

Excuses, Excuses

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into Luke chapter 14, focusing on the parable of the great supper where many were invited but made excuses not to attend. The message emphasizes the importance of responding to God's invitation without making excuses, highlighting the need to prioritize a relationship with God over worldly distractions. It challenges listeners to examine their hearts, value the call of God, and not delay in accepting His invitation to partake in the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Scripture: Luke 14:15, Matthew 22:2, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 3:20, Matthew 25:1

Topics: "Responding to God's Invitation", "Prioritizing Relationship with God"

Description

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Transcript

Amen. Well, Luke chapter 14 and we'll read 15 through 24. Luke chapter 14, 15 through 24.

Now when one of those who sat at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then he said to him, A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at suppertime to say to those who were invited, Come, for all things are now ready. But they all with one accord began to make excuses.

The first said to him, I bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask of you to have me excused. Another said, I bought five yoke of oxen, I'm going to test them.

I ask you to have me excused. Still another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So the 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 the lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed, and the lame and the blind. And the servant said, Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room. Then the master said to the servant, Go into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say to you that none of these men who were invited shall taste my supper. And so, remember the context is that Jesus is at supper in the Pharisees' home, and there's this man with dropsy that he heals. He then tells two parables, and then he now tells a third parable.

And all of these parables relate to the issue of invitations to the supper. And so, he had just made some very strong statements, and one of those who sat at the table, presumably a Pharisee, said that, Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Now, that sounds like a very good statement.

Sounds like a very pious and righteous statement. The problem is that it was a self-righteous statement, as Jesus is going to show. So he's really saying, we're all saved here.

We're all going to be in the kingdom, and blessed is he who sits at the table or eats bread in the kingdom of God. This concept of eating bread in the kingdom of God was not a new thing. It was something that was familiar in Jewish context, and you remember that Jesus at the Last Supper said that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until I do so new in the Father's kingdom.

So the concept of a meal or of eating in the kingdom of God was a Jewish concept. Jesus enlightens us more, and he says, well, it's not just about eating bread in the kingdom, but there is going to be this marriage feast of the Lamb. And those who are born again and those who are taken to be in the presence of God will sit at the marriage feast of the Lamb.

And that's going to be a great and a glorious opportunity. So this guy is really saying, well, you know, he's giving Jesus a message. He's saying, well, you know, blessed are those who are going to eat in the kingdom.

But he's saying, we're all going to be part of that. Now Jesus then tells a parable, and I'm going to jump to the end, and then I'm going to go through the parable. So the next verse, the last verse, is verse 24.

I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper. So the one guy is saying, we're all going to be there. And Jesus says, no, you're not going to be there.

That's really the bottom line. And then he now tells the parable in between, and it's absolutely important that we understand a few important issues about the parable. The first is that he is obviously speaking concerning Israel.

The second is that he is speaking concerning the church. Because remember, Luke is written to Gentile believers, essentially. It's not written to Israel.

So it's written to us. And then thirdly, he is teaching us about the problems of excuses. So let's have a look.

In verse 16, then, he said to him, a certain man gave a great supper and invited many. So Matthew says he was a king, and it was the marriage of his son. It doesn't matter.

It's a very important occasion, and wealthy people are invited, as we'll see in a moment. The one guy had five yoke of oxen, which meant that—or he just bought five yoke of oxen. Don't know how many he had to begin with.

So that was quite something those days. Very few farmers could even afford one yoke of oxen, let alone five. And so the custom was that they would send out invitations, the same way as we would send out

invitations to a party or to a dinner or a feast.

And people would then respond to the invitation and say, we're coming, the same way as we do an RSVP, and we say, I'm coming. And then when the feast actually is about to start, he would send out servants again and say, the feast is ready. Now come.

So there's sort of a two-stage invitation thing. And when these guys don't pitch, it's really the same as us having, you know, having RSVP'd and said, you know, we'll be there. And, you know, they set a table, and, you know, there's a—what do they call it—a design for who's going to sit at which table, and, you know, your name's up there, and you come in at the door, and, you know, so table number so-and-so, so many—these people will be there.

And you don't show. It's incredibly rude. I mean, these days it seems that people don't bother.

They do RSVP. That they're coming, and they don't come. Or they don't RSVP, but they pitch anyhow.

Focus. It's just plain rude. And Jesus is not really teaching about good manners, although I suppose that's part of the issue.

