

# Come to Christ, Offer No Excuses

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Well, if you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 14, where we're going to be looking at the parable of the great dinner feast in verses 16 through 24.

When I was a young heathen, before coming to Christ, I hated to read. I hated to study and especially I hated doing homework. I just thought to myself, "Why study English? I'm never going to be an English teacher? Why study social studies? I'm plenty social already. Why study government? I'm never going to be a politician."

I liked wood shop and metal shop and fly fishing and stream-side strategies. I actually took a class like that one time. It was a different state at a different time.

When teachers would ask me why I didn't get my homework done, I gave them an excuse; the dog ate it; I slept in; I forgot; whatever it was. I wasn't convincing, but I held to my excuses with white knuckles because that was all I had.

Usually, around mid-term, I would be getting a "D" or an "F." I'd worked hard to get that. And then I would do just enough homework to get a "C" or a "C minus" so I wouldn't fail the class.

That was the story of my life.

It wasn't until I became a Christian in my junior year of high school and I came across that verse that said I needed to do everything as unto

the Lord, that I realized that I should probably even do school as unto the Lord. Instantly, I started getting “A’s” and “B’s” and God just put in me this insatiable appetite for studying. Now, my problem is studying in a whole different way – too much studying, I think. I just want to leave the office, go home, and just sit there and atrophy in the chair and study. I love studying now. I love reading. I’m just different than I was before.

As I look back on those years when I was a God hater, just escaping and making excuses for not doing what I needed to be doing, it really is kind of clear why I didn’t want to do my homework.

I wanted to enjoy the things that I wanted to enjoy.

I didn’t want somebody else telling me what I was supposed to do, especially studying things that I saw no reason for studying. I got “A’s” in shop classes because I liked those classes, but if I didn’t want to learn something or I saw no reason for learning it, then I just didn’t do it because it took me away from certain important pleasures like watching TV or hunting or fishing or things like that.

Someone once said excuses are the nails used to build a house of failure. That is exactly the truth.

I remember in seminary, I made a dumb decision to take Hebrew and Greek simultaneously. They started talking about verbs and adjectives and predicate nominatives and accusative case and I just thought, “What’s that?” So, I would go home and reap the consequences of my own neglect and ignorance and I would open up a ninth-grade English book, work through some lessons so that I could open my Hebrew grammar and my Greek grammar and learn my lesson. It was a little painful and I thought, “So that’s why they wanted me to do this? How did they know I was going [to go] to seminary?”

But you know, we have the same problem in the church in just a little different way and especially in the world. There are many excuses that people give for not coming to Christ. The difference is that the consequences are much greater. If you don’t learn English grammar when you’re in grade school, you can learn it later. You reject Christ in this life, there’s no other

chance. You perish in hell for all eternity and there's no escaping the consequences of your excuse making and neglect.

If there's one clear message that spans all of the Bible, it is this – everybody needs to come to Christ and offer no excuses.

It is what is called the historical redemptive message of the Bible, the grand thing of the whole Bible. And it's a big book!

There are constantly exhortations to come to God, to come to Christ, to believe, to turn from sin, but people always seem to make excuses. You know you've maybe made some yourself or are making some now or you know people [who say]:

“You know, I can't come to Christ now, I need to make my fortune in the world. If I came to Christ I'd have to be honest in my business practices and it'd take a lot longer;”

“I can't come to Christ now, I'd have to pick some weird guy with a pencil protector who walks around with a big fat black Bible. I could never do that now. I'll find my own husband and then I can become a Christian;”

“I can't come to Christ, I'd have to give up my sinful pleasures. I couldn't look at pornography anymore. I couldn't live with my girlfriend. I couldn't do drugs or steal or tell dirty jokes at work or whatever. God would then have control over my life and frankly, I don't want Him to have control, so I'm going to offer some excuses.”

Well, that's what people do. They do it in the world and we see it all the time, especially if you share Christ with anybody. But it's the same in the church.

In our text, Jesus is going to address excuse making. He's headed towards Jerusalem, where He's going to die. He's stopping by little towns and villages doing a few miracles, doing some teaching, calling people to

believe in Him, to come to Him, and offer no excuses. The problem is almost everybody is offering excuses.

But their excuses break Jesus' heart because He loves them. He wants to see them escape the wrath of God to come. There's kind of this divine frustration in Jesus, if there is such a thing; an urgency because He sees that most people reject Him. Because the religious leaders are rejecting Him, the other people are following the religious leaders and are rejecting Him. He kind of has this compassion and love mixed with anger [that turns] into this holy zeal [so] that He's out to get people into the Kingdom of Heaven. We just encountered it here in [Luke] 14. It's like. . . His engine is revved to red line trying to bring people to Himself.

