

**“The Kingdom of God is Like...A Wedding Banquet”**

Luke 14:15-24

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Rev. Dave Baldrige

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

The Kingdom of God is Like....a wedding banquet...any banquet. In this sermon series that we begin today we explore not only what the kingdom of God is like but how we can make it happen here on earth... “Thy kingdom come, Thy Kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven.

Thanks to Jim and Margi Hudson, and to Chef Susan and our worship planning team we have a banquet table prepared for us today. Now at a banquet especially a wedding banquet there is food, there is music, there is laughter, there is noise. The Kingdom of God is like that? Uh, huh!

Now we will find as we go examine our scripture in just a moment that people gave excuses as to why they couldn't come to the great banquet. It reminded me of some excuses I sometimes here about coming to church. But I found the following that has a humorous correlation and a church and spiritual translation. Let's see if we can make the connection.

It is **“Ten Reasons Why I Never Wash”**

- 1. I was forced to as a child.**
- 2. People who wash are hypocrites -- they think they are cleaner than everybody else.**
- 3. There are so many different kinds of soap, I can't decide which one is best.**
- 4. I used to wash, but I got bored and stopped.**
- 5. I wash only on special occasions, like Christmas and Easter.**
- 6. None of my friends wash.**
- 7. I'll start washing when I get older and dirtier.**
- 8. I can't spare the time.**
- 9. The bathroom is never warm enough in winter or cool enough in summer.**
- 10. People who make soap are only after your money.**

Beloved I will be honest....Jesus is after your heart and your soul. He is wanting you to be completely His.

So as we will see in scripture excuses do not hold up.

A man had a great banquet and invited many...but they all began to make excuses. Now let me stop and explain a little here about the invitation.

In this time period when a feast and a banquet were going to be held it was announced a long time beforehand. Invitations were sent out very early with the day of the banquet and people accepted at that time. The host had to know how many to anticipate so he could prepare the right amount of food...like us needed to have a head count so he would know how much to prepare. So the guests had already accepted the invitation to the banquet. They knew the day, but not the specific time. When the day arrived the master would send out servants letting them know that now is the time...the banquet is ready...come.

And so we have listed 3 people making excuses. **Verse 18: The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’**

I don’t know very many people who buy property, sight unseen. “Hey I’ve got some great swamp land in Florida...want to buy it.” Why sure!

We have someone so caught up in his business that he does not have time to come to the banquet. So caught up in the ways of the world, so caught up in purchases, so caught up things...that it is easy to make an excuse from the Master (God) and His invitation to us.

The second man has this excuse: **Verse 19: ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’**

Again I would ask rhetorically how many would go buy a car or truck sight unseen. Let me contemporize and do a Baldrige paraphrase, I will take out the words 5 yoke of oxen. “I have bought 5 Dodge Rams, and I am going to go now and give them a test drive. Please have me excused.”

This man had already said yes to the original invitation on this day, but now he finds an excuse. What excuses do we come up with? We are so good at making excuses and rationalizing.

And now the third excuse. Please don’t laugh too hard on this one. **Verse 20: ‘I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.’** Or was it...I have married a wife and *she* said I can’t come.  
 ☺

Now hold it...let’s understand this a little better. In Old Testament Law, actually in Deuteronomy it says this. **Deuteronomy 24:5 The Message (MSG) <sup>5</sup> When a man takes a new wife, he is not to go out with the army or be given any business or work duties. He gets one year off simply to be at home making his wife happy.**

Well...la..tee..da... Good intentions, but Jewish weddings were never surprises they were big events. So this was known. He shouldn’t have accepted an invitation to the great banquet in the first place. Yet your yes be yes and your no be no.

Now no doubt this was a good intentioned excuse. But when it gets down to it we can always convince ourselves that our excuse is valid and the right thing.

Such as the following excuse. **(Image)** Sorry I can't today. My sister's friend's mother's grandpa's brother's grandson's uncle's fish died. Oh and it was tragic!

