

Excuses, excuses

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[0:00] Luke chapter 14. We're going to talk through from verse 16. The context here is the Lord Jesus is with a group of people and sitting down having something to eat.

Jesus says unto him, a certain man made a great supper and bade many. Many were invited. A man invited many to a great supper. It was a great supper and it was a personal invitation. A personal invitation. This great supper was offered at great expense by the master and many were freely invited. And to be invited to this great supper was a great privilege. It was something special. This was a sumptuous banquet. A feast of the finest food and flavours. Everything was laid on. No expense was spared. The table was spread. It was a feast abounding with all kinds of delicacies and delights. And this was an event of great importance. It was indeed a great honour to be invited to this event. To attend. And the host had personally put together a guest list. A list of invited guests. Honoured guests.

[1:35] There were some invited guests. Just as some of you may have been invited here today. But not everyone who was invited is here. And it was so too at this time.

In this parable, this story that the Lord Jesus told, the master, the one throwing the party, represented God. It goes on, verse 17.

And the master sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come for all things are now ready. He sent his servant saying it's supper time. It's time to call the guests to come and dine, to come and feast.

And it was the custom of this day that someone, as he was to invite people to come to a banquet, they would send out an advance invitation.

So some weeks or months beforehand, the guests would have had plenty of warning. They knew that this was the day that it was going to be. They just didn't know the time and some of the detail perhaps.

[2:43] And so these were the invited guests that already had that notification. They had been catered for. Provision had been made. It was as if there was a seat at the table, maybe a little nameplate around the table as it were.

And the servant was simply sent to remind the guests to come and to eat. It was a personal invitation. A personal invitation.

This story of salvation, if you like, this story pictures salvation. In that God extends an invitation to planet Earth. And salvation is like a great feast.

And God sends people on his mission communicating his message to come, to come and to join in, to come and to feast, to come to his table.

And in the representation of what was given here, the message was first extended to the children of Israel. The message was first extended.

[3:46] The invitation was first sent to them. They were the ones first invited, the Jews. Yet they refused God's invitation.

And they killed their own Messiah. God extends his spiritual blessings, his gift.

Just as the master extended the invitation. God extends the grace of the joy of knowing him, of relationship, of fellowship with him, of his exceeding great and precious promises, of his many blessings, of the glories of heaven yet to come.

And a personal invitation is sent out. A personal invitation, as it were, hand delivered through the messenger from the master's hand to every human soul.

Yet some willfully rejected still. A personal invitation. Secondly, a personal invitation calls for a personal response.

[5:05] A personal response. Every person has to make a response to the invitation. You know, when you get an invite in the mail, there's an RSVP.

You can accept or decline. A personal invitation can be received or refused. So too, with salvation. Sadly, in these cases, first up, the personal response was one of refusal. As we read on, verse 18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse.

What will your personal response be? You could title this message, excuses, excuses. Because that is what these people did.

Here we see people use a number of excuses. Some people are like that today with God's extended invitation of salvation.

[6:08] When God calls on them, it's excuses, excuses. I like how someone has described what happened next.

This is how someone put it. Real estate Rob said he had to look at a piece of property that he had purchased. Farmer Frank said he had bought ten oxen and he had to try them out.

And hand-pecked Henry said he had married a wife and he could not come. These were flimsy excuses. They weren't evil, but they were lame excuses.

Weak excuses. Ridiculous, ludicrous, absurd, sham excuses. You could even say they were lies. The bottom line is that their reaction shows that they counted other things.

Other things as more important than honouring the host. More important than honouring the host and respecting the privilege that he had extended to them to be his guests.

[7:23] And the people's excuses shows their values and their priorities. And it's the same for us today. We show what we count important when we are careless about spiritual things.

What will your personal response be to his personal invitation? We could all reflect and consider our lives.

Our life choices. The things that we count as important. The things we consider perhaps even good things. Acceptable things. Yet, perhaps not the best things.

The best thing would be to choose what pleases God rather than ourselves. People make excuses. Excuses about where they stand with God when other things, other things stand in the way of that relationship with God.

[8:29] That personal relationship. Our lives can be filled with many, many other things. Such that we neglect God's gracious invitation and miss out on what really matters.

And this story captures for us this sense of how people can be captivated by other things, by the cares of this world. It pictures how people can put their own selfish interests above spiritual obligations.