Well, in the other part of [Luke] 14, we learned three traits of true godliness and then in verses 12 and following, Jesus begins to speak to this one man who invited Him over for the Sabbath meal. He's now sitting in this Pharisee's house who's invited Him over. He's surrounded by other Pharisees and scribes, experts in the law, and they're looking for an occasion to discredit Him, disqualify Him, [and] condemn Him in the eyes of the people.

So, they're watching Him like a hawk and Jesus turns to this man and says, "You know what? You shouldn't have invited these kinds of people to your Sabbath meals. Instead, you should invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame; people who can't pay you back. Then, later on, God will repay you in the resurrection."

Then, somebody, we don't know who, somebody in the room, either a scribe or a Pharisee, pipes up and says, "Blessed are all who eat bread in the Kingdom of God." In the Jewish mindset, and you even see it if you read the Old Testament that the Kingdom of Heaven is often described as a place of feasting, of dining. It's in the Old Testament; you even see it in the New Testament [with] the marriage supper of the Lamb. You see this idea that you go to heaven. . . . Jesus says when He's instituting the Lord's Supper. . . , "I will not eat this bread and drink this cup with you until I do it. . . ." When? "In the Kingdom of Heaven; in the Kingdom to come."

There's this concept that we're going to be feasting, dining, [and] eating, so when this man said, "Blessed are *all* who eat bread in the Kingdom of God," that was a true statement. But there is a problem with that true statement because it was coming from somebody who was rejecting Jesus. It was the prevailing attitude of those scribes and Pharisees in that room that they were all getting into the Kingdom of Heaven. And they probably all said, "Yes. Yes. Good statement." And Jesus just couldn't let it go. *He could not let it go.*

You cannot reject Jesus and get into heaven.

So, He tells a parable. This is what it is. Follow along as I read [Luke 14:16] and following.

But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is ready now.'

"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'

"And another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.'

"And another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'

"And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame.'

"And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'

“And the master said to his slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

‘For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.’”

In this parable, Jesus gives us three categories of people, three different groups of people who need to come to Him and offer no excuses so that they will escape the wrath of God to come and eat bread in the Kingdom of God.

The first are the Jewish leaders, they need to come to Jesus. Look at [Luke 14] verse 16,

But He said to him. . .

That is, the man, whoever he was, who said, “Blessed is everyone who eats bread in the Kingdom of God.” He said to that man. . . what?

Well, just stop here for a second. I want you to think about this. You may be thinking right now, “Well, Jack, if we’re talking about Jewish leaders, I don’t think there’s very many here [in church]. I don’t think we have very many rabbis. We might have one or two. [They] may be sitting out [here] and. . . forgot [their] yarmulkes, [but] I don’t see any. We’re out of Jewish leaders here, most likely, so why don’t you just skip this portion?”

And I thought about that, as a matter of fact, I thought, “You know, I could just go through here rather quickly and say this part of the parable applies primarily to the Jewish leaders,” but I thought, “You know, there are some parallels here.” I thought, “What made the Jewish leaders, Jewish leaders?”

One thing in particular [made them leaders], their knowledge. They had the Scriptures. They studied the Scriptures. They had a knowledge of the Scriptures. People just didn’t have their own scrolls unless they were extremely rich and so, these scribes and the Pharisees were the great attenders of the Law of God. They were the ones who had the Scriptures. They

had access. They were the experts in the Law of God, so they had great knowledge.

And I thought to myself, “How many people here have Bibles? How many people here have a great knowledge of Scriptures compared to the rest of the world?” And I thought, “Pretty much everybody. *Pretty much everybody here.*”

If you [have] been here for very long, you cannot go anywhere without hearing the Scriptures. This is Calvary *Bible Church*. There’s a reason why we call it *Bible Church* because the Bible runs everything we do. You can’t get involved in any ministry and escape it. We put it in everything. It’s the reason why we do everything. We find Scriptural reasons for everything. We’re very Puritan in that way.

And so I began to think, there are certainly those here this morning who have a great knowledge, who profess to know Christ, but don’t know Him. They are, in many ways, like these scribes and Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees were very knowledgeable. You are very knowledgeable. They were very religious. You are very religious. They were very faithful in their religion. You are very faithful in your religion. But they didn’t know Christ and I’m sure some of you don’t know Christ either.

