it is the gift of God; not by works, so no one can boast."* This banquet is our when the Holy Spirit creates faith in our heart for the Bible promises, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."* When it comes to Jesus carrying out God's plan to save sinners, Jesus never said to his heavenly Father, *"I would really love to save sinners from death and hell, but..."* and then offer excuses ranging from *"They really don't deserve our heaven"* to *"I'm really busy keeping the world and everything going."* No, instead Jesus simply prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, *"Not my will, but thy will be done."*

You and I need to remember what a precious, generous, priceless, free gift God offers us in Jesus Christ. There is nothing more important in your whole life than that your sins be forgiven and that you be rescued from death and hell. Especially we who have had this precious gospel message among us for so many years in our church body need to remember that

Jesus is telling this parable for the sake of people like us. The Jews of Jesus' day had this promise of a Savior for thousands of years, and it had become old hat to them. The message of forgiveness and eternal life had become stale and boring. Their hearts no longer were moved by it. The promises of God were no longer interesting or exciting. Church had become nothing more than set of rules and laws and a place to meet familiar faces. Life itself had become a pursuit of passing earthly pleasures. They were not hungry for the great banquet. And so they began to make excuses why they couldn't come.

## 2. The Excuse

Listen to all the excuses given by those who refused the invitation. **BUT THE ALL ALIKE BEGAN TO MAKE EXCUSES. THE FIRST SAID, "I HAVE JUST BOUGHT A FIELD, AND I MUST GO AND SEE IT. PLEASE EXCUSE ME." ANOTHER SAID, "I HAVE JUST BOUGHT FIVE YOKE OF OXEN, AND I'M ON MY WAY TO TRY THEM OUT. PLEASE EXCUSE ME." STILL ANOTHER SAID, "I JUST GOT MARRIED, SO I CAN'T COME." "I would, Lord, but..."**

Did you notice something about all of the excuses for refusing the invitation? They all sound legitimate, don't they? They were not saying they were going to commit some terrible sin and therefore couldn't come. "*God, I hate you; God, I don't have time for you ever; God, I'm going to rob and steal, gamble and commit adultery, so I can't come.*" Nothing like that. They are all very polite. They all beg and plead to be excused. They're all involved in good, God-pleasing things. It's God who instituted marriage. It's God who said that if we don't work, we shouldn't eat. And God told us to be good stewards of the things he gives us.

Jesus is telling us that any good thing becomes a damnable sin when used as a reason to refuse the grace of God. God expects that we will buy and sell property, take care of our property, have jobs and spouses and families and all the obligations that go along with these things. But these things are never to be used as excuses for not accepting the invitation to God's grace. There is nothing that can make us too busy for the gospel. Jesus once told about a man who excused himself from following Jesus because he had to go to a funeral. Jesus said, "*Let the dead bury their dead.*" Another time Jesus was told that his mother and brothers had come to visit him. Jesus said, "*My mother and my brothers are those who hear my word.*"

Don't many of the excuses that we give and hear today sound like the people in our text? God invites us to the great banquet of forgiveness and eternal life in his word, and we say, "*I would, Lord, but my life is too busy. I would, Lord, but I'm too tired at night. I would, Lord, but I've got a family, I bought a house and I have to work overtime to make the mortgage, I've got other things to take care of.*"

## 3. The Result

In the parable Jesus also told of the results of refusing God's invitation. **THEN THE OWNER OF THE HOUSE BECAME ANGRY AND ORDERED HIS SERVANT, "GO OUT QUICKLY INTO THE STREETS AND ALLEYS OF THE TOWN AND BRING IN THE POOR, THE CRIPPLED, THE BLIND AND THE LAME ...I TELL YOU, NOT ONE OF THOSE MEN WHO WERE INVITED WILL GET A TASTE OF MY BANQUET.**

What does Jesus mean by this? He certainly doesn't mean that only poor people and sick people will be invited to heaven. He's talking in a spiritual way, and he means those who know they are spiritually poor and crippled and blind and lame. To have the good news of Jesus Christ is a passing privilege. When it's refused by people who only have time for jobs and money and families, God will take it away and give it to someone else whose heart is poor and tame and begging to be forgiven. History shows that this is exactly what God does. When the Jews in Israel refused Jesus, the gospel moved on to the Gentiles in Asia and Europe. When the Gentiles in Europe became indifferent, God moved the gospel to America. And when people in America grow bored with God's invitation to the great banquet in heaven, God will take it to some other country, like Africa, where people are hungry and starving for forgiveness and life.

Is there anything in life that is so important it's worth giving up eternal life for? Reasons for refusing the gospel may seem ever so reasonable and logical. But they lead to the judgment of the Master: **I TELL YOU, NOT ONE OF THOSE WHO WERE INVITED WILL GET A TASTE OF MY BANQUET.** May the heavenly Father give all of us hearts of faith that believe his loving invitation. By the power of his Holy Spirit may he give us the strength to say, I will, I will. Then when God invites us to come to his house, to hear the gospel, to read and study it at home, to receive his holy Supper, to have our children baptized, we will never say, "*I would, Lord, but...*" Amen.