People can get so easily too distracted, too busy with other things than to care about giving themselves to God.

And this story shows us today when we see how even when people are invited to the honour of getting to know God, they spurn him and treat him with contempt.

The excuses of the invited guests was really an affront, an offence to the host. And for some today, the consideration of spiritual themes does not take first place.

[9:41] It's way down the list. It's way down the list. It's downplayed, discarded, neglected. In reality, every excuse that was raised was absurd.

And like that tune, with that invitation of salvation, every excuse of man is absurd. It's a vain choice when we realise, when we understand what we stand to lose.

If you reject God, what do you stand to lose? Excuses. Excuses. Let's look at the one by one.

As the story goes on, verse 18. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must need to go and see it. I pray that he had me excused.

This man's excuse was materialism. He was more concerned about his investments than about the invitation. He wanted to go and see this property that he bought.

[10:47] Just go and have another look at it. Maybe just to gloat over that bargain price or whatever it was that featured on that land. In other words, he was saying that that field, that piece of dirt, was more

important than his relationship to the host.

And many treat God the same way. Materialism. Other things. It goes on, verse 19. A second man. Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.

I pray that he have me excused. He bought five yoke of oxen, so ten oxen to plant his field. He wanted to go and prove them, test them out.

Take them for a test drive, as it were. You know? This was another insult to the master. This man, this second man, was preoccupied with his business.

His excuse was worldliness. Some people get so absorbed by this world and the things and activities and interests of this world, that they have no time for the weightier matters of faith and life.

[12:01] In verse 20, we see the third excuse. The third man. Another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

This third excuse was the bluntest of all. It was quite blunt. He didn't say, I pray thee have me excused. Please let me off. Not, please excuse me. He said, I cannot come.

His excuse was family matters. It's a picture of how some people put other responsibilities ahead of their relationship with God.

With the master. God. The Lord. God. And these excuses, all three, were an insult. An insult to the host. All of these refusals, these excuses, were really inexcusable.

Inexcusable. How insulting it was to the host who had gone to such great lengths to prepare this feast, to make it ready. It pictures how God treats, how man treats God's offer.

[13:11] And how God accepts man's refusal. How sad it would be if you were to beg to be excused. And God gives you up.

Gives you up. To go on. To go on. To go on on your own self-destructive path. To its ultimate destiny. To be lost for all eternity.

If God were to give you up. When you beg to be excused. Some people think they can put off getting right with God for a more convenient time.

A more convenient time. When it suits me, I'll get right with God. When I get around to it, I'll get right with God. Yet, the Bible warns us in Proverbs 27 verse 1.

Boast not thyself of tomorrow. For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. You may not even see tomorrow.

[14:13] Don't boast about what you're going to do tomorrow. Don't boast that one day I'll get right with God. I've just got a few pleasures to enjoy first.

I just want to be free and easy for a little time. Then I'll think about eternal things. Friends, a personal invitation is extended.

What are you going to do with it? What are you going to do? What will your personal response be to his personal invitation to you? Will you decline or accept the offer?

It is time limited. Time limited. Why not accept the invitation while it is extended? There's one preacher who put it like this.

It would be better to let the plough stand in the furrow. Let the oxen stand in the stall until you accept the invitation. Let your business go until this question of eternity is settled with you.

[15:21] Settle that question. First, it is better for you to press into the kingdom than it is for you to attend to any other duty.

That is the first thing a man must first attend to. The soul's salvation. It goes on. If your wife won't go, leave her at home.

If you cannot get your family to join you, go alone. Make up your mind that today you will be up and pursuing that one object. If your companions make light of it, let them do it.

It is Christ that invites you. End of quote. A personal invitation.

A personal response. So back to the story. The servant goes back to his master to report on how he went in issuing these personal invitations.

[16:21] What will your response be? Let's make it personal now. What will your response be? Will you accept or refuse him?

Will you receive or reject him? Will you humbly take his free gift and come to that great feast that is salvation? Or will you make an excuse and try to put it off?

There's really no adequate excuses for refusing God's gracious invitation. His undeserved grace is a precious personal invitation for you.

And we must take hold of it while it is offered. Excuses. Excuses. Excuses. God's word in Romans 1 verse 20 says, They are without excuse.

They are without excuse. There's really no excusing your decision. We'll pick it up back in verse 21 as our story goes on.