If good things keep you from best things then they become bad things. (Warren Wiersbe)

So imagine the Master now with a banquet prepared, and well all these excuses. Let me show you some beautiful banquet halls. **(5 images)**

Weren't they beautiful? Fancy. Elegant. First Class. Snazzy even. But did you notice something in common with each of them? Let me show them again. **(5 images, show again)**

Here's the commonality...There's no one in the seats. Ain't nobody there.

So the Master says **(verse 21): "Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame."**

A little Biblical side note. How did these people get there? They were invited and they were brought to the banquet. The blind and lame could not get there on their own. Have you invited? Have you brought? Are you with me? Xxxxx

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10)! As has been said before---the least, the last, the lost.

Excuses are eliminated. The poor could not afford to buy oxen. The blind could not go and examine land. And in that day and time the poor, crippled, blind and lame were not usually given in marriage.

These all come...but the banquet hall still has room. And God (the Master) said to the servant (us), "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in..." Go out into the highways and byways...invite people...tell them to come.

Compel is a strong word, perhaps too strong in context. Maybe better said---strongly urge, persuade, make a strong case. It is an eternal life and death situation.

All things are ready. Everything has already been prepared. Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead for you. The feast is has been prepared. The invitation is free.

Are the sick, the poor, the lame here? Have we gone out to the city and the highways and byways to bring people in? Let's not get caught up in excuses. **(Image—"Not going to church because of the hypocrite is like not going to the gym because of "out of shape people.")**

The table is set. Yes the table of Holy Communion. The Lord's Banquet. Allow me to share some Methodist theology about why we as United Methodist's have what is called an Open Table. This means any can come and receive communion.

The following is from our United Methodist website.

Question: I am a Christian, but not a United Methodist. Am I invited to receive Communion in a United Methodist church?

Yes indeed. It is the Lord's Supper, not ours, and it is Christ who invites you. "Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another." We do not refuse any who present themselves desiring to receive. Whether you should receive Communion with us is between you and God.

Question: Should I receive Communion if I feel unworthy?

Two thousand years ago Jesus ate with sinners and those whom others scorned. He still does. None of us is worthy, except by God's grace. Thank God we don't have to earn worth in God's eyes by our goodness or our faith. Your sacred worth, and ours, is God's free gift. No matter what you have done or what your present condition, if you want Christ in your life you are welcome at his table. Communion provides the opportunity for you to confess your sins, to receive forgiveness, and to indicate your intention to lead a new life.

All ages! All In---invited!!!

The Kingdom of God is like a Banquet...a wedding banquet. Always remember that Jesus thought of the Kingdom like a feast.

Go home and invite. Go to the neighbors and streets and invite. Go to the highways and byways to invite. Don't just invite...bring!

Do we mean it when we say "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." Do we want to build His Kingdom here? As Rend Collective song says: "Oh We seek Your kingdom first. We hunger and we thirst. Refuse to waste our lives. For You're our joy and prize. To see the captive hearts released. The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace. We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause.

We are Your church. Unleash Your kingdoms power. Reaching the near and far. Awake the kingdom seed in us. Fill us with the strength and love of Christ." (Build Your Kingdom Here)

"Come all things are now ready....are all they? The following happened in October of last year in Sacramento, California.

(video: <http://video.nydailynews.com/?ndn.trackingGroup=90051&ndn.siteSection=nydailynews-news&ndn.videoid=29825154&freewheel=90051&sitesection=nydailynews-news&vid=29825154> )

That banquet cost more than \$35,000. This banquet cost Jesus His life. The table is set. For the homeless, the sick, the poor, the lame. For the spiritually homeless, the spiritually sick, the spiritually poor, and the spiritually lame. Yes the Table is set. The Bread---His body. The Cup of Juice---His blood shed for us. All are invited. Come, for everything is now ready!