

# The Excuses We Make

**Preacher:** Harold Summers

**Date:** April 27, 2026

**Church:** 16th Avenue Gospel Chapel

**References:** **Luke 14**, Matthew 6:31-33; Luke 15:3-5; Luke 15:8-10; Luke 15:11-13; Luke 16:19-21

Well, again, welcome to all this evening, and we're going to carry on with some studies tonight in the book of Luke. So you might want to turn with me, please, to Luke and the 14th chapter. And probably we should start by reading, and then I'll discuss the theme that we might consider. So some verses that you know very, **very** well from Luke 14. Verse 16, we'll start to read.

[Luke 14:16-24 NKJV]

<sup>16</sup> Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, <sup>17</sup> and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' <sup>18</sup> But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' <sup>19</sup> And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' <sup>20</sup> Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' <sup>21</sup> So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' <sup>22</sup> And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' <sup>23</sup> Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. <sup>24</sup> For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

Well, you've read that story before. It's an interesting story. It's a **powerful** story. I guess it's the very last line that impacted me recently. It simply says, "none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." What's that mean? Well, I'm not sure. I think this story's got lots of applications. But can you think of a situation where you had an opportunity to go and feast at the invitation of the Lord, and you said, "well, I can't go right now. I certainly would like to, but I couldn't go"?

What happened? Can you think of that time when you missed out on the feast? "I could have been there," you say. And I wasn't there. What a shame. How many great feasts could we have enjoyed if we hadn't had an excuse?

So my question this evening revolves around the subject of the excuses we make for not repenting at the teaching of the Lord. The excuses we make for not repenting, responding to the invitation of the Lord. And because there's a certain amount of repetition in what I'm saying, and I want to be able to compare one thought to the other, I actually put it down on a piece of paper, and then I got Roy to put it up for me so you can see what we're talking about tonight. Excuses that we make for not repenting at the truth of God; the parallel line is for not responding to the invitation of the Lord to partake in his blessings.

I don't know what that dinner was like, but he was a great man, and it was a great supper, and the people who were invited missed out at the very least. They missed out on the supper. And I told the story the other day about the man who was in the armed services and he alienated the chef. And so instead of a great supper, he went for supper one night and there was beans. And he went back the next night and there was hash. And he went back the third night and they had leftover bean hash. And there **could** have been a great supper.

## **The Excuse of Money**

So let's take a look at these excuses. So Roy will give us the first slide here. And so the story in reference is this—is the story that we just read in the book of Luke. And the first excuse was, "I just bought a piece of ground and I've got to prove it." And so I tried to reduce that excuse to something that you and I would understand very well. And the excuse is: my money.

"I would do it, but, well, frankly, I needed more money. I could have gone, but, well, I decided I'd better go for the money. I need more money for my future." You ever said that? You ever noted afterwards that because you said that, you missed out on the blessing that could have been yours? And I've said to people on occasion, "would you like to do this with me for God? Would you like to come to this function for God?" And they say, "no, I need more money."

Is that a really good argument? Can you think of any verse that would be a problem to that particular argument? And the answer is yes. You can think of it. It's Matthew 6:33, and it says:

[Matthew 6:31-33 NKJV]

<sup>31</sup> "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or

'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

What are all those things? Well, in the context, it's very simple. All those things are "what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed." So you want to have enough food? Okay, that's good. Want to have enough clothing? That's good. And you want to have enough for the future? That's good. Matthew 6:33 again: seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be provided for you.

So, let me ask the question. Is "I can't go to the supper because I need more money," is that a valid excuse? And the answer is no. And then you ask yourself the question: have I ever used that excuse? What did I miss out on by using that excuse?

## The Excuse of the Job

All right, that's number one. So, Roy's going to show us number two. It's the second excuse, and it's "I have bought how many yoke of oxen?" I never remember these details. Somebody call out the number for me, please. I can't even find it on the page. Where's the 19? How many? Verse 19, that's right. It's right there. I was looking in the wrong chapter. No wonder I can't find it.

Okay, verse 19 says, "I bought five yoke of oxen." When was the last time you bought five yoke of oxen? Well, very few of you have ever owned any yoke of oxen. That's a lot of oxen. And why did he have five yoke of oxen? Well, he had five yoke of oxen because if he only had four yoke of oxen, he wouldn't get as much work done.

And so the argument is: I need to be more **efficient** in my job. "I've got a job, and I've got to do it well. Of course, it's important that I do my job well. And so I think if I had five yoke of oxen, I could do better. I would have a more effective job. I'd be of more or greater value to my boss. Matter of fact, I might even make more money." Anybody ever use that argument?