So he has this great supper. He invites many. And he sent his servants at supper time to say to those who were invited, come, for all things are now ready.

So the time for the supper had come. They'd had warning weeks, months in advance, saying the supper's going to be at such and such a time. Now it's ready.

Come. And they all with one accord began to make excuses. You'll see *accord* is in italics in the text.

In other words, it's not in the original. So the original literally says, they all as one began to make excuses. Now it doesn't mean that they conspired together and said, you know, we're not going to go.

It's just that they all had the same mindset. They all had the same attitude. And so while the excuses were different, the heart was the same heart.

And so the first one said to him, I bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you, have me excused. Now, the commentators argue as to whether these excuses were good excuses or lame excuses.

Some say, well, you know, they're legitimate excuses, particularly the guy who married a wife. And we'll touch on that when we get there. And then others say, well, these are lame excuses.

Well, as far as I'm concerned, they're lame excuses. You don't buy a piece of land without having looked at it first. And having bought it, it's not going to run away.

It's still going to be there tomorrow after the feast. But, you know, this is the thing, is that excuses are, they really don't have to have any substance. Because they have nothing to do with reality.

They have to do with the state of heart. We can find excuses for anything. And, you know, when it comes to his invite—and obviously he's speaking here about heaven.

And we say, well, you know, I'll never make an excuse to not go to heaven. You know, if the trumpet sounds and the rapture happens or the resurrection happens and, you know, the time has come for the

marriage feast of the Lamb, I won't make excuses. I'll be there.

But, you know, this morning he has invited us to a feast again, a feast of his Word. And I'm not speaking about how well I can preach or can't preach. That's not the point.

But we're opening the Word of God. And man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And the Word of God is rich and is powerful and is a blessing.

And every time I open the Word of God, it blesses me. Last night I listened to a message preached by another brother in another place, and I was blessed by what he said. It's a feast.

God is ministering to us. And, you know, at the head of the table is the Lord Jesus, and he is present amongst us this morning. You remember the disciples who, after the resurrection, came together and Jesus was there.

But Thomas wasn't there. Thomas had an excuse, whatever that excuse may have been, but he wasn't there. And he missed out on one of the most glorious opportunities in his life.

Thank God for his grace that he appeared to Thomas again later on. But for a week, Thomas kicked himself because Jesus had appeared, and he was there and alive and fellowshiping with the disciples, and Thomas had something else to do. Now, the problem is not how big the excuse is or how real or relevant the excuse is.

The problem is the value we attach to the invite and the value we attach to the other things. You remember Esau sold his birthright for a pot of stew, and you remember what the Scripture says about it. The Scripture says the problem was not that Jacob had overcharged him on the stew.

The problem was Esau despised his birthright. Esau said, my birthright is worthless. It's worth less than a pot of stew, and he sells his birthright for a pot of stew.

So it's the value he had attached to his birthright that was the issue. And, folk, when we make excuses not to be where God wants us to be, whether it be in church or whether it be in prayer at home or in reading your Bible or doing whatever it is, when you have an excuse to not accept his invite, to be in his presence, what you're really saying is, ah, he's not important. You're despising the invite of the king.

Now, we've said this before, but the reality is that unless you have a big political issue, if you get an invite to the White House, you wouldn't think twice. But you would go, well, I guess if you had a problem with the incumbent, then maybe it would be different. But an invite to go to the White House, and yet we have an invite to come into the presence of God.

We have an invite to meet with brothers and sisters and to worship him. We have an invite to sit down at the feast of his word. And, folk, the reality is that there are many who are watching the video this morning who long to have what you guys have here this morning, who are crying out and saying, we don't have a pastor, we don't have a church that preaches and teaches the word of God.

And, again, it's not because I'm a great preacher. It's simply because I'm simply preaching the word of God. What I'm doing used to be common 20, 30, 40 years ago.

Today it's not common anymore, but I'm doing nothing special. I'm just looking at the word of God. But no one's doing it, and so we find ourselves in a famine of the word as they must prophesy.

And there are many who are saying, I wish, and I get emails, folk, literally every week saying, if only we could live close by and be in your church. And yet there are many empty seats here this morning of those who have an excuse to not be in the presence of the Lord. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

And so I must go and see, please have me excused. Sunday mornings I dread it when I get a notification on my cell phone of a text, because I know it's going to be another, and I'm sorry, lame excuse. Sorry can't come.