[17:21] And so the servant came. He'd issued the invitation. He'd received the refusals. So that servant came and showed 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 and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, and the holt, and the blind.

He said to the servant, Go out quickly. Go into the streets, into the places round about. The lanes bring in here the poor, the maimed, or the disabled, the holt, the lame, the blind.

The kind of people that weren't on the top of the guest list, you could say. As some people would imagine it. Imagine having a party and no one you invited showed up.

Who's ever done that? I think there was one time Julie and I were invited somewhere and we didn't show up. And then we realised, oops, we forgot. What an embarrassment that was.

Imagine having a party and no one showed up. And so, no wonder this man was angry.

Understandably so. And it reflects how God is angry with the wicked every day.

[18:42] That's Psalm 7 verse 11. He's angry and he's rightfully angry. And his rightful judgement and his righteous wrath are just held back for a short season.

So we've seen that a personal invitation calls for a personal response. And lastly, we face each of us a personal responsibility.

A personal responsibility about what are we going to do with this message. The message of salvation. The Master extends his invitation far and wide and further and wider.

To the outcast. To the downtrodden. To the unworthy. To the undesirable. God is a way of reaching out across all cultures and spaces. And he still reaches to the uttermost.

And he still keeps and saves to the uttermost. Those who come to him. To the uttermost. God goes to great lengths, doesn't he?

[19:40] Amen. He sent the disciples to the uttermost parts of the world. To reach out to the uttermost. And the Bible says he saves to the uttermost. When God saves, he saves to the uttermost.

As far as he possibly can. To the great extent. And to those who come to him. So every invited guest has a personal responsibility to receive the invitation.

But furthermore, every servant has a personal responsibility to give it. To tell them. To tell others. So the Master commands, go out quickly into the streets.

Into the lanes. Bring in here the poor, the maimed, the holt, the blind. And we have a personal responsibility to go out quickly.

And bring in the people to the great supper. So this story pictures for us how the Christian has a calling, a commission.

[20:45] To go out quickly and invite others to come to Christ. Verse 22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded.

And yet, there is room. And yet, there is room. There's still places vacant at the banqueting table. There is still room. What hope this message gives to us today. What hope it gives to the human soul. There's still room at the cross for you.

There's still room. Mercy is still extended. It's like these sails. They just extend them and extend them.

But ultimately, the sail ends. Mercy is still extended. He's extended it and extended it and extended it.

[21:44] And the season of grace is still present tense. Still today. He beckons still. He invites still. There is still room.

But it is for a limited time only. One day, the day of grace, the day of mercy will be no longer. Meantime, you have a personal responsibility. Verse 23.

The Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them. Compel them to come in. That my house may be filled. Go out.

You have a personal responsibility. Either way, you have a personal responsibility. It's been said that every man in Christ is a missionary.

And every man outside of Christ is a mission field. Amen. You have a personal responsibility in two of two ways if you're a Christian.

[22:43] To come and to go. God desires people to come and receive. And then God calls his own people to go out and compel them to come in.

We have a wonderful privilege and honour of being invited to dine with him. And also of being a part of doing the inviting. As a Christian, as the servant of the Lord, as the servant of the Master, as it were, of this feast, he's invited you.

You've come in. You're his servant. And he calls you to go out and invite others. Invite others to come to this relationship with God Almighty.

Who are we to go to? The mission field is as vast, as wide, as full as the planet Earth. And no one is excluded from being given an invitation.

As a preacher of old put it, The great river of the heavenly feast fulfills his own command. He bids to his table the spiritually sick, the spiritually needy, while the rich in their own virtues, in their own merits, at once exclude themselves and are excluded by him.

[23:57] You know, it's kind of telling that the children of Israel, the Jewish nation, they refused him. He came to his own and they received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave him power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name. So the invitation is extended still more to the more despised, to the helpless, the homeless, people living in hedges.

I've known some people like that. There was a guy living over in, I believe he slept in a hedge not far from this building. And he did come. And he did trust Christ.

I'm not sure that he trusted Christ the first time here, but he was a believer. And he lived in hedges. This is the kind of people that's talking about here. Go out into the highways and the hedges, to the helpless, the homeless, the people excluded, the people on the fringe of society as it were.

Everyone is included. And you have a personal responsibility. The master beckons and the master sends. Get that now. The master beckons and the master sends.