I don’t know who you are, but God does, and the Word of God tells us they’re in every church, they’re the tares among the wheat, the sheep among the goats and we can’t distinguish them, but God does. God sees them. Maybe you’re here this morning and you’re just kind of hiding under this thin cloak of Christian profession and, you know what? You’ve got us deceived. We don’t know who you are, but God does. And He wants you to know something.

I know saying things like this probably makes bristles pop up on the back of some of your necks and you know what, I’m speaking to you specifically because you probably don’t [know] Christ.

If it bothers you that I question your salvation, that is almost a sure sign that you don’t know Jesus. No true Christian ever has a problem with somebody loving them enough to question them.

You may be sitting there thinking to yourself, “Listen, how dare you question me. I grew up in this church. I’ve been a Christian all of my life. I’ve given. I’ve served in ministries. I believe in Jesus!”

Well, so do the demons.

I think it’s good that we stop and we ask ourselves if we’re offering excuses or not. Your good works can’t save you. *They can’t save you.* If you’re looking back, “I know I’m a Christian because I’ve come here faithfully; I’ve read my Bible; I’ve taught in this ministry; I’ve served in the children’s ministry; I gave to this such and thing.” Those are all things you do and those things don’t save you.

It is Christ and Christ alone. *You* must repent of *your* sins. *You* must receive Christ as *your* Savior. *You* must believe in Him by grace alone, faith alone, or *you* will perish. There are no works, there is no pattern of faithfulness, there is nothing that can earn you favor with the Holy God.

Look at the middle of [Luke 14] verse 16, Jesus says,

A man was giving a big dinner and he invited many.

Back then, like today, you’d often receive a written or verbal invitation. You would either accept or decline and then later on, if you accepted you would then be reminded again. This happens to me all the time. People ask me to preach [at] different places and so I say, “OK.” I put it on my calendar and then right before I’m supposed to preach there I get a little e-mail, I get a little note, I get a little phone call: “Remember, you’re supposed to be coming.” They don’t want to make all those preparations to have me come and then have me forget, because I would probably if it wasn’t for Ruth and my wife. And so that’s normal. We even do that today.

So that’s how it was then. They would send [a reminder]. So, these people have been invited.

Now, in this parable, Jesus is the man inviting the guests. The dinner feast is entering into the Kingdom of Heaven and those invited first are the Jewish leaders. Look at [Luke 14:]17 –

and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come for everything is ready.’

Great preparations had been made at this large feast. Now, this wasn’t like today. You could imagine. . . . I just went to a wedding yesterday afternoon and whenever I go to a wedding I always feel sorry for people, all the preparations that have to go into that. I was trying to tell my daughter, “Why don’t you just come into church after service. We’ll just marry you and get you out of here. Five minutes of prep and it’ll be over.”

But no, there is huge preparation and back then it was even worse. Why? Because you didn’t have refrigeration. You had to get all of the animals ready, all of the people ready to kill the animals, chop up the animals, roast the animals right then at the feast and get everything just right, prepare everything and get everything brought in. If you were having this huge dinner feast, everything had to be just right. You get ready and just as the people come you have all these servants chopping and hacking and cooking it up and serving it so people could eat. That’s how you did it. So this was a big deal if you were going to have a big dinner party.

So, he says, “Come now, everything’s ready.”

And you know what? Everything is ready right now to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Paul tells us in Galatians 4:4–5, that at that perfect time, the fullness of time,

God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

that He might redeem for Himself a people to redeem them out from under the curse of the Law. So, Jesus has come. He’s made preparations. He’s become the sacrifice, the Lamb of God. And now He’s saying come, *come*.

Look at [Luke 14:]18 –

But they all alike began to make excuses.

Those of you who do not know Jesus Christ in a saving way, you have your excuses. You may even profess to believe in Him, but you still have your excuses because you don't really believe in Him. Oh, you believe in His existence. You believe that He's the Savior, but He's not your Savior, because you won't submit to Him.

Look at the middle of [Luke 14:]18 –

The first one said to him, “I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.”

It's the real estate excuse. I mean think about it. He can't go to the feast. What? Is the property going to run away in the nighttime? He can't go see it the next day? What's going to happen? Is it going to become a hole in the earth? Why do you need to go see it now? It's a flimsy excuse. Not only that, look at the second, similar excuse in [Luke 14:]19 –

And another one said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.”

Well, listen, you'd be a fool to go buy five yoke of oxen sight unseen. It would be like buying a car you'd never heard about. You're not going to buy one and then go look at it and test drive. Most of these wedding feasts were held at night. Do you think the guy's actually going to go do some plowing in the dark? Oxen don't have headlights on them. It's not like a tractor where you can actually go out at night today, but back then you couldn't.