And the whole purpose of this message is to have you search back into your own life. And as I look at that line, I search back into my own life. And I say, "Harold, on that particular occasion, what did you forfeit by saying, 'I've got to be more efficient in my job. I've got to take this time. I've got to go check those five yoke of oxen. I've got to go make sure that I can manage them well. I can't go to the banquet?'"

We should have sung that tonight, as a matter of fact. Do you know the little chorus?

I cannot come, I cannot come to the banquet.

Don't trouble me now.

And so it goes, "I bought me a wife, bought me a cow. I married a wife and bought me a cow." Well, don't do that.

## **The Excuse of Family**

So there's a third excuse. And that's not my money, not my job; it's my wife. And when I heard this years and years and years ago, I read it often. And I thought, "what's the matter with the guy? Bring your wife with you, dummy!" It's all very simple. I still can't figure it out.

I get an invitation. Frankly, I did get an invitation a while ago to a banquet. And I planned to go. And he said, "will you be coming alone or will you bring your wife?" And I said, "frankly, if I had a wife, I'd bring her. But I don't have a wife, so I'm coming alone." But that's the only reason I'd be coming alone.

What is the logic that lies behind "I married a wife and therefore I cannot come"? Well, the logic is very good, but her welfare comes—uh-oh, there's a problem. Her welfare comes **first**. First before my welfare? Well, that may be. First before the invitation that the Lord gives to come to his banquet? No.

Now, I get involved in a lot of things. And one of the things I get involved in is trying to invite people to come to various activities. One of the arguments that's often given is, "I would love to come, but that's family day. Our family, we've got to do this. I can't come because of my family." Is it important to fulfill your responsibility to your family? Yep. What could you do? You bring them with you.

And one of the great blessings in our lives was when we were children, we were involved as children in the family activity for the work of God. And my father had a job to do, and he often invited my mother and my sister and I to go along with him. As a family, we served the Lord. It wasn't just that we went as a family to the blessings of the Lord, and we did. And many of the happiest times in my life as a youth was going along with my family to the good things that God had for them. And I got to go on. What could you miss out on if you said, "my family comes first, my wife comes first"?

So three excuses. Are they ever used in the year 2026? You go like this. Have you ever used those excuses yourself? And you go like this. Okay.

## The Excuse of Self

So I said, well, those are three very interesting excuses. I wonder if there's any more. So, Roy, what's the fourth? Oh, you get to chapter 15, and there's a lost sheep.

[Luke 15:3-5 NKJV]

<sup>3</sup> So He spoke this parable to them, saying: <sup>4</sup> "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And so you say to yourself, "all right, Harold, how did that sheep get lost? It's not logical that he should have been lost." How did he get lost? Well, I think he got lost because he was feeding and the grass was good. And he lifted his nose just a little off the grass and he saw a really good clump of grass ahead. And so he went for that. And then another. And then another. And then another. And then another. And he said, "I'm just going for the good grass." And then he saw just a little puddle. And he said, "I'm going to go and get a drink." And so he went there. And the rest of the sheep were with the shepherd. But he just wandered.

And so what would be his excuse? "I've got to do what's good for me." Have you ever heard the philosophy of our day, which is expressed like this: to thine own self be true? That's the philosophy, I think, that really covers the past generations. I think I saw the cover on Time magazine probably in the 70s or 80s. Very few of you have seen that particular issue of Time magazine. But I think the cover simply said, "**Me.**" This is the **me** generation.

And a lot of people make an excuse. And they say, "well, I can't do it. I can't go. I can't be part of the party. I can't be part of the work because I must be true to myself." Now, I've got to be true to myself. Sometimes hard to define very precisely that particular excuse. Actually, sometimes you will find these excuses are not those that come immediately to the fore. But if you analyze why you missed out on it, if you analyze why you missed out on the work and the blessing, you'll often find that these excuses are at the root. So I said, well, all right, the story of the lost sheep, he must have had an excuse.

## The Excuse of Inaction

So next slide says that there was a lost coin.

[Luke 15:8-10 NKJV]

<sup>8</sup> "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' <sup>10</sup> Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

So what was the excuse that the coin was lost? Duh. The coin didn't do anything to make an excuse, did he? What did the coin do? **Nothing**. Never met anybody who missed out on all kinds of good things because they never did **anything**? That coin, he didn't work hard to get lost. He just didn't work hard not to get lost. Ah.

This is not really the most appropriate line, but I've got lots of not appropriate lines that I've given to you. But you heard the person, didn't you? They said, "well, as a matter of fact, I didn't do that because my mother dropped me on my head when I was a baby." Okay. Well, I'm sure lots of mothers drop their kids on the head. I've still got a bump right here. It's not my mother's fault. But I fell down the back stairs so many times. Every time I landed, I landed in the same spot. And that was when I was two and three and four. And so I've still got a bump on my head right there, just to prove it.