Got something more important than being in God's house. Now I'm preaching to the choir. I'm not trying to beat you up.

But, folk, this is the reality. This is really what Jesus is speaking about. I found a song, and you can be easy, I'm not going to sing it.

But it's a gospel song, and I just thought it was very good, and I felt that maybe the guy who wrote it had to have been a preacher. So let me read it to you. It's very simple, but I think it really illustrates the point.

Excuses, excuses, you'll hear them every day. And the devil, he'll supply them if the church you stay away. When people come to know the Lord, the devil always loses.

So to keep them, folks, away from church, he offers them excuses. In the summer it's too hot, and in the winter it's too cold. In the springtime, when the weather's just right, you find some place else to go.

Well, it's up to the mountains, or down to the beach, he must have been in LA, or to visit some old friend, or to just stay home and kind of relax, and hope that some of the kinfolks will stop, will drop by. Well, the church benches are too hard, and that choir sings way too loud. Boy, you know how nervous you get when you're sitting in a great big crowd.

The doctor told you, now you better watch them crowds. They'll set you back. But when you go to the old ballgame, because you say, it helps you to relax.

Well, a headache Sunday morning and a backache Sunday night, but by work time Monday morning, you're feeling quite all right. While one of the children has a cold, pneumonia, you suppose? Why, the whole family had to stay home just to blow that poor kid's nose. Well, the preacher, he's too young, and maybe he's too old.

The sermons, they're not hard enough, and maybe they're too bold. His voice is much too quiet, like sometimes he gets too loud. He needs to have more dignity, or else he's way too proud.

Well, the sermons, they're too long, and maybe they're too short. He ought to preach the word with dignity, instead of stomp and snort. Well, that preacher we've got, that preacher we've got, must be the world's most stuck-up man.

One of the old ladies told me the other day, he didn't even shake my hand. Excuses, excuses, you'll hear them every day, and the devil, he'll supply them if the church, you stay away. When people come to know the Lord, the devil always loses.

So to keep them folk away from church, he offers them excuses. So there'll always be a reason, there'll always be an excuse. And so the guy said, well, I need to go and look at my, I have to go and look at my piece of land.

Another said, verse 19, I bought five oxen, and I'm going to test them. I ask you, have me excused. So again, and I guess if we translated it into modern language, you say, well, I bought a car, I have to go and test it.

Well, you know, why didn't you test it before you bought it? And if you've already bought it and the deal is done, well, it's too late to test them now. You're going to find out sooner or later whether they work or don't work. But it's just not a good excuse.

It just doesn't work. And then another said, I married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Now, I want you to notice the difference between the first two and this guy.

There is a difference. The first two said, please excuse me. This guy didn't ask to be excused.

He just said, I'm not coming. And what that does in Jesus' parable is it shows a hardening. Because, you see, this is how it happens when we make excuses.

And I'm not just talking about not coming to church, and we'll find out that there's a much deeper and bigger application. But the problem is that initially we feel guilty about not being where we should be or doing what we should be doing. And so we make excuses, and we say, well, Lord, you know, please understand, you know, I have to do this.

But then as time goes on, we get bolder. And I've observed this in reality. I've seen this with folk.

So that eventually, we get to a place where we don't even say, please excuse me, Lord. We just say, well, Lord, I can't do it. You know, I've got to do something else.

Now, Jesus didn't have a fourth guy, but there is a fourth guy in my experience. And the fourth guy doesn't even make an excuse anymore. His conscience is not working anymore.

The spirit is not dealing with him anymore. He feels no need to make an excuse for his bad behavior or his absence or whatever else it may be. And so this guy, and I told you that some say, well, he had a legitimate excuse.

And it's based on the law which said that a man, once he is married for the first year, he is excused from going to war. He has to spend his first year with his wife. This is not going to war.

You can't apply that scripture. This is an invite to a dinner. This is not an invite to going to war.

So to say that this guy had a good excuse, no, he didn't have a good excuse. He was going to still live with his wife for many, many years after that, maybe. All right.

So the servant came. Now here's the second part. You see, here's one of the problems with this parable from a preaching point of view, and that is that most preachers will preach the first part and downplay the second part.

But remember that these parables have a dynamic to them, and there's a first part and a punchline. And the first part is less important than the punchline. Now I'm not saying don't listen to what I had to tell you about excuses, but there is more to it than that.

