

“Don’t Excuse Yourself From God’s Banquet of Salvation” Luke 14:16-24
Respite In Me 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“Are you looking for just the right excuse for a certain situation? Ask your pastor he has heard them all.” Although more of joke than advice there is some truth to it. Pastors do hear a lot of excuses. But I think it would be more correct to say that only God has truly heard all the excuses ever given. And sadly, the majority of the ones He has heard are related to His free gift of forgiveness and salvation. In our foolish pride, sinful lust, and spiritual stupidity, we humans have sent a constant flow of excuses to the LORD. Through these excuses we are often rejecting his love and turning our noses up at His desire to have a close relationship with us.

In the parable upon which we will focus in our sermon, we hear some samples of excuses that three guests made for not attending a banquet. Jesus used some powerful images to bring home an urgent warning. May His words touch our hearts as He says to each of us:

It probably doesn’t come as a surprise to us that Jesus told this parable of the great banquet at dinner party to which he was invited. Luke 14 tells us that Jesus had been invited to eat at a prominent Pharisee’s house. Before the meal he healed a man who had dropsy (what we today call edema). He did this in front of his host and the other guests. Then he taught a lesson on humility by pointing out the way people picked seats of honor at the dinner table. Finally, just before telling the parable of the great banquet Jesus told his Pharisee host to be generous to those less fortunate by inviting them to luncheons and dinners.

Perhaps to break the awkwardness of the situation someone at the table with Jesus said, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” Seizing the moment Jesus took up that thought and told the parable of the

“Don’t Excuse Yourself From God’s Banquet of Salvation” Luke 14:16-24
Respice In Me 2025

great banquet. Indeed, those who will feast in the kingdom of God will be blessed. But eating at God’s banquet in eternity begins by eating at his banquet during one’s earthly life.

Jesus said, “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’” Since his listeners were at a dinner party they would have been familiar with the customs of that day connected to banquets. The person giving the banquet would send out an initial invitation to his guests. Then when the day arrived and everything was ready, he would send out his servant or servants with the final call to come to the banquet.

Remembering that the parables “reveal and conceal” we must stop and look closely at the scene Jesus described. It was no ordinary banquet that the man had prepared. It was a “great banquet.” And he didn’t just invite a few family members and some friends. No, he invited “many guests.” In just a few sentences Jesus retold the whole the history of God’s interaction with the Jews. The man in the parable is obviously the LORD. His great banquet was his plan to save his people from the bondage of sin. Once the curse of sin was cured God then wanted to have fellowship with his people and enjoy their company. He wanted their lives to be an ongoing banquet with their God. And he had now sent his “servant” Jesus to tell them that everything was ready.

Before we look at the excuses the guests made for not attending, we need to read the menu for God’s great banquet. No longer shrouded in images and prophecies we have been given a clear picture of what God has prepared for us. Of course, the main entrée at God’s banquet is His Son Jesus. Those who eat Him who is called the Bread of Life will be satisfied forever. Through him our sins are

“Don’t Excuse Yourself From God’s Banquet of Salvation” Luke 14:16-24
Respice In Me 2025

removed. He then fills our longing to be right in God’s sight through his perfect life. When we eat Jesus by faith we are given the perfection and holiness we need to be loved by God and to love him. At God’s great banquet we are also given unlimited refills of living water to drink. That beautiful beverage restores and invigorates us as the Holy Spirit directs our lives of service to God. Course after course of spiritual food is set before us at God’s supper of salvation. On top of all that he promises us a rich and creamy dessert. It won’t make us fat. It has no calories and yet it lasts forever. It’s the perfect joy of an eternal home in heaven.

And does this great banquet cost us anything? No, it is free. God prepared it. God has invited us to it. In Isaiah 55:1-2 the Lord said to us, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.” Oh friends, God’s great banquet is free, it lasts forever, and you and I are invited.

Before we make the foolish mistake of excusing ourselves from God’s great banquet, we must realize what we will miss if we do so. Right now, he offers us the food that our soul craves. When we excuse ourselves from God’s banquet in this life we can expect nothing but misery and slavery to sin. But even more tragic is the fact that if we miss God’s meal now, we will also miss his great banquet in heaven.

When we connect the parable to the spiritual point Jesus was making the excuses the guests made take on even greater significance. We see a very “subtle” rejection of the invitation. These guests politely say “no thanks” to the invitation

“Don’t Excuse Yourself From God’s Banquet of Salvation” Luke 14:16-24
Respice In Me 2025

to the banquet. They have things in their lives that they believe are more important than attending the man’s party.

Fellow invitees to the great banquet of salvation, I pray that we are slapped in the face by the excuses of the guests in the parable. I think that it is safe to say that the spiritual danger for us isn’t rudely rejecting God’s invitation. No, the greater danger for us is carelessness and apathy toward God’s invitation. It is more likely for us that will let other priorities in life cause us to excuse ourselves from God’s great banquet.

In all our excuses the problem lies with our priorities. First things must be kept first. As Jesus said to Martha, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.” That one thing was the plate of God’s Word that serves us the meal of salvation. The only thing important in life is fellowshiping with God through His Word. Jesus spoke about priorities in life in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” When we make God’s Word the first priority in our life our material needs will fall into place.

Not only is it foolish for us to excuse ourselves from God’s great banquet because of what we miss it is also foolish because of how worthless anything else is. The things of the world that pull us away from the LORD won’t satisfy us. They never last and they never deliver what they promise. Listen to what God says in 1 John 2:15-16, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world -- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does -- comes not from the Father but from the world.” 1 Corinthians 7:31 we are reminded that “this world in its present form is passing

“Don’t Excuse Yourself From God’s Banquet of Salvation” Luke 14:16-24
Respice In Me 2025

away.” Warning us about letting material things keep us from God’s banquet the Apostle Paul declares that we will “fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.” And he went on to say, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

Excusing yourself from God’s great banquet of salvation is utter foolishness. No person, place, or thing is worth missing it. All the wealth of the world and all the pleasures of our flesh amount to nothing in comparison to eating what God serves for the soul. His banquet feeds our hunger and thirst for righteousness. His food and drink make us spiritually alive now and will give us life forever in heaven.

Because God’s people had hardened their hearts to his invitation they would be excluded from the banquet in time and in eternity. Never would they taste of it. Forever would they be barred from it!

Now we have arrived at the main point of the parable. It is warning for us not to excuse ourselves from God’s banquet. There is still room there—room for us. If we excuse ourselves we will find ourselves in “outer darkness” separated from God forever. If we make excuses now we will stand without excuse before Jesus on the Last Day.

Recall the polite excuses of the guests in the parable. They all thought they had better things to do than to go to the man’s banquet. But wasn’t it good that they at least were nice about declining the invitation? I believe there is some application here for our lives. We can fool ourselves into thinking that if we are polite to God and nice about saying “no thanks” to his invitation things will be

“Don’t Excuse Yourself From God’s Banquet of Salvation” Luke 14:16-24
Respice In Me 2025

fine between him and us. The excuses we make now for not eating God’s spiritual food will have eternal consequences. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” Today is the day to eat with Jesus by putting our faith in him. Now is the time to eat at God’s banquet so we can eat at it forever.

In the parable of the great banquet Jesus warned us about making excuses for not attending God’s great banquet. May we take them to heart and not excuse ourselves from it. Jesus’ words encourage us to realize what we will miss if we excuse ourselves. He also wants us to recognize the foolishness of excusing ourselves. And finally he would have us remember the eternal consequences of excusing ourselves. With that in mind let’s eat now at the great banquet so that we can eat at it forever. Amen.