Then, there is another pathetic excuse.

... another one said, “I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.”

Well, your wife can't feast with you? You can't leave her for a couple of hours? What are you talking about?

And this is how Christ looks at the excuses of those who will not come to Him. Those are pathetic excuses. Those are flimsy excuses. He sees right through them. They may fool some people some of the time or all of the people all of the time, but they never fool God. They never satisfy God. Excuses never work with Him.

You've got people who say things like, "Well, how can I know the Bible's true? There are so many translations and transliterations."

Well, name five of them. *Name five of them!*

"Well, aren't there?"

Oh, so you've studied up on the subject?

"Well, no."

So, you're putting your whole eternal soul on an assumption that you won't even investigate? That is a pathetic and flimsy excuse.

"Well, listen, I don't believe in God."

Oh, yes you do.

"No. I'm an atheist."

You believe in God.

"No. I don't."

Well, I'm sorry. God says that He has put a knowledge of Himself in your heart and if I threw you off a cliff you'd become religious on the way down.

Your real issue is [that] you don't want God telling you what to do. You don't want God ruling over your life, so you just pretend to deny Him, but you know He exists. You know it in your heart because God put it there. So, we offer these little wimpy, pathetic excuses for not coming to Him.

"What about the natives in Africa?"

Which ones? What does that have to do with you?

"I don't know if I'm one of the elect."

Well, if you don't believe, I *know* you're not one of the elect.

R. Ken Hughes writes,

The real reason the three invitees offered their lame excuses was that they really did not want to go to the feast. Their excuses, that in their minds make attendance to the feast impossible, would have evaporated if they really wanted to be there. In today's terms, if they were offered front row seats at the NBA Championships or a box seat to hear the three tenors Pavarotti, Domingo, and Carreras or a week's fly fishing on the Madison,"

I can't believe he put that in there. . .

or a week's shopping in Paris, they would have found someone to tend to the field, the ox, and yes, even the home. Make no mistake, the real reason people turn away from the eternal feast is that they do not want to be there. They have no appetite for higher things.

And that is exactly right. They just don't want to be there. A lot of people think, "Well, how could God reject those people?" They're rejecting God! They don't want God ruling over them.

J.C. Ryle had this brilliant insight. Commenting on this text he said,

We have in this part of the parable a vivid picture of the reception which the Gospel is continually meeting with where it is proclaimed. Thousands are continually doing what the parable describes. They are invited to come to Christ, but they will not come. It is not ignorance of religion that ruins most people's souls. It is a lack of will to use knowledge or perhaps the love of this present world.

And here's the brilliant statement.

It is not open profligacy that fills hell, it is an excessive attention to things which in themselves are lawful. It is not avowed

dislike of the Gospel which is so much to be feared. It is that procrastinating, excuse-making spirit which is always ready with a reason why Christ cannot be served. Let the words of our Lord on this subject sink down into our hearts. Infidelity and immorality no doubt slay their thousands, but decent, plausible, smooth spoken excuses slay their ten thousands.

That's how it is.

"I can't become a Christian right now. I just don't believe that."

Believe what?

"I don't know. But I don't."

So, the question is, are you here this morning offering excuses why you can't turn from your sins, why you can't submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of heaven and earth, God almighty Who created you and owns you and the world and all it contains. You can't submit to Him because... why?

Our hearts are like fountains that just spew forth a never-ending stream of excuses. It just never ends, but they never work with God.

What I've learned is, there are some people who kind of go through these stages and it's dangerous. They don't want Christ ruling over their lives and so at first they might just say,

You know, listen, I'm not a Christian. I don't care about that Christian stuff. I'm just going to live in the world and be carnal.

And you know what? They become prime targets for zealous evangelizing Christians....

You know, that person just needs the Lord. I mean, he just says it.

And so [those who declare that they're not Christian] walk around with big bull's-eyes on their chests and every Christian who comes along goes,

Let me tell you, Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins.

And they're like,

Oh man, I can't handle this.

And so what they often do in order to kind of repel some of this evangelistic bombardment upon their souls is they just say,

Well, you know what? I'm a Christian. OK? I'm a Christian.

And then that'll get [evangelizing Christians] out of there, but they still live like devils. They profess one thing and they live another. They don't go to church. They don't read their Bibles. But they think, "You know, I'll fit into the social category of Christianity," but still that doesn't repel the real zealous Christians. They see through him.

