

What's your excuse?

Luke 14: 15-23

Excuses, we all have them and use them. These are the...

Top 5 excuses for speeding according to insurance.com

5. I'm having an emergency situation in my car
4. Everyone else was doing it
3. I didn't know I broke the speed limit
2. I'm lost and unfamiliar with the roads
1. I couldn't see the sign telling me not to do it

From Policeone.com

"I wasn't speeding, I just got a haircut and it makes me look fast."

I stopped a guy for doing 71 in a 50 because he wanted to get to McDonald's before the breakfast menu ended!

My favorite - "I know I was going fast, I was trying to get the snow off my windshield so I could see where I'm going!"

Why do we use excuses? Is it to explain our actions whether good or bad? Usually it is to try to persuade someone to our way of thinking. Because if they already understood why we said or did something there would be no need to explain it. There are times though that excuses are used to try to explain our behavior, but are not very good reasons. Like the bad excuses I just mentioned for speeding. Those people knew they were in the wrong, but were still trying to get the cop to let them off the hook. Jesus tells a parable about some people who gave some not so good excuses to get them off the hook from an invite to a feast and the result of their choice. Today we are going to look at Luke Chapter 14 and the parable of the Great Feast.

Before we get into the parable, I think it is important to look at what was going on and said prior to Jesus telling the story.

Jesus went to a house of a prominent Pharisee on the Sabbath day. He was at a dinner party when he told this parable. He uses a story similar to the event He is at. This could have been to help those that would listen understand it better.

Also, the people at the dinner were prominent individuals. Jesus had just told them a parable about choosing a lesser place of honor at the table in order that the host could then move them to a higher place of honor if they deserved it. He told them this because they were picking the highest places

of honor for themselves. In verse 11, Jesus points out that, “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

This isn't referring to self-degradation, it is a mindset that we, as Christians, should have. Not thinking more of ourselves than we are. C.S. Lewis stated, “true humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.” Jesus was not saying to strategize or manipulate the situation by taking the lower place at the table in order to be exalted, but that we should be thinking of others. Fred Dickenson writes, “That's the paradox of humility. When you start to try to show everyone your humility- you lose it!” When we are thinking of others we spend less time thinking about ourselves. Jesus was preparing the guests who were paying attention to hear the next parable.

Then Jesus went further in explaining humbleness by telling the host in verses 12-14. “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brother or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Well, at least one other person besides the host was listening. He tells Jesus, “blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” But the man wasn't humbly stating this. He missed the point about being humble. He was most likely thinking that the elite were who get to enter the kingdom, as were a lot of the people there. So Jesus responds by telling them a story.

Jesus replied: “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.’

“But they 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.’

“The servant came back and reported this to his master. 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.’

“‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

The feast in the kingdom of God or Heaven is not new to Jesus. He taught about it on other occasions. In Matthew 8:11, "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Earlier in Luke 13:29, "People will come from the east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God."

In the culture there are two invitations given out for a banquet. The first is to tell of the day and then when the banquet is prepared the second invite goes out for the guests to come in. Jesus starts the story with the second invitation. So when the servant goes to tell the invited guests that the banquet is prepared, they already knew that there was going to be one. The key point is that they were already invited, but refused to come.

An excuse is a seemingly polite way of rejection. These guests didn't want to come to the banquet. They were thinking of the things they wanted to do or get done and not thinking about the host who had gone to all the trouble of preparing the banquet for those that he had invited.

Even though they were invited and knew the day of the banquet, they came up with excuses on why they couldn't come. We are given 3 examples of the excuses, but there were obviously more than 3 people invited and more excuses. We know this, because none of the guests that were invited came to the feast and there is plenty of room as we see later in the story.

These excuses that are given are also pretty lame. Who buys land without seeing it, or if so needs to go right then to do it. Who buys 10 oxen without knowing if they can do the work he needs them to do. And though the one just got married that did not exclude him from coming to the banquet.

An excuse is defined as an explanation or to overlook. But we use them to get out of situations in which we do not accept the other person's reasons as valid. Sometimes we can be right in our actions and sometimes wrong, but we explain to make them understand our reasoning.

"I didn't take the trash out yet, because I was waiting for it to get filled up more" – said while the trash is overflowing onto the floor.

"I'm busy right now, we can play later" – said to children when they want to go play with their Dad.

"I didn't do a back-up of the computer system because it would have delayed the scheduled flight" –as to why the back-up had not been done at the scheduled time.

"Excuse me" as you pass between two people that are talking in the middle of the aisle in Walmart.

These are all reasons I have given to explain my actions. The first two I was obviously in the wrong. The third one would have caused a delay in the flight schedule which would have been a lot

worse than a delayed back-up. The last one is because going around would be an inconvenience to me. But all are given in rejection of the other person's ideas or reasoning.

Through this story we also learn that **excuses come with consequences**. These can be good and bad. In the story the invited are left out of the party. The man giving the banquet sends his servant out to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. These are the same people that Jesus told the host to invite prior to the story. These are the people that cannot give him anything in return. But once this is done, the house still has room so the master tells the servant to go out to the country roads and lanes and make them come. He wants to fill his house so that no one that rejected his invitation would get in.