"Harold, you're so dumb. You did it over and over and over and over and over again." Okay. Is it possible that we could say, "I didn't know"? Why didn't you know? Why didn't you know? Well, I guess I didn't know because I didn't learn. Why didn't you learn? Well, I guess I didn't learn because I didn't study. Why didn't you study? Well, I guess I didn't study because I didn't really care.

Oh, what did you lose out on? Big banquet. The banquet may simply refer in this particular story—the banquet may very well mean eternal life. And there's a lot of people who won't be in heaven because they were like the lost coin. They were just too lazy to find out. But, you know, it could be not quite that eternal life. It could be a lot of other things. Have you ever missed something, the work of God, that you lost out on because you didn't sign up?

And I look back in my life and I can see instances where I said, "by the grace of God, I will do that." And I went to the banquet. I went to the work of God. And the result was the door opened. And there was a marvelous opportunity in front of me. And I got blessing after blessing. And then I said to myself, "Harold, if that happened then, what would have happened if you'd said yes on that occasion, when you said no? Oh, I said no there and I

never did get a blessing over there." Why didn't you get the blessing over there? Because I said no.

So there was a man who said, "I can't go because of money." Another man said, "I can't go because of my job." Another man lost out because of his wife and his family. Another man got tied up because of self, and another one got tied up because of self-pity. He kept on making excuses for being lost.

## The Excuse of Self-Indulgence

So Roy says there's another line. And that was the story in Luke 15 of the prodigal son.

[Luke 15:11-13 NKJV]

<sup>11</sup> Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. <sup>13</sup> And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

You know that story well. What was wrong with the prodigal son? It was called self-indulgence. "You know, I frankly, I really need a little more. I need that." Well, whatever it is you need. A lot of us need a whole lot more than we need. Is that right? We say we need more, but do we really need more? And it could be any number of things. You can interpret that way in many other ways.

In the story of the younger son, the prodigal son, self-indulgence was to bury himself in sin. But that's not the only self-indulgence that we could build into our lives. And self-indulgence says, basically, "I need more fun." Frankly, life gets to be a little bit boring. And it's been a while since I've had a really good laugh. And frankly, I'd like to go to that party.

I've been to Israel, as you know. And frankly, if I were to move back, I would like to move to Joppa. Of all the places I've seen there, I would like to be in Joppa. It's a beautiful city. It looks out over the Mediterranean. There's a rocky hill there, and I said, if I were here, I would like to have a house right on that rocky hill and I'd look out to the north to the beach, and I'd look out to the south to the beach, and I'd look out to the west to the ocean. Ah! And I think I could be happy. I'll just sit there for a while and relax.

And I keep on thinking of the prophets in the Old Testament, and they went out to serve the Lord. And I said, "Harold, if you were a prophet in those days, what would you have done?" And I would say, "Well, me? Maybe... maybe next week I'll go to serve the Lord. But right now I'm going back to Joppa because it's nice. I'd like a little more fun too, you know."

Have you ever listed all the fun that Elijah the prophet had? Didn't have much fun, did he? How about the other prophets? Jeremiah. Okay, going to be Jeremiah. No, Jeremiah didn't say that. He said a lot of other things, but he didn't say that.

## **The Excuse of Self-Righteousness**

All right, so. What excuses might we make? Money, or job, or wife, or self, or self-pity, or self-indulgence. Roy, what's next? What about the older son? Did he ever miss out on a banquet? Yeah, he wouldn't come to the banquet for his own brother. Amazing. Amazing.

What was he? He was Mr. Self-righteous. I think the story is told about him just because the Pharisees were listening to this whole story. And they said, "I'm better than him. I'm better than him." And Mr. Self-righteous didn't get involved in the banquet for his own brother. Didn't love his father. He talked about the fact that the Lord, the Father, never gave him an animal so that he could kill it and have a party with his friends. He could have had a party with his own brother. And the animal was already killed. Could have had a party with his father. He didn't want that. "I'm better than my brother. My brother, he's a bad egg." And he's true.

But self-righteousness. Could self-righteousness cause us to miss out on the blessing that God has? "I don't know that I should really work with him. I mean, maybe I shouldn't even fellowship with him. You know, he's wrong. This is wrong. That's wrong."

And they came up to D.L. Moody, and they said to him, "Mr. Moody, you're preaching the wrong way." And Mr. Moody said, "well, I'm not sure that I am." He said, "listen, Mr. Moody, I'm a Calvinist, and the Calvinists know that you can't be born again unless you are chosen by God in advance. You can't preach the gospel to everybody."