Yeah, the guy's still not saved. He calls himself a Christian, but he's not.

So he keeps getting invited to church and he keeps getting evangelized and evangelized and finally he just says,

You know what? I'm going to draw closer.

And he comes to church and he still doesn't want to give his life to Christ. So, he learns the jargon. He learns the Bible stories; maybe a little doctrine; maybe reads his Bible; maybe even gets involved in ministry; maybe even becomes a member.

As soon as he does that, people just leave him alone. I mean, the person's a Christian, right? I mean, [he's] very religious... like the scribes and Pharisees. He seems to know his Bible... like the scribes and Pharisees. He calls himself a believer. He says he's going to heaven... like the

scribes and Pharisees. But like the scribes and Pharisees, he's not because he's never given his life to Christ.

What's really bad is when friends who are Christians are so deceived by the person's profession of faith and religiosity that they actually defend the unbeliever.

Oh, that person's saved. I know that person. That person's a friend of mine. Surely, he knows the Lord. Surely he has to know Christ. I mean, he's at church every Sunday. He hangs around with us. He does things [with us]. He's Christian in his behavior. Obviously, he must know Christ. . . .

Just like the scribes and Pharisees.  
Look at [Luke 14:]21,

And the slave came *back* and reported this to his master.

Reported what? Reported that all those people that [were] invited, that said they would come, would *not* come, but made excuses.

You think, well, when did they get their first invite? In the Scriptures. They had the Scriptures which said,

OK, this is what's going to happen. Let me just tell you. [I, God, am] going to raise a deliverer. He's going to come from the Tribe of Judah. He's going to be born in Bethlehem. He's going to do miracles. He's going to heal the lame and the sick. He's going to be a prophet and he's going to speak My Word,

and on and on and on.

And so Jesus comes. He's born of a virgin. He fulfills all these prophecies. He comes on. He says, "Guess what? I'm the Messiah."

They don't believe Him.

“Let me show you. I’ll do miracles.”

They don’t believe Him.

“I can forgive sin.”

“Only God can do that.”

“Well, let me show you. I can forgive [a man] his sins and I’ll show you. I’ll do a miracle and then I’ll forgive his sins so you’ll know I’m from God.”

And so He does that. He convinces them by many miracles, by words, by everything He can, by fulfilling all the prophecies that He’s the Messiah and then they still won’t accept Him. They keep offering excuses. They won’t come to Christ.

It says in [Luke 14:] 21,

Then the head of the household became angry. . . .

There’s a righteous indignation here. “I’m trying to save you. I’ve told you I was coming. You made a covenant with Me as a people. I’ve tried to reach out to you. I’ve fulfilled all the prophecies. What more do you want? I’m doing miracles every day. What more do you want?”

This is what they want: “We don’t want You reigning over us. That’s what we want. We don’t want You telling us how to live our lives. That’s what we want.”

And that is really the bottom line excuse for every single person who won’t come to Christ.

Jesus had given them no excuse. Their religious leaders were without excuse.

For those of you who have a great knowledge, who have grown up in Christian homes, who have sat under good teaching and good preaching, who have made the profession, have learned the jargon and know the doctrines and know the truths, the question is, do you have an excuse in your heart? Deep down, do you really know that you don’t want Christ telling you what to do?

You'll pretend. You'll fool us, but you'll never fool the Lord.

When I was thinking about this, I was just thinking about some statistic I read that nine out of ten students who were raised in the church, when they leave home, turn from Christ; turn their backs on Christ. *Nine out of ten.*

Now you think, surely that couldn't be true for us.

Well, let's just say Calvary Bible Church is this super, exceptional church and we've got a 50 percent "stick" rate. Think about it. Go into the Junior High group and look at all those junior highers; go into the High School group and look at all those high schoolers; go into the college group and look at all those college students and just tell yourself the truth. Half of these people will go apostate. Half of these people will turn their backs on the Lord.

That is sobering. And they're all going to have their excuses. They will have sat under good teaching and heard the Gospel a million times and heard all the Bible stories and have all the Bible knowledge and then they would turn their backs on Christ?

Some will even stay in the church, not because they love the Lord, but because that's what they're used to. That's what they grow up with. That's what their parents expect of them and, you know, if they left the church and shacked up with some girl, there'd be all this hubblebub. Their parents would freak out. Their friends would freak out, then they'd get all this pressure and be disciplined [and so they think to themselves], "I'll just stick in the church." They still don't love the Lord. They still don't know the Lord.

