

## “Too Busy for Jesus?”

### Luke 14: 15-24

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Text: Luke 14:15-24 (NIV) <sup>15</sup> When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." <sup>16</sup> Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. <sup>17</sup> At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' <sup>18</sup> "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.' <sup>19</sup> "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' <sup>20</sup> "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' <sup>21</sup> "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.' <sup>22</sup> "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' <sup>23</sup> "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. <sup>24</sup> I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

<sup>18</sup> “But they all alike began to make excuses.” Interesting.

I wonder how many of us today would say “I am a Christian!” Actually, Jesus never used that word... “Christian.” Followers of Jesus were first called “Christians” at Antioch sometime after the Resurrection. Rather, Jesus called those who followed him “disciples.” Ok, so how quickly would we say that “I am a disciple of Jesus Christ.” But what would that mean? Are we really? Do we understand what that word disciple really means? And does this parable somehow come all the way around to that very question of *what is a disciple?* We said many times that the Greek word used “matha-tais” was really the word for student. Jesus often referred to himself as the “teacher.” So, what kind of students expect to learn from a master teacher but do not draw near to him to be taught? Perhaps many who would say they are true disciples are simply too busy...for Jesus. Perhaps. First let us pray.

Let me begin on a lite note. I have Donna’s permission to tell you another funny story about her. She is the smartest woman I know but...she is really a blonde at times. Years ago, we were sitting in the box seats at the old Tiger Stadium. Friends had given us their two tickets for the night. I had performed a wedding ceremony for their daughter and her husband a few weeks before the game.

Next to us was a little old lady wearing a Tiger cap and diligently writing every detail into the scorecard. So Donna sat down next to her and they immediately made friends. After a while the little old lady said “Excuse me dear. How is that you have these seats to use tonight? How do you know these folks?” Whereupon Donna said “Oh, my husband married their daughter.” The little old lady sort of paused. Then she quietly said “Oh.” About an inning went by and she said “Excuse me dear. Did you say that your husband married their daughter?” “That’s right.” “So then you are their daughter?” “No, I’m not their daughter. Their daughter is named Jill. I’m Donna.” At this point it sounded like an old Abbot and Costello routine!! Finally, I said “Maybe you should tell this nice woman that your husband is in the ministry and that he officiated at their daughter’s wedding?” By the end of that exchange even I wasn’t sure who was married to whom!

Now, that was a fun moment but it reminds us of something far more important. I think that most Christians do not realize that the church is the bride of Christ and that we as Christians are in a sense engaged to the Son of God. And the great feast to come will be the wedding reception given by the Father for His Son the Risen Christ. Consider:

**Revelation 19:7 (NIV) <sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.**

So, when we are too busy for Jesus we are like a man or woman too busy for the one with whom we will spend eternity. Put it another way...who would happily get engaged to someone but spend very little time with them? Who would get engaged but place other things over one’s fiancé? Thus, the parable touches on something deeper. Saying “Yes” to Christ but then not being devoted to him.

Now let’s back up the tape for a moment. It is critical not to mis-apply a parable. This one does not present the feast as a wedding feast. But we can carefully look for implied teachings within the purpose of a parable. So, what was this one really all about?

Jesus seems to be speaking to the Pharisees who looked down on everyone else who did not keep the laws of Israel as they understood them. These men were particularly disdainful of the poor and lame and those others excluded from Israel because of their low rank. It is impossible to overstate how badly Jesus shocks these men on this day! They are smug and repulsive even though they are very, very religious! If asked if they are going to Heaven and would they be resurrected among the righteous they would have said “Are you kidding? We’re us! The Pharisees! We’ve got fancy robes and tons of prayer cards that we wear on our sleeves and we’ve got perfect attendance certificates from the synagogue since we were little mites! We can recite the Five Books of Moses from memory! Of course we are saved! If we’re not saved...who is!” Jesus is about to tell them...who is.

Jesus really, really stuns them because they knew how a scheduled feast worked. A first invitation was sent out and the guests would make “reservations” in a sense. That’s the way great feasts were set up in first century Israel. Only the date was left pending. So, the host sent his servants to those who had already been invited and who had said they would be coming! Now the delegate from the host says “Ok...everything is ready.” But they say “Ah...we can’t come!” These were people who had made a **commitment** to the host to join him when he said all was ready. This would be like responding to a wedding invitation with a “Yes! We’ll be there!” but on the wedding day you leave a message saying “Sorry...we have to cancel!”

The people in the parable were Jews under the law and Jesus now portrays their response to the Messiah who was sent to host them...as them saying “We’re too busy!” Keep in mind also that in the ancient world, every citizen high or low hoped someday to be invited to a King’s feast. It would have been unthinkable to dismiss the invitation except for the most compelling reason. It would have been like not attending a Presidential Inaugural because you had to cut your grass. Or skipping a dear friend’s wedding to go shopping. Their excuses are ridiculous!