And Mr. Moody said, "well, I'll tell you what. You go around and put a big X on the back of all those people who can't get saved. In the meantime, I'm going to preach to them." And then I think Mr. Moody said to him, "how many people do you preach to?" And he was too self-righteous to preach to. The Pharisees were too self-righteous, not only not to preach, they wouldn't work with the others.

## The Excuse of Insufficient Evidence

Is there another excuse? Well, I guess you could go to the next story, couldn't you? The next story is a rich man who died and went to hell.

[Luke 16:19-21 NKJV]

<sup>19</sup> "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, <sup>21</sup> desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And so he has this long conversation with Abraham, and the conclusion of the conversation is, "Father Abraham, send them back to my brothers, because if some were to rise from the dead, they would trust the Savior. They would believe if someone rose from the dead."

You ever heard of a man—you ever heard yourself say, "ah, I would do that, but you see, I'm just not fully persuaded. I need more evidence. If I had more evidence, I would do this. If I had more knowledge, I would do that"? If you wanted more evidence, what would you do? Well, you'd go looking, wouldn't you? If you wanted more evidence, what would you do? You'd say, "well, I'm going to study more."

You remember the stories. There's innumerable stories of the man—I think Lee Strobel is the one I read about last. But Lee Strobel came home one day and found his wife was a Christian. He thought, "what foolishness! I thought I knew my wife. That's nonsense," he said. He said, "about time, I'm going to prove that this Christianity stuff is all wrong."

So he said, "I need more evidence." So what did he do? He started to study. What did he get? More evidence. What did he do after that? He became a Christian. What did he do after that? He became a prolific writer in the defense of the gospel. You've all probably read something of Lee Strobel as he's taught the truth of God in our generation.

Many people make excuses simply because they say, "I have a legitimate reason for not doing, going, coming. That is, I don't have enough evidence." Okay? Is that a valid excuse? No. Why? Because all you have to do is go and get the evidence. "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham to the rich man.

So what's the rich man do? Well, he would like somebody to go to his brothers. What should the rich man have done? He should have sought more evidence. You know what he could have done? That rich man could have invited Lazarus for supper. And Lazarus would have

had a good meal. And he could have said, "Lazarus, what do you think?" Lazarus would say, "well, I just want to tell you about the joy of the Lord." And he could have preached to him. And he would have had the evidence. But he was too lazy, too self-indulgent to invite Lazarus for supper.

## Closing Reflections

All of which says that there are in Luke at least eight different stories which outline the excuses that could be made by some in our generation. They could be made by some who will never know the Lord as Savior. And the story is over, like the rich man. And the Lord has to say, "none of those who were invited will eat of my supper."

But it could be just for those of us who are Christians. And we could have missed out on many good things. If instead of making an excuse, we simply said, "Lord, I would like to do that."

We had a little Bible study this afternoon. My friend came to me at a Wednesday night Bible study—I've told you this before—came to me at a Wednesday night Bible study one day and said, "Harold, if you held a Bible study in the early afternoon, people would come." I said to him, "people aren't going to come at that time." "Sure," he said, "if you do that, they'll come."

I said to myself, "if we do that, I'm going to have to come. And I have other things planned for Tuesday afternoon." I said, "you know, let's try." He said, "if you try, you'll find it's a success." So we announced it for the following Tuesday afternoon. What happened? People came. We've been studying the Bible together on Tuesday afternoons ever since. You know what? I've learned a lot on Tuesday afternoon. Okay, hopefully it's a benefit for somebody else, but the benefit is for Harold. Harold got the teaching.

All right, that's our story. You made the list. You look at the list, and you say, "all right, Harold, which one of those is your problem?" You make the decision. Which one is your problem? Are you like me? You might even say, "I think there's more than one of those." That's your problem, Harold. What's the Lord want us to do?

Thank you. Don't be like those who say—like when the Lord said, "if you say no, you'll miss out on the blessing. You won't come to the dinner." Don't be like that. Say, "Lord, I don't want to miss out on the blessing. I want to say **yes**."

Lord, it's all simple stuff. It's all convicting stuff. Because frankly, Lord, a lot of us have missed out on marvelous banquets from our Savior because we made excuses. What kind of excuses are they? Lord, we often call them flimsy excuses. None of these excuses have much

value. Lord, we pray that we might be a people who are humble in obedience rather than self-focused in excuses.

Lord, our prayer is that you will build each of our lives, that you will build each of our families, that you will build each of our witnesses, that you will build collectively our assembly and much more beyond. Lord, help us not to be people of excuses, but may we be people of helpful service. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.