And here is the issue. So that servant came and reported these things to his master. So he's going around and he's inviting, and obviously this is a rural area, small town environment, and the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, and I thought about that, and I must admit, and I get bad excuses.

And I beat myself up and I say, well, you know, you shouldn't be angry. But the parable tells me that the Lord gets angry when we make lame excuses. And you'll see how this plays out in the macro situation.

So the master of the house is angry, and he said to his servants, go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind. Now clearly he had invited the rich, the influential friends. Remember where this whole thing started a couple of weeks ago, when he comes to the dinner and Jesus says, don't invite all your fancy friends.

Invite those you can't reciprocate. So clearly he'd invited his rich friends, a guy who could buy five yoke of oxen, a guy who could buy another piece of land. And so now he says, go and invite the unwanted, the disadvantaged, the poor, those that you would not normally have at a dinner.

Remember at this dinner was this guy with palsy. He wasn't there because they like to have poor people or sick people at their dinners. He was there because they were making a point to Jesus.

But now he says, bring them, all of those that are poor, that are maimed, that are lame and the blind. So what is the point that Jesus is making? Well clearly he's speaking about Israel, and he has invited Israel to the feast. He has invited Israel into a relationship with him.

And remember it wasn't long before this that he said, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often did I want to gather you as a hen gathers the chickens, but you would not. So God has been inviting Israel for hundreds of years, sending out the servants. Who were the servants? The prophets.

Sends out the prophets and he says, come to my feast. Not to the feast in Jerusalem, but to a relationship with me. And Israel says, no, I do not.

I have excuses. We have other things to do. We have wars to fight.

We have an economy to run. We have crops to gather. We have all sorts of things that we have to do as a nation.

We don't have time for God. And so what is the bottom line? And what is the point Jesus is making? Remember where it starts. Blessed are those who will eat in the kingdom.

Lord, I thank you that we're all of those who are going to be part. Jesus says, no, you're not going to be part. Those that are poor and maimed and blind and lame, those are the ones that will be part.

Who are they? We are they. The Gentiles are those that they despised and they looked down on and they said they can never be part of the kingdom of God. But when Israel rejected the invite, God sent his servants again, New Testament prophets, evangelists, apostles.

And he's called us, those who are unacceptable in Israel's economy, Israel's way of thinking, the filthy dogs of the Gentiles. And he said, come and enjoy the feast that Israel has rejected. That's the point that he is making.

Now, verse 22, and the servant said, Master, it's done as you commanded. And there is still room. And for 2,000 years, the message has gone out that the Lord has prepared a feast at his table.

And there is still room. That old hymn that we love to sing, there is room at the cross for you. There is still room.

The door of grace has not been closed. The invite is still going out, and it's still going out to whosoever will. It doesn't matter whether you're qualified.

It doesn't matter if you're rich. It doesn't matter if you're religious. It doesn't matter if you're good or holy or righteous or religious.

The invite goes to everyone. And then there's a third phase. The master said to the servant, go into the highways and the hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

You see, everything had been done. The meal had been paid for. The fatted cattle had been slaughtered.

The food had been prepared, the wine or whatever they were having. Everything was there. And it was going to go to waste.

And maybe God is saying today, I've done everything. I've given my son. He shed his blood.

And yet, it's going to go to waste. And I'm saying this very carefully. Yet it's going to go to waste in the sense that those who've been invited are not going to avail themselves of the invite.

But there is no limit to space in heaven. There is no limit to the table that he has prepared for us at the marriage feast of the Lamb. And so he is calling each one to come.

But he's now also sending us as his servants, and he's saying, compel them to come in. Now I have to stop here for a moment, because we have a theological issue here. This phrase, to compel them to come in, was used by Augustine, and then later by Calvin and his followers, to mean that you must use force to get people into the kingdom.

In other words, you can evangelize by the sword, as in the Crusades. This was the same text that Calvin used to murder and to torture those who dissented from him, those who did not agree with his doctrine. He believed that it was legitimate to torture people to a place where they would agree that his doctrine was the right doctrine.

This is clearly not, and this just blows my mind, that intelligent people can come to those kinds of conclusions. Because nowhere does Jesus say you must use force to get people into the kingdom. But he says, preach the gospel.

When he says compel, it means reason with them, plead with them, beg them. As Paul says, plucking them as a brand out of the fire, if necessary. Some with fear, folk, we need to get people into the kingdom.