[25:07] And it is his feast, his house, and it is his desire to see his house filled. Crammed is the sense of it here. He wants his house filled, crammed, chock-a-block.

That's the sense of God's desire. So there's a pressing sense to it here. Compel them, constrain them. It means to strongly urge.

It means a full, all-out effort. It has the sense of insistence. Who's ever known some persistent people? I've got some persistent people in my life.

And, you know, they just nag. They mean well, but they hound you until you give way to them. They just persist and persist until they break you down.

And, you know, there's a sense where there's this compulsion, this compelling, this insistence, this overcoming of reluctance. I know telemarketers are a bit like that.

[26:11] I talked to a particular company to have some product, and they've been phoning me just about every day since. I said, I'm still making my mind up.

You know, give me time to think. And some people are like that. They're just persistent. And think of it today. God is persistent with us, isn't it?

He's long-suffering towards us. He's persistent. You know, some people talk about the perseverance of the saints. What about the perseverance of God? The perseverance of God, that He would persevere with you, persevere with me.

His long-suffering is extended still. And He perseveres with us. Thank God that God is long-suffering. He keeps on searching for the least, for the lost.

And He commissions you and me to play a part, as weak human vessels, to be a part of that same mission. He has come to seek and to save the lost.

[27:10] And here is an exhortation to you and to me, for compulsion. A compulsion that I believe should drive us. That we are to show, as we seek to be diligent and determined as soul winners, there is an urgency

to this message.

There is a persistence. Compel them! That's strong wording, isn't it? Compel them. You could consider that it speaks of those who would consider themselves too unworthy to be included. You know, we were trying to give some food away to someone and say, oh no, it's okay, you know. Some people, they find it hard to receive. They're good givers, but they find it hard to receive. And that's not the people in this story.

Oh no, it's okay. You know. Or they might think, oh, I'm not worthy. Some people think, I'm not worthy to be a Christian. You know, have you seen my past?

Have you seen the dark blots on my record? Have you seen the black marks, the foul things that I've done back there behind me? Do you know who I am?

[28:19] What I have done? Where I've been? I'm just too unworthy to be included. This is the sense of it here, I believe, that these are people that perhaps feel too sinful.

Too sinful. Too hard, they feel, for God to reach them. You don't know what I've done. But we have a pressing message.

There's a pressing need. And we have a personal responsibility to go and compel them. We're almost out of time. Yes, I know I've been preaching too long.

We're almost out of time. Compel them. Time's running out. Soon, time will be no more. We're almost out of time. Some need to be driven to Christ as their only refuge and hope.

Just as the angels took Lot by the hand and led him out before destruction fell. They took Lot by the hand and led him out.

[29:26] Sometimes we need to have that same compulsion. There's an urgency to this. There's an earnestness about this compulsion that it should be our compulsion as time is fast running out.

And of course, God is sovereign. God knows the past from the future the future and he knows the whole story.

But you're a part of that story. And your job is to compel them to come in. Your job is to compel them. While time is fast running out, it's supper time.

And if you are one of the invited yet to make up your mind, you have a personal responsibility.

Others can't decide for you. You might think, well, I've got a pretty good track record.

I'll just try my chances. When judgment day comes, I'll show God my CV. And he'll just weigh out the good against the bad.

[30:26] I've given to charity. I've been a pretty good boy. I didn't go to prison. I didn't get caught anyway. There's these sort of things. People go through their minds and they kind of work out, yeah, I'm pretty good.

I reckon I'll make it by the skin of my teeth. But it's not how it works. It's not how it works. And some of you might think, yeah, I'm good. I'm a righteous, upstanding member of the community.

I'm a citizen. I've got letters behind my name. I'm qualified. I'm distinguished. And I go to church every week, morning, noon and night and midweek. Surely God will allow me to enter his heaven with my track record.

You know, I'm such a glowing candidate, such a saint. I polish my halo every morning. You know, some people like that. They think it's by their works. It's not about that.

It's not about any of that. It's not about anything that you have done or can do or ever will do. It's nothing of your works. Others can't decide for you.

[31:31] You must choose. It's a personal responsibility. And if you keep on making excuses, you will be excluded. The door will slam in your face.

Sorry, too late. You will miss out if you keep on making excuses. Yet there is room. Yet there is room.

There is still room now. Right now. Right here. Right today. There is still room. And there is still an open invitation. The door is wide open into God's mercy and grace.

