

## **Sermon Luke 14:15-24**

*May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.*

**In the verses prior to today's Gospel reading, Jesus was in the process of accepting hospitality that had been offered to Him. Jesus was eating in the home of a leading, well respected religious teacher and all eyes are on Jesus. What will Jesus do? What will Jesus say? Jesus knows He is being watched. He knows there are those who would like to trap Jesus, to discredit Him. While Jesus was being watched, He noticed that the guests at this dinner are jostling for position to pick out the places of honor at the table. Rather than keep quiet, Jesus addressed what He has seen, and as was often the case, Jesus expressed wisdom by telling a parable to convey a message. What is a parable? We hear about "parables" often in the teachings of Jesus. A parable is a story that paints a picture to illustrate a point that is clear.**

**Jesus takes advantage of this gathering to make a point. He initiates a parable.**

**Jesus catches the attention of everyone at the meal. With all eyes and ears on Jesus He tells this parable: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.” At the time of the banquet the master sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready. Now, it is quite possible that the owner of the house where Jesus was eating as He told this story had done exactly that himself. Typically, back then, the verbal invitation went out initially, a verbal reply was given, and then on the day itself, the servant would go out to find and remind the guests that it was time to come. The guests would all be local, living within walking distance, and so this story is not only ringing true, but the guests around the table with Jesus can see themselves in the story.**

**Jesus the Story-Teller is using a parable to teach, and now come the excuses from the invited guests in the story; but as we hear the excuses we need to remember that almost certainly, a bit like sending out wedding invitations today, the guests had previously accepted the invitation and replied to confirm that they were coming.**

**But on the day of this Great Banquet had arrived, the servant had gone out to call the guests to the feast, and as he proceeded, the excuses began flooding in. And as Jesus is**

telling this parable He says that each and every person alike began to make excuses.

Have you ever come up with the lamest of excuses to get out of something you had previously agreed to do? The true reason for rejecting the invitation is probably apparent to the person who invited you.

Now, I could be wrong here, but I believe that there was more than an ironic hint of disrespect in the refusals. Excuse after excuse was received. Was it a coincidence that all of the invitees were rejecting the hospitality. Was it an outright slap in the face of the Master?

One said, I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Was there a reaction from Jesus' listeners around the table? Of course some of the guests listening to Jesus were there to watch him closely, and they might well have wondered what this parable was leading to.

Another says, I have just bought five yoke of oxen [which is a small herd of cattle], and I am on my way to try them out. In other words, my latest business venture, or my latest toy is far more important than this Great Banquet I am supposed to be attending.

Another invited guest says, I have just been married, so I will be unable to come. This is a most wonderful excuse! You have

**known for months that you were getting married, you have known for a while about your invitation to the Great Banquet, and finally, when the day arrives, you are going to use that as your excuse.**

**All of these were lame excuses. They are also examples of things: preferences, distractions, commitments, material belongings, occupations and relationships that we ourselves might use as an excuse and as reasons to avoid what could be the most important things in life.**

**The invitation which Jesus was referring to was the most important invitation that has ever been issued to humanity.**

**Jesus was revealing God's invitation to the world!**

**Was there a reaction of unease from His listeners around the table?**

**Jesus continued with His story. The servant reports back to his master who becomes understandably angry when he hears that the entire guest list has decided to go off and do something else. He then orders his servant to go out into the streets and later into the country lanes nearby until the house is full. The Servant is commanded to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame, and in Jesus' parable the Master of the Banquet ends with these words: I tell you, not**

**one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.**

**We are not told about the reaction of the guests around the table to this parable; but there can be no doubt that they were shocked and challenged. Jesus told His parable in response to someone at the table saying: Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. Jesus was alluding to Gods invitation to His Heavenly Banquet. He was telling them that He, Jesus Christ was inviting all of the Jews to follow His teachings, and they were rejecting this offer. He told them that His invitation was now open to everyone to the exclusion of all who have heard the invitation, and rejected it. Jesus tells them, and I quote His words: “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, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” Jesus is saying that the invitation is open to all who will accept His teachings, and follow His words.**

**During the ministry of Jesus, and throughout Church history, the invitation has continued to be issued. God says, “Come” and many hear the invitation. It is an invitation to be in a relationship with the maker of the universe. It is an invitation**

for sins to be forgiven. It is an invitation to enter into everything that God has in store for those who love him.

What is your reaction to the invitation of God? You are invited to be in a relationship with Him. You are invited to know the peace of mind that comes from forgiveness and having a guilty conscience healed. You are invited to journey through life with Jesus. You are invited to be transformed into the person God designed you to be, and when this life ends whenever or however that might be, you are invited to God's Banquet. Yes, You are invited to God's Heavenly Feast! Have you accepted this invitation? Will you come to God's Banquet or will excuses and other priorities prevent you?

Amen.

**a**

*Remember the words of our Lord, Jesus Christ, "It is better to give than to receive".*