So, they'll just continue to come to church and their MP3 downloads, music CDs, and DVDs will always exceed their theological library. They will never love the Lord. They will never become great women of God or men of God. God help us if they ever become elders.

If that's you, you're making excuses and you need to lay those aside. You need to come to Jesus.

Don't delay. Offer no excuses.

Ah, but one of you may feel like standing up right now in your pew and letting me know that you just walked in from the street and you have not been in the church very long, so you don't fit that category. "Like listen, man, I just came for the music thing last night. I don't know who you're getting down on, but it isn't me. I mean, this is my first time."

Well, that's why Jesus goes on in the next section. Let's look there.

Jewish outcasts need to come to Christ. Look at the middle of [Luke 14:]<sup>21</sup> where the man having the dinner then said to his slave,

Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

Now, this is the city where the man lives. He says, go out into our town here, go up and down the alleys and when you find anybody, bring them in, but they have to be poor, crippled, blind, and lame. Those are the same categories He used in the preceding context when He was talking to the Pharisee about who he needed to invite to his house. Interesting that He did that.

If you were here last week, the whole point was, the poor, crippled, blind, and lame were the kind of people in society who had no means, were totally dependent on other people and therefore, could not repay you. So, to invite them over was to show true hospitality and true love, unconditional love to those in need and God would, for those who did that, repay them at the Resurrection.

Here, though, we're in a parable. Now, we've gone from the literal meaning in the preceding context to a more spiritual meaning and these are the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame spiritually.

Do you remember in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says in Matthew 5:3,

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

Remember that? And then right after that, He says,

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Now, Jesus isn't saying blessed are those who are financially poor and those who are physically hungry. He's saying, blessed are those who see their spiritual bankruptcy, who see that they are hungry and thirsting for righteousness, for those are the ones who get into the Kingdom of God.

Do you remember in Luke 4:18–19, where Jesus goes back to Nazareth the first time after He's kind of gone crazy and become the Messiah? He comes back to His home town, reads a little bit of Isaiah. Here it is –

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to publicly proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

And He said, I want you to know it's happening right now, which meant two things: I'm the Messiah and you're the poor, the blind, and the captives. They got so angry at Him, they tried to throw Him off a cliff.

[They] said, "We are not spiritually poor. We are not spiritually blind. We are not spiritually captive and we're not spiritually oppressed. What are You talking about?"

But that's exactly what they were.

Do you remember Jesus' words of rebuke to the church of Laodicea? In the first couple of chapters of Revelation, there are those letters to the seven churches and Laodicea is the rich church. They're like an American church. Jesus says this to them,

Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, so that you may

become rich, and white garments, so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eyesalve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

Jesus tells this rich church [that] materially speaking, literally, it was extremely wealthy, [but that] spiritually, it was naked in the gutter. And Jesus says, “You’re in trouble. *You’re in trouble.*”

In these present times, God is saving for Himself a number of Jews. We have some here in the congregation. We lost one to that church up the hill, old Marv Bittick. Do you remember Marv? If you’ve been here awhile, you know him. He’s barely getting around, but he’s still loving the Lord and still serving the Lord. So we have a few.

Now, I haven’t talked to a lot of Jews before. I haven’t witnessed to a lot of them. I’m always kind of shocked whenever I talk to them. It just shocks me that all through their Scriptures it tells them to read the Scriptures, study the Scriptures, [and] meditate on the Scriptures. Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth. Meditate on these things day and night. And yet most of them never read their own book. I find that interesting.

But the ones I have talked to, they say things like, “Well, I could never become a Christian because Christians persecute Jews.” You know what? If you look in history, you discover [that] Christians have persecuted Jews. That’s exactly right. And they did so because they were ignorant of certain Scriptures or distorted certain Scriptures. It’s true. It cannot be denied. And it’s also true that those who professed to be Christians, but were not, have persecuted the Jews. But it’s also true that Jews have persecuted Jews.

Now, you never take the worst minority and judge the whole by it. If you did that, imagine the consequences of that, if you just applied that same excuse to Judaism.

Abraham, he didn’t believe God. He didn’t trust God. He told his wife to lie, to sin. He sinned. We can’t trust him as the father of faith. And Jacob? Ha! He was a deceiver. He and his mom plotted to get his own birthright. What? We’re going to make him some sort of hero? And David? I mean,

he wrote the Psalms. We can't read the Psalms; the guy committed murder and adultery.

You would unravel Judaism if you [used] that same line of reasoning. It's an excuse for not coming to Christ. *It's an excuse.*

And it doesn't work with God.