To go back to my excuses: The trash was on the floor because I didn't take it out when I should. I could have made time to play with the kids, but prioritized what I was doing as more important. With the back-up situation my boss understood and in Walmart the people overlooked my intrusion. All of them had some sort of consequence though.

This story if you haven't guessed is about who will be in the Kingdom of God. God is the host and sent the invitations out. Jesus was pointing out that, in truth, they were rejecting the invitation. So the undesirable, in the Jewish mind set, were brought in. And when that was not enough the servant was to go out even further and compel others to come in to fill up the house. So those that rejected the invitation had no room to change their minds.

We have all been invited to a relationship with Jesus Christ, to understand that God created a way that we could be with Him through the sacrifice and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. And the only way to do that is to believe and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior. The invitation is open to everyone. But not everyone is going to accept it.

There will be those that reject it outright. No excuses are given, just an outright no. These are the people that we know that are outright against religion in general. No matter what, they are going to go through life rejecting God and anything that looks like him. These are the people that when it gets to the end of their life will meet God and then realize that it is too late to accept the invitation.

There are some who will want to wait. They will give an excuse as to why now is not the time. Maybe they want to sew their wild oats and God will get in the way of that. Maybe they are waiting to know everything about Jesus before accepting His invitation. Maybe they are scared of what they will have to change or give up to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Maybe they are under the impression that they need to be perfect or worthy before accepting the invitation. These are those that were invited and give excuses why they cannot come.

Then there are those that will accept and be welcomed. They are welcomed with open arms and become part of the church, the body of Christ. But it doesn't stop there. **Christ calls us to be a disciple and to make disciples.** Paul puts it in a picture of a body. In Romans 12 he explains that each part of the body has a different function. And as a body functions as a whole with many parts so does the church. Each member is a part of the whole and belongs to all the others. When each of us is using the gifts we

are given then the body can work as a whole together. But, if the hand doesn't want to grasp, or the foot doesn't want to walk, it makes it hard for the body to work.

This brings us back to excuses. We have excuses why we wait. We wait to accept the invitation Christ has given us, we wait to get involved, we wait to use the gifts that God has given us. Why do we wait? Is there something that is holding us back, holding you back?

David Ring is an evangelist. He was born dead. He was a blue baby. For 8 minutes he did not take a breath. The lack of oxygen to his brain caused him to have Cerebral Palsy. His body doesn't work like it should. His mom was told he would never walk or talk. They told her it would be best to put him in an institution. She didn't. His dad died when he was very young and then his mom passed away when he was 14 years old. He grew up being called all kind of names and none of them good. He was angry, sad and lonely. He didn't know anyone who loved him. God didn't love him or why did He take away his mama. Then two years after his mom passed away he went to church. That day changed his life. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and became a changed man. He now knew God loved him and how much. Later he felt God calling him to preach. He was told that because of his speech impediment no church would ever invite him or hire him to come preach. He's been preaching for over 40 years in over 2000 churches all across the country.

God had a plan for him as he does for all of us. We only have to be willing to let Him work through us. We have to give up our grasp on our life and give it over to Christ. That is in whatever we are doing: Our job, our school, our organizations, our vacations. We have to be willing to look for those times that someone needs a helping hand, or prayer. We need to love one another like family, regardless of our differences. We have to have compassion for those that we meet that do not know Jesus and care about them enough to talk with them about the joy that comes from giving our lives to Him.

This is where the humility comes in. We need to be true to ourselves without puffing up or tearing down who we are. Once we do that we can be real to those around us. People want to see a church that is real, one that shares their hurts and struggles with each other without condemnation. I talked to a man sitting in a church pew a while back. He was all alone, so I went over and asked how he was. He had been going through struggles financially and emotionally. He mentioned he felt out of place because, "none of these people have those struggles." I assured him he was wrong, but it shows that the world is not looking at the church to be perfect; then it seems hard to get in. Besides God knows we're not. Those that are seeking are looking for the church to be real. We need to be humble and inviting, so that we do not find ourselves as the excuse of someone who is seeking Jesus.

David Ring has a line that he uses when talking about accepting Jesus as Lord and savior or using your gifts for Christ. "I have Cerebral Palsy, what's your problem?" Don't let an excuse hold you back from what God has planned for you!

As the worship team comes to play the song of invitation I just want to say:

If you find yourself waiting to accept the invitation of Jesus, know you don't have to be perfect when you **accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior**. Now is the time to make that decision. If you wait it may be too late. You only have this life to accept it and none of us know how long that will be. Don't find yourself one of those that gave an excuse and then it was too late because the house was full.

If you are thinking that you have been waiting too long to get involved, now is the time to **make yourself available**. There are plenty of opportunities inside and outside the church to serve the Lord. It could be in a ministry in the church, it could be as a pray warrior, or many other things that God has made available to you. Make yourself available today so that God can use you.

If you have made the decision to follow Jesus, or if you want to just come and pray at the stage, or you want to make yourself more available I will be up here, there is one of our elders over to the side by the cross and we have a place to pray if you want to up front. Come just as you are.