

MAKING EXCUSES

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Lesson: Luke 14:15-24

When the Lord was on earth, He often spoke in parables. Now a parable is a story that has a spiritual meaning within it. Because the Lord did so much of His teaching by means of parables, they are very important, and we should pay close attention to them. One of these parables is about a man who made a great supper and sent invitations to many people. But when it came time for the guests who had been invited to come to the supper, they began to make excuses and say they could not come. Then the man who had invited them became very angry. He told his servants to go out into the streets and fields and bring in all the poor beggars and cripples that they could find so that his supper table might be filled.

Why was he angry? Because he had gone to a great deal of work and expense to prepare this fine supper for these guests. They had accepted his invitation and then had decided that they did not want to come at the last minute, that there were other things that they would rather do. And, therefore, they made up all kinds of excuses as to why they could not come. Now all of the fine food would go to waste. All of the money and time and work that had gone into the buying of that food and preparing it would have been spent for nothing. And so the man gave the supper for other people, for those who would appreciate it. This was a parable that the Lord told to His disciples.

But what is the spiritual meaning of this parable? The man who gave the supper is, of course, none other than the Lord Himself. And the invited guests are—whom do you suppose? The invited guests are all of us, we who belong to the Lord's church. The Lord invites us to a great spiritual feast—a feast of spiritual food. And what is spiritual food? It is the truth of His Word, which nourishes our mind and makes it grow strong and healthy, just as natural food does for our body. But remember what these guests did who had been invited to the supper. They wanted to do other things, and so they made excuses for not coming. They pretended that they could not come, because they really did not want to come.

Now I want you to think of something for a minute. I want you to think of how easy it is to make excuses when you don't want to do something that you should. Maybe your parents ask you to do something to help at home, and you pretend that you are feeling sick, so you won't have to help. Maybe your teacher wants you to help out at some project at school, and you pretend that you do not know how to go about doing that project, because you are not

interested in it. Maybe your conscience tells you not to cheat, not to lie, not to steal. And you begin to think up all kinds of reasons why it really wouldn't be so very wrong for you to do these evils things just a little bit.

Have you ever stopped to think that of all created things, only a human being can make excuses? Baby animals, when they are learning from their parents, often make mistakes and get punished for it. But they never try to get out of it by making excuses. But think how easily we, as human beings, make excuses for not doing what we know we should do. We are the greatest excuse-makers in the whole world. In fact, we are the only excuse-makers in the whole world.

The Lord has given to us much more than He has given to any animal or tree or flower. Yet think of how often we take advantage of Him. Think of how often we take what He gives us with greedy hands, and still look for more. And all the time we make excuses for not using wisely what He has already given us.

Now why is it so dangerous to get into the habit of making excuses for not doing the things we should? There are two reasons why this is dangerous: First, making excuses gets us into the habit of being lazy, of not doing our work well, and then trying to put the blame on somebody else. Second, making excuses gets us into a habit of pretending, first in little things, then in more important things. And finally, if we are not careful, our pretending turns into lying.

So whenever you are tempted to make an excuse for not having done a job the way you should have done it, and the way you could have done it, remember that excuses are a very dangerous weapon that the evil spirits love to use against us. For excuse-making leads to laziness and to lying, and lazy people (people who are not willing to do their fair share of work) and liars (people who do not tell the truth) cannot come into heaven. The Lord's home is heaven. He invites you to enter His home, His heaven. But if you make excuses and put off doing the work that He asks you to do, you will be throwing away your invitation. And somebody else will take your place in heaven, even as it happened to the guests of the parable.

Now none of you want this to happen. Then live according to His Word. Honestly try to keep His Commandments, and your place will be waiting for you.