All you [a Jew] have to do is look at your own Scriptures and see that the Jewish leaders persecuted about every single prophet that came or was sent to them. It's in your own book.

What is so odd about them persecuting the Messiah when He showed up? It's even predicted in your own book.

Isaiah 53 – He bore your grief, the chastening of your well being fell on Him and by His stripes you were healed. He was crushed for your iniquities. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

The Jews. [Isaiah 53 is] speaking about the Jews.

Read the second Psalm. You only get two Psalms into the Psalter and what do you get?

Do homage to the Son, lest. . . you perish in the way.

Who is that Son? It's Jesus. He's described by the Hebrew prophet Zechariah in Zechariah 11:12–13,

And I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.

Then the Lord [Yahweh] said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

And the thing is, Judas fulfilled that. He came as a Jew. He betrayed the Messiah to the Jewish leaders, then felt remorse about it, came back, [and] threw back their thirty pieces of silver. They said, we can't use this, we're righteous men and this is blood money, so they bought a field so they could bury strangers in Jerusalem who died there.

If you are Jewish and have not repented of your sins, have not given your life to Jesus Christ, you need to do that. You can start now fulfilling the prophecy which will become fulfilled in an even greater way in the future in Zechariah 12:10, where the Lord says,

And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look...

(The Lord is speaking)

...they will look on Me...

(The Lord)

...whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.

If you are Jewish, you see your spiritual bankruptcy, the hollowness of your soul, your sin, your need for a savior. The Messiah came. He lived. He died. He resurrected into heaven. His name is Jesus Christ. Come to Jesus. Offer no excuses.

Now, you may be saying, "Well, Jack, listen... I haven't been in the church a long time and I don't have a whole bunch of knowledge. I'm just figuring this out. I'm not a Jew who just came off the street. I don't see myself as poor, blind, naked, and crippled. I'm a Gentile."

Well, that's good because that's what the third group is. Look at [Luke 14:]22 –

And the slave said, “Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.”

The kingdom of heaven is a big place. I don’t know how big it is, but it’s huge. It’s so big that God has been inviting people into it ever since He killed that animal to clothe Adam and Eve after the Fall. All through history He’s been calling people to come to Him, to believe in Him.

Look at the end of [Luke 14:]23 –

And the master said to the slave, “Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

“I’ve made preparations [said the master]. I’ve made this huge sacrifice. Come in! Come in so that you can be blessed.”

If the original guests represented the leaders of Israel, and those in the streets and towns represented those Jews who really saw their spiritual poverty, then who are these on the other side of the highways and the hedges? I think you can see [they are] the Gentiles. [They are] *the Gentiles*. The highways are the places where the Gentiles travelled through Israel. They didn’t stay at the Jewish little towns and villages and stay in Jews’ houses. They were unclean! And the hedges literally could be fences or walls or partitions. He’s basically saying, “What I want you to do is I want you to go out and cross over the fence, get over the hedge, get out there beyond the borders of Judaism here and compel those Gentiles to come into my house.”

And the word compel is a very strong word. It means to insist, to drive by force, to make threats or warning in order to compel somebody to do something. Beg them. *Beg them!* Convince them. Argue with them. Do whatever you can. Get them to come in.

Sometimes, people have said, “Well, you’re just a real hellfire and brimstone preacher.” Can you believe somebody calling me that? And you know

what, I am! I am! I'm with Paul, who said knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men; and Jesus [who said] unless you repent you will likewise perish. The Scriptures tell me to preach the whole counsel of God's Word and so, if it talks about hellfire and brimstone, I preach it. And it does, so I do. So, that's it!

You might be thinking, "Well, yeah, you could be a little nicer." I'm trying to be whatever the nice is in the text. The text is severe, then you get severe. Go through this section in Luke and you just find this, "You know what? I'll make you happy and wonderful. You just come to Me," I'm going to preach that way. But not today.

I'm guilty. Let's just say that you are visiting me and I live in the Midwest and we're talking and all of a sudden the wind begins to kick up and the skies begin to kind of turn black. I'm kind of concerned so I go and turn on the radio and all of a sudden there's a tornado warning. [So] I come out and I say, "Listen, there's a tornado warning. We need to be really careful here. If it looks like there might be a tornado, we're going to have to go down into the basement."

And you say, "What's a tornado?"

I say, "You know, one of those big twister things that come down."

"I've never heard of that. That sounds really cool."