And it is a great supper. Can't you just smell it? What? I'm preaching so good you can almost smell it cooking. It's a great supper. Who's hungry?

Who's hungry this morning? Now you want to be satisfied. There's a great supper. It's going to satisfy you from the soul, from your inside out. There's a great supper. It's cooking already.

[32:30] There's a great provision being made. There's a rich smorgasbord here. How tragic it would be to miss out. I can almost smell it.

The flavours, the savour of it. Can't you? You're invited. You're invited. What a privilege. You're invited. What's stopping you? God knows who you are.

He knows where you've been. He knows what you've done. And he invites you anyway. There's a great supper. There's no entrance fee. There's nothing to pay.

There's no dress code. There's no human works required. But there is an expiry date on the offer. It's time limited.

It's for a limited time only. And he simply says to us, Come. Come. For all things are now ready. Don't delay.

[33:28] Lay aside your excuses. Decide now. It's supper time. Come and dine. We have each one of us receive a personal invitation.

Handwritten for us. Delivered by God's grace into our hand. And it calls for a personal response. Decide now. You can decide to make excuses.

More excuses. You can decide. I'm going to decide later. No. Decide now. Decide now. Choose you this day. Whom you will serve. And by his great drawing power.

By his great grace. Crumble to your knees and trust him now. Trust him today. He who has died to set you free. And risen from the dead. Extending his gift of eternal life to you.

For a limited time only. To pay for your pressing sin debt. To wipe out your slate clean. To cancel every debt of your guilt against you.

[34:32] And for everyone here today. We are faced with a personal responsibility. The original invited guests. They dilly dally. They thought they could buy some time.

They thought there was other things. That were more important. And so they gave all kinds of excuses. And they were excluded.

We have a responsibility to come to him. And as his messengers. To go for him. And invite others while there is still room.

So as servants of the master. You have a message to deliver. It's a compelling message. It is a vital message. An eternal message.

And he says to you. Go out. Go out. Go out. Far and wide. Compel them. Compel them. To come in. In other words.

[35:25] This message is so compelling. To invite others to the Christ. To invite others to that relationship. To invite others to feast around his table. As it were.

To know him. And to be in his company. And he has called us to share this generous invitation with others. What a privilege to be invited. And what a privilege to be sent.

We have a mandate. A mission. To take his message. With his heart. Of grace and humility. A personal responsibility.

To go out. You bear. Personal responsibility. For yourself. The Bible says.

Every man. Will have to give account. For. Himself. You have to bear responsibility. For yourself. And your own decisions.

[36:22] There will be. A reckoning time. For what we have done. With this invitation. The last verse. We'll read. Verse 24. For I say unto you.

That none. Of those men. Who have bidden. Those ones that were first invited. Shall taste. Of my supper. What a. Shocking way.

To finish the story. The ones first invited. They're not even going to get a taste. They're not even going to get a spoonful. Of my supper. There was no space left.

For the original guests. They missed out. On their opportunity. So there is a consequence. For refusal. And the ones invited. Who had rejected the invitation. Had lost.

Their opportunity. What a tragic. Thing it would be. For you to live a life. And lose that opportunity. To neglect. That opportunity. That opportunity. Well there is opportunity.

[37:22] Don't miss out. Respond to him today. Friends. We've seen. A great supper. A great invitation. A personal invitation. We've seen a personal response.

Is called for. And that can be to refuse. Or to accept. And we see. A personal responsibility. To come. Individually come. To Christ. And then go for Christ.

Taking the message. To others. I urge you this morning. We've got. A tangible. Feast shortly. And think. As. As you feast.

Of that. Precious. Love feast. That precious. Table spread. The banqueting table. And the lover of your soul. Extends the invitation.

To you. I pray. That. If you're not a Christian. This morning. That. This. This message will. Move you. To a decision.

[38:18] Yeah. And it will be the right one. To trust him. To accept his offer. To receive that opportunity. To trust him. To know him. To receive him.

Him to know his life eternal. To receive. His saving grace. At the cross for you. Where he bled and died. And rose. And he's coming again for you.

The saviour of your soul. If you but trust him. He can be. Your master and saviour. For eternity. And as Christians. Let's be moved.

To action too. As Christians. We've got a compelling message. It's too precious. To keep it. To ourselves. We want others to know. While there's still time.

While there's still room. To a ending.