But look closely please. In the parable, Jesus portrays the host of the feast as disappointed when he hears people cannot come. But he does not cancel the feast. He simply invited other guests...and they are people that the first group would not have wanted to be with anyway! And if we look really closely we see something else. The host of the feast is angry! He says:

**24 “I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.”**

Thus, Jesus has just said to the Pharisees “You who were supposed to be at the feast in Heaven have rejected the one inviting you so your places will be filled with unclean Gentiles and all kinds of others...and you will be excluded!” Little wonder these same Pharisees later cried “Crucify him!”

We’ve established two things...let’s clarify: **FIRST**, the parable is about the Jews rejecting their Messiah and God inviting others into the Kingdom as indicated by their coming to the feast. **SECOND**, as Christians we are the ones who made reservations for the wedding feast with Jesus and as part of the church we are engaged to him...that he must be first in our lives. In fact, if he is **not** first in our lives, he is not **in** our lives. We might say “Oh I would never be like those foolish guests who said they were too busy for Jesus” but is that true?

Are **we** too busy...for Jesus? Again, consider the lame excuses that those invited give for not attending! “I just bought a field.” “I just bought five oxen.” “I just got married.” We read this and we think “What fools have we here? The field is not going anywhere! The oxen will be there tomorrow! And the marriage will last another day! How could they be so impudent and indifferent? How could they engage in such an act of effrontery as to tell the King they can’t fellowship

with him because of such everyday things? I mean, I would never do that...would you? I would never be too busy for Jesus...would you? I would never let my schedule get so full and draining that I'd be too busy for Jesus. Right? Or would I?"

Allow me to try out a slightly more modern version of this parable just to see if it applies to modern people. Of course, I do not mean any of *us*. I mean others out there who follow Christ but are too busy much of the time to be with him. If we were invited to a time of fellowship and celebration with Jesus...such as worship...such as this gathering...would we say "Please excuse me. I just got a new computer and I have to install the software." Or "Please excuse me Lord Jesus, but there's an important game on and I can't miss it?" Or "I'm just worn out or I had a late event last night or whatever..." But let's be truthful here; we do that all the time. We are too busy much of the time to place Jesus first. I know. I know. The worst way to motivate people is thru the use of guilt. But I am willing to try!

Actually, I do not need to give a motivational speech this morning to try to get all of us more devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have something far more effective and frankly frightening to consider. We have the words of Jesus himself in which he explains what a disciple is. Here is what I mean. The Lord Jesus Christ did not call you to salvation just so you could go to Heaven when you die. Jesus did not call you to salvation just so you could be a believer and have eternal life. No, if we belong to Jesus we need to understand that we are not called to be only believers ...BUT DISCIPLES! Here is what Jesus said to his servants:

**“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

So...how did Jesus define a disciple? You may have heard the wrong Gospel. The one that says Christianity is a party invitation that is all good with Heaven to follow. That Christ asks nothing of you except to believe in him. But the problem is that when Jesus says believe in him he does not just mean intellectual assent. He means engagement as part of the bride of Christ! He means something far more demanding. And I suspect that this is the reason that most people are too busy for Jesus. Consider these words:

**Luke 14:25-33 (NIV)<sup>25</sup> Large crowds were traveling with Jesus,**

Today we see and hear of large crowds traveling with Jesus or going to huge gatherings. They're excited and perhaps there is much praise singing and passionate preaching...and no room for any spiritual wet blankets who will take the fun out of following Christ. But then we are stunned to hear Jesus speak

almost as if he is trying to get us to drop off...almost as if he is saying “Do not do it quickly! Do not be hasty in following me!” We read:

**“...and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”**

I think I can see the moment. They are suddenly silent. “Hate my own life? Huh? Really?” Then Jesus gives a warning that we never, ever hear in connection with evangelism. Think if you’ve ever heard an invitation to give your life to Christ that includes a strict warning to **COUNT THE COST**...first! Jesus says:

**<sup>28</sup> “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup> "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.”**

Jesus just said “Think about what being a disciple of mine will cost you. Think about it...do you have the desire to spend all your resources and be left possibly without friends and family? Do you want to start down a path where you will not be able to continue?”

At this point, Jesus does what all good teachers do...ancient and modern. The listeners are silently crying out for a summary of what he is saying...and he gives it to them and it is every bit as stunning as what he said to the Pharisees about the feast. He says:

**<sup>33</sup> “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”**

In the New English Version, that verse reads:

**Luke 14:33 (ESV) <sup>33</sup> “So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”**

Renounce? The Greek word "apotasso" broken down means to “set apart” or “re-arrange” ...It does not mean the disciple can never own a car or a computer or enjoy this life. It simply means that in comparison to being a student of Jesus the true disciple considers those things dispensable and quite unimportant. Another way of putting it might be this....to tell if you are a true disciple...if you had to literally lose all of your possessions and all of your relationships and even your

life to follow Jesus...would you do so? If not, you are either not a disciple or just as bad...you are a disciple but you're just too busy for Jesus!

True disciples have a reservation for the wedding feast when the church is truly joined with Christ in glory. This Communion Table? It is on one level simply an engagement celebration pointing towards the wedding feast. And you are invited...if you're not too busy for Jesus.

Let us pray.