But we cannot use illegitimate reason, methods. You cannot use blackmail, and some preachers do use blackmail in the way that they preach and make the altar call. We certainly cannot use physical force, guns and swords and things like that.

And yet there are places in the world even today where people are evangelizing in that way. No, compel them to come in is convince them. When you look at Paul's preaching, one of the words that's used about Paul's preaching is, he was convincing.

He was debating. He was arguing. He was giving reasons.

He was discussing. In order to convince, that's the job of the preacher as well. It's the job of every one of us as we're called to preach the gospel, but it's particularly the job of the preacher.

And I have a problem with preachers who have an academic approach and say, well, here's the story, here's what it means, here's how you interpret it. That's not my job. That's part of my job.

But part of my job, and you say, well, why are you getting personal this morning, pastor? The reason I'm getting personal is because I have a commission to compel you to come in, to plead with you, to beg you, to cajole you, to do whatever I can within the framework of what is legitimate. I don't want you to be going out here making bad decisions on Thursday night and on Sunday morning when you have to make decisions. I want you to make the right decisions.

I can't do more than I'm doing this morning, and I can plead, and I can beg, and I can give you reasons and arguments, but at the end of the day, you have to make those decisions. And so, the whole idea of Augustine and Calvin is absolutely, I won't even go there. So, go and not just invite them, but compel them to come in that my house may be filled.

Now, here's the problem. God had a plan B to fill his house. Israel rejected the offer, so he invites the Gentiles.

But now that he has invited the church, the church is making the same lame excuses today, maybe always. And many who have been invited, and I'm not meaning to the service this morning, but being invited to be participants in the kingdom, to be participants at the marriage feast of the Lamb, have rejected the offer and walked away, and there is still room. And the question I now have to ask is, what is plan C? Now that the church has treated the invite the same way, the Gentiles have treated the invite the same way as Israel has, is there a plan C? And the answer is obviously there is not.

This is God's last stand, if you will. And as we find ourselves at the end of the ages, there is no other plan. Who comes will come, but there's nothing more.

There's nothing more he can do. He's not going to do what Augustine and Calvin said. He's not going to send the armies of heaven, or the angels of heaven, and by, at the point of a sword, convince people to convert and to become Christians.

He's sending out the invite. And the invite is still going out today. The invite is going out to each one of us.

The invite is going out to the world at large. Would that we would hear the heart of the Master, who says, come. It's not about eating.

It's not about drinking. It's about a relationship with me. And you remember that as we've been looking at the rapture on Thursday evenings.

This last Thursday, we looked at Moses and at Lot. And they ate and drank, married and gave in marriage. And then concerning Lot, it says they bought and sold, and so on.

And what was the point? The point was they were just living their lives. And it says they knew not until the ark was closed. But for a hundred years, Noah had pleaded, get into the ark.

Get to fix your life. And for a hundred years, they rejected the invite. And they just lived their lives as though, and they had every excuse.

And then when, in Lot's situation, Lot had pleaded with those people. Remember the scripture says he vexed his soul. He troubled his soul daily over the behavior of his fellow citizens.

And while the Bible doesn't say so, I am convinced that he must have said a few things along the line. But they weren't listening, because they had every excuse. Oh, God is gracious.

God will not judge us. God won't punish us. Well, you know, that's just the way I am.

I have these natural urges. I just need to express them. And folks, there's all sorts of crazy and lame excuses that people have today for their sick behavior.

But the invite is still going out. Come, have a relationship with me. Come under my covering.

Come under my wings. And yet people have all sorts of excuses. You remember Festus, when Paul speaks the gospel to him.

Obviously, he was convicted by Paul's message. And what was his answer? Manana. Some other day.

Not today. But folks, the invite is today. The invite to each one of us is today.

The invite to those who are unsaved is today. Today is the day of salvation. Tomorrow, we have no guarantee of.

And obviously, once that servants had come back, and they brought everyone in that they could, the doors were closed, looking at the other examples in Scripture. And there was no way back in again. And folks, I just wonder at the heart of God.

I just wonder when, you know, Jesus says the master was angry when his friends didn't pitch. And I wonder how the master felt when he looked over the tables. And yes, there was rejoicing, because there were poor and hungry and crippled people.

And they were enjoying, but there were empty spaces. Spaces where others who really could have done with a solid meal, could have been, but they're not there. And at the end of the day, it's not about crowds.

