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~ **Excuses, Lies, and Insults** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 14:1-24
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Luke 14:1-24 NASB	Luke 14:1-24 NLT
<p>It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on <i>the</i> Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. ² And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. ³ And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” ⁴ But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. ⁵ And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?” ⁶ And they could make no reply to this.</p> <p>⁷ And He <i>began</i> speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor <i>at the table</i>, saying to them, ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give <i>your</i> place to this man,’ and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”</p> <p>¹² And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and <i>that</i> will be your repayment. ¹³ But when you give a reception, invite <i>the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,</i> ¹⁴ and you will be</p>	<p>One Sabbath day Jesus went to eat dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, and the people were watching him closely. ² There was a man there whose arms and legs were swollen. ³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in religious law, “Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the Sabbath day, or not?” ⁴ When they refused to answer, Jesus touched the sick man and healed him and sent him away. ⁵ Then he turned to them and said, “Which of you doesn’t work on the Sabbath? If your son or your cow falls into a pit, don’t you rush to get him out?” ⁶ Again they could not answer.</p> <p>⁷ When Jesus noticed that all who had come to the dinner were trying to sit in the seats of honor near the head of the table, he gave them this advice: ⁸ “When you are invited to a wedding feast, don’t sit in the seat of honor. What if someone who is more distinguished than you has also been invited? ⁹ The host will come and say, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then you will be embarrassed, and you will have to take whatever seat is left at the foot of the table!</p> <p>¹⁰ “Instead, take the lowest place at the foot of the table. Then when your host sees you, he will come and say, ‘Friend, we have a better place for you!’ Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests. ¹¹ For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”</p> <p>¹² Then he turned to his host. “When you put on a luncheon or a banquet,” he said, “don’t invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. ¹³ Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who</p>

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blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

¹⁵ When one of those who were reclining *at the table* with Him heard this, he said to Him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

¹⁶ But He said to him, “A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; ¹⁷ and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’ ¹⁸ 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.’

¹⁹ Another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’ ²⁰ Another one said, ‘I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’ ²¹ 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 crippled and blind and lame.’ ²² And the slave said, ‘Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ ²³ And the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel *them* to come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.’”

could not repay you.”

¹⁵ Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, “What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!”

¹⁶ Jesus replied with this story: “A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. ¹⁷ When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, ‘Come, the banquet is ready.’ ¹⁸ But they all began making excuses. One said, ‘I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.’

¹⁹ Another said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.’

²⁰ Another said, ‘I now have a wife, so I can’t come.’

²¹ “The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, ‘Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’

²² After the servant had done this, he reported, ‘There is still room for more.’ ²³ So his master said, ‘Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full. ²⁴ For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.’”

2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

From *Poet and Peasant* by Kenneth Bailey

- Jesus reclined at a table in the Pharisees house. A table was usually a sign of wealth in that time. See 2 Sam 9:7; 1 Kings 13:20
- The banquet was a sign of Messianic salvation – See Isaiah 25:6-9. Also see Psalm 23:5. The banquet has the food of kings. Instead of the nations coming with gifts as in Isaiah 18:7; 60:4-7; and Psalm 96:8, the banquet is one of grace to people. They come to receive.
- In the intertestamental period, the offer of Gentiles to come to the banquet is replaced with judgment. In Qumran, even some Jews are excluded and only Jews of high rank come.
- When the man said, “blessed are those who will eat bread in the kingdom of God”, it would have been expected that Jesus would have responded with an invocation, a blessing, a positive response. But he responded with a parable.
- A great banquet can only be hosted by a great man. He will invite his peers and associates. The invitation is to be taken seriously and an acceptance is a firm commitment.

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- The meat for the banquet is killed and cooked according to the number of people who accept the invitation.
one or two chickens for 2-4 guests
A duck for 5-8
a kid for 10-15
a sheep for 15-35
a calf for 35-75
Once the appropriate animal is killed the guests are duty bound to attend for the meat must be eaten that night.
- Once the food has been cooked, a servant goes out with the message, “come, all is now ready” meaning that the food is prepared.
- A last-minute refusal is bad taste in any culture. Everything had been done right – invitations sent out and accepted, an animal butchered, meat cooked, the guests summoned, and then – all at once – excuses.
- The real estate excuse was a blatant lie – no one in the Middle East buys a field without knowing every square foot of it. He will know springs, wells, stone walls, trees, paths, and anticipated rainfall. These would all have been included in the contract. The purchaser will also know the human history of the field – who has owned it for generations and how much profit it has yielded. Fields often had proper names. In the first century, due to increasing population, land space was becoming limited and therefore even more important. Would a man really buy a field without seeing it?
- Sometimes purchasing a field can be a long and complicated process and can even take years.
- The excuse of buying the oxen – animals are sold either in the market next to a field where the oxen can be tested. Or they are sold on a given day where the seller can demonstrate their worth. Word spreads and prospective buyers come on the day of demonstration to see their strength and if they work well together. All this happens before negotiation for a price begins.
- The excuse of the passionate bridegroom – the wedding could not have been that day. Otherwise the host would not have planned a great banquet. No village can have two great events occurring at the same time. In addition, to talk about one’s bride in public would be inappropriate.
- “There is still room” – these were people from beyond the village.
- “Compel them to come in.” In the Middle East, an invitation that is unexpected must be refused, especially if the one receiving it is of lower rank. He *must* refuse, but the servants are told to overcome this disbelief and social reserve and compel – usually by gently pulling their arm.

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3. Answer these reflective questions.

The man in Luke 14 was suffering from edema, sometimes known as dropsy. This was considered a physical condition caused by greed. Do you think physical illnesses can be caused by sin? Was this man's problem caused by sin? Either way, what was Jesus' attitude towards his condition?

Jesus said it was better to take the lower seat than the seat of honor. When you go to dinners or banquets, do you wish to be recognized or to be in a place where others do not notice you? What is the promise of taking the place of humility?

In the story, why do you think the men first accepted the invitation and then excused themselves from it? Why would they make excuses? What is the spiritual lesson for us? Do we make excuses about following God?

Read about the prophecy of the great banquet in Isaiah 25:6-9. What encourages you the most about this prophecy?

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The master wanted his banquet hall filled with people. Who do the crippled, poor, blind, and lame represent? Who do the ones who were compelled to enter represent? How much does God wish to fill his table with people? Is there a place reserved for you at God's table?