And just as you're talking, all of a sudden in the distance you see this huge black funnel touch down to earth. I tell you, "Come on! We need to go back down and hide in the cellar," and you say, "Oh, no. No. No. I'm fine. I want to see this thing go by."

I say, "No, you don't understand. If you're out here when that thing comes by and you aren't in this concrete shelter, you know what's going to happen to you? That wind is going to tear you apart. The wind is so fierce it can drive pieces of straw through wooden planks. You need to come with me."

"Listen, I've got a hold of this railing and it feels sturdy."

Now, I wouldn't be your friend, I wouldn't love you if I were to say, "Oh, OK. You just stay here and hold onto the rail. I'm going down and

locking myself in the bunker. When the house starts coming apart, if you can get down there, the door will be locked, so you'll just have to ride it out on your own. OK?"

I wouldn't be loving you.

I would compel you to come in. "Come on! Come here!" I would grab you by the arm. I would drag you down there to save your life.

This is what excuses are. They're just holding on to the rail of something which, maybe right now before judgment comes, seems pretty sturdy.

"Well, I've got my own religion. I don't believe in God. I don't really believe the Scriptures. I don't believe that Jesus is the only way."

You're just holding on to a rail which may seem a little firm right now, but believe me, when the Judgment Day comes, and the wrath of God is being dealt out, you will not escape. You will be torn to pieces and cast into hell. You won't escape. And that is why Jesus wants you to know that you need to come to Him and make no excuses.

There is no excuse that works with God.

Oh, you can fool us. You have fooled us. You cannot fool God.

Jesus is the only way, the only truth, the only life and no one comes to the Father but through Him.

So, just lay aside your lame excuses. Realize that you're a sinner, that you're poor, blind, crippled, and lame spiritually. Just say, "Jesus, save me. Save me because I cannot save myself."

If you're still thinking, "I'm just going to hold up this one excuse for a little bit longer," Jesus has one more thing to say to you. [Luke 14:]24.

This is a warning that should have made any of those scribes and Pharisees and, really, any unbeliever's blood run cold. Jesus just drops it like a bomb right in the middle of this group of religious leaders and He says,

For I tell you, none of those men who were invited. . .

(That is, originally invited. . .)

shall taste of my dinner.

That is scary.

“All of you who are religious leaders, all of you who know the Scriptures, all of you who know the prophecies, all of you who’ve seen Me do miracles, you’re not making it into heaven. You’re going to perish in hell. That’s what’s going to happen. You’re not getting in.”

This is the punch line of the parable which answers the man who said, “Blessed are all who eat bread in the kingdom of God.” [That man] was really saying, “We’re going to get in.” And Jesus says, “No, you’re not. You reject me, you’re not getting in. *You’re not getting in.*”

I think there’s obviously a clear application here for those of you who don’t know Christ. Lay aside your excuses and come to Christ.

For the rest of us, compel them to come in. Not come in to this building. I mean, if they come in, I’ll give it to them. You go out there and you compel them to come in at your workplace and in your neighborhood and in your family. You tell them the Gospel. You tell them who the Savior is. You tell them that salvation is by grace through faith, if they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ they will be saved, they will be born again. God will change their lives and they’ll begin to grow from one glory to the next and over the course of their lives they’ll see God working in them. They’ll have a love for Christ, a love for the things of God, a love for the people of God, a love for the Word of God. They’ll like studying and reading like never before.

That’s what God will do when He saves a person and transforms them into a new creature in Christ. It all comes down to you believing in Jesus as your Savior and trusting Him alone.

If you don’t know Jesus. . . one more time – offer no excuses, just come to Christ.

Let’s pray.

Father, we are so grateful for your Word. We’re thankful for Jesus in this section, though He is giving hard calls. They’re necessary calls because many people are holding on to the rail of their own flimsy excuses, thinking that they can stand before You on Judgment Day and, yet, still reject your Son.

Father, if there [are people] here who're deceived into thinking they're saved, but are not, who have really lied to themselves so many times, they begin to believe their own lie, or people here who have professed to know You, but they know in their hearts they don't, and others who have never professed to know You, Father, I pray that they would see their need of salvation, that they would see themselves as poor and blind and crippled and lame and, Father, that they would come to humble repentance and faith, they would receive the Lord Jesus Christ, that they would be born again and changed into new creatures.

And Father, I pray for the rest of us who leave here, that we would be faithful slaves, that we would go out into whatever sphere You have put us in and compel them to come in. Your banquet hall is great and You have a great harvest here on earth and You want us to be part of that. Father, we thank you for what we have learned and may it settle in our hearts and may it produce fruit to Your glory. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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