It's not about me preaching to a full church. It's not about numbers. I don't count.

I never have. But my heart is broken for those who should be in these pews this morning and are not here this morning. Because if we have an excuse for this morning, what excuse have we got when the Lord is asking us to do something else? What excuse will we have when that trumpet sounds? Spoke about that trumpet on Thursday.

Those slaves who have been enslaved for six years, when that trumpet sounds, the moment of liberty. There was not one of those slaves who would say, well, yeah, I hear the trumpet. I can go out free.

It's the year of Jubilee. I just want to go and do a few things first. Remember those that Jesus had called, I have to first bury my father.

I first have to go and do this. No, when that trumpet sounded, those slaves dropped whatever they were doing, and they walked out free men. And folk, when the trumpet of God sounds, I trust we will be those who will be walking out.

Not first, Lord, me, me first go and do this. Let me first go and do something else. And here's the bottom line.

We've seen this. I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper. How many people that have been invited into a relationship with the Lord Jesus in this chapel will be at that supper that day? Many have been invited.

Few will enter in. And folk, here's the problem, is that we must learn from Israel. And the point of Israel is that God's grace does not extend forever.

God called Israel, sent the prophet, sent his son, and then the time comes, God says, I'm not going to speak to Israel anymore. I'm now going to turn to the Gentiles. And we know that with us, when the time comes, there's no plan C. The door's just going to be shut and what's in is in and what is out is out.

But I just wonder about the heart of God this morning, about those that were invited, those that were invited and didn't make it. And I pray that none of us would be those. Each one who's here this morning, each one who's watching the video, listening to the recording, has been invited.

The very fact that you're hearing my voice means you're invited. But let's not be like the Pharisees. We say, oh, well, we're all going to be there.

Blessed are those who eat in the kingdom. And then we begin to make excuses. But let's be those who make sure, as Paul says, make your calling and your election sure.

When you get an invite to a very important function, and I don't get such things. Maybe you do or don't. But I think if you did, if you had an invite to meet with the president, whichever one you chose, you choose.

How many times would you look at that invite? Make sure I've got the dates right. Make sure I've got the times right. Is this really my name on here? Where is it? Is it in LA or is it in DC or you know? You're going to make absolutely sure you've got it all right.

And so we have an invite to a supper, the marriage feast of the Lamb. Let's make sure that we got the details right, that we've got our hearts right, that we're dressed and clean and ready, so that when the trumpet sounds, the feast is ready and he calls us to be with him, that we will be there. Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for your grace, Lord. And while this sounds like a very harsh message, Lord, at the same time, it's your heart that you're not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to eternal life, to repentance. It's not your desire, Lord, that any not make it.

And so, Lord, I pray that you would help us to examine our hearts, Lord, as to the value we attach to the call of God upon our lives. As you call us into a relationship with you, as you call us into prayer, as you call us into reading and studying your word, as you call us into meditating on your word, as you call us into

fellowship, as you call us into service. Lord, as you call us, we pray that we may be those who hear the call and don't have excuses, that we may not be as fast as who said tomorrow, some other time, but not today, as today is not convenient.

But Lord, that we, as we hear your call, we would we would jump at the opportunity. Lord, I pray that you'd forgive us for making excuses, because Lord, there's not one of us, every single one of us, make excuses for not doing what we ought to be doing, or doing what we ought not to be doing. Lord, help us to get rid of those excuses and just to face the reality of the state of our heart, and to admit, Lord, we're not doing what we should be doing, because our heart's not right.

And Lord, help us to get our hearts right, because the excuses don't fix anything. And so, Lord, I pray that you'd help us. I know, Lord, this is a hard message, and yet, Lord, you've called us to compel men to come in.

And Lord, we're pleading this morning. I'm pleading with the hearts of those that are present here this morning. I'm pleading with those who are watching online, and those who will listen to the recording later on.

Lord, we're pleading, and your spirit is pleading, and saying, come, come, and enter in to a relationship with you. Lord, we remember again the letter to the Laodicean church, with Jesus shut out of the church. And he's knocking, and he's saying, if any man will hear my voice, I will come in to him, and sup with him.

I'll dine with him, and he with me. Lord, you're asking to sit down at a meal with us. Help us to be those who hear the knocking of your voice, and to open up to you.

I ask this in Jesus' name. I pray that you'd go with us now, Lord. Keep us, protect us, bring us together again safely on Thursday, I pray, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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