

Buying Fields And Testing Oxen.

Text: Luke 14:16-19

Suggested Hymns:

301, 377, 305, 303, 304

- 1) The Most Gracious Invitation Ever Extended
- 2) All Is Ready
- 3) Some People Made Light Of The Invitation
- 4) Excuses Are Revealing
- 5) Living Dangerously

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 14:16–19, ¹⁶ *Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, ¹⁷ and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’*

¹⁸ *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.’ ¹⁹ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Buying fields and testing oxen has become the chief concern of mankind. Business has the ‘right of way’ in our present setup. A good bargain must never be passed by.

Churchgoing can wait, but not a good business deal. It has always been like that. It was so in the days of Jesus as well as in Abraham’s time. Some mighty sharp bargains have been made by the men of yesteryear.

Therefore Jesus gives us this warning in Mark 8:36, ³⁶ *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?* Nobody, not even the Rockefellers, Fords, or Gates have gained the whole world. Nevertheless in the minds of most people money gains must come first.

Jesus stresses that there are bigger things than fields and oxen, good jobs and cars. For this reason Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us that the love

of money is the root of all evil.¹ Crime, dishonesty, strikes, wars, are all traced back to one basic passion: the love of money.

Jesus presents to us a real human-interest story in this parable to prove His point that most human beings value fields and oxen much higher than their soul's salvation.

A man made a great supper and invited the outstanding citizens of the community. Such events were 'red letter days' in the rather drab Oriental life of the day. However, many of the invited guests thought other things to be of greater importance and did not go.

Then Jesus makes His spiritual application. To man is offered the Gospel as a feast to delight the soul. But most people make light of the invitation. They have other interests to occupy their time. Material things are more tangible and give more enjoyment to the earth-bound.

However, Jesus refuses to accept these excuses. That is the point of the parable. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Most Gracious Invitation Ever Extended

Jesus extends to us the most gracious invitation ever given to mankind as He invites us come to Him and find nourishment and rest for our soul. Wherever people who are weary and heavy laden with sin are found, Jesus asks them to come. All over the world we find men and women crushed by the worries and cares of life.

On the highways and byways of life Jesus Christ stands offering Himself as the Bread of Life to nourish the soul. However, often we excuse ourselves by saying that we have a house to buy, or a car to try out!

If we bypass the Saviour and neglect our soul we have gained nothing, even if our successes have enabled us to move to 'Main Street' and buy the highest-priced car on the market. All these tangibles we cannot take with us when crossing over into eternity.

This invitation is extended to us through the written Word, the Bible. Therefore Jesus urges us to search the Scriptures. "*They testify of Me,*"² He says. This Word is being made available to all people. The Christian world through the years has given the people of all races, in their mother tongue,

translations of the Bible that they may read for themselves and know that God reconciled the world to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, who was crucified for our sins.

This Christ Jesus also instituted the Christian ministry, which is to proclaim the message of the Cross wherever possible. These servants of the Lord are sent forth to plead with all people to come and find healing from sin, and to find salvation through the Cross.

They are to apply the Word to the particular needs of each individual, just as the doctor prescribes the specially prepared medicine to the ills of his patients. To the secure and indifferent - the Law is to be applied. To the sin-conscious and sin-troubled - the Gospel of forgiveness. To the sorrowing - the comforting promises of the resurrection and heaven. To the hungry and needy - the assurance that God will provide in due time and on time.

In our present age this invitation has reached an even greater multitude through the radio, television, and the internet. All this puts everyone beyond the pale of excuse.

2. All Is Ready

The invitation announces that all is ready. Salvation is a finished work. Altogether and completely Jesus has brought about the reconciliation. He has left nothing undone. Even the wedding garment was furnished to the guests that they might be properly dressed in the king's presence.

Christ's righteousness and holiness covers us completely and hides all our sins from the eyes of God. Looking at us when we are clothed in this righteousness, the Lord sees none of our sins. They have been paid for in full. Nothing has been overlooked to completely reconcile us to God.

This salvation is ready now. There must be no delay. We read in Hebrews 4:7, "*Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.*"

Salvation must be obtained and secured in this world. With death the door is shut. There is no second chance in eternity. "*Now is the day of salvation.*"³ Now all things are ready.

What is ready? The Gospel feast. What does it offer? What does it give? First of all, full forgiveness of all sins. We read in Romans 5:1, that *having been*

justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are acquitted of all our sins in God's court. We are free people in God's kingdom. This means that we live for Christ and in Christ. We live the abundant life in grace.

God who first loved us we serve willingly with all our hearts and with all the strength that is in us. We have found that contentment of heart which makes us unafraid of the future, for we have a hope which assures us that after life's journey a glory awaits us which is eternal. There we shall live in Christ's presence forever.

In short, salvation consists in having and enjoying a personal forgiveness of all sins, so that we can live the abundant life in Christ and have heaven as our final home.

3. Some People Made Light Of The Invitation

If all this is ours by the grace of God, why do so many people ignore the invitation to come and enjoy the blessings of the Gospel? Seemingly they do not want to give the time it takes.

The enticements of sin and the allurements of pleasure want to make us believe that the broad way of the world is more rewarding than the narrow way that Jesus leads us on to eternal life.

What Paul says of Demas holds true of many today: *“Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica.”*⁴ Therefore we excuse ourselves with being too busy and fail to come, even though Jesus so graciously calls us to Himself.

They made light of it. *“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.’”* Undoubtedly he had seen the field a number of times before he bought it. His excuse belied the facts. The man was not interested in the invitation.

He had bought a field, and he wanted to glue his eyes on it, rub his hands, and say to himself that he had made a good buy. To him it was an easy excuse; an easy way out. Oh, the convenient alibis we find when asked to read our Bible and to worship on Sundays!

¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' In all probability he had examined the oxen a number of times before he bought them. He had tested their strength and endurance and knew that he had made a good deal. However, it was a big event in his life. Five yoke of oxen! That makes 10. That is big business.

When the sale was completed, he smugly considered himself smart. Therefore he must look over his animals again and again in smug satisfaction. So he begs to be excused, and the alibi seemed reasonable and made sense — yet it showed an obsession.

We of the 21st century likewise have this obsession of doing big business. This demands complete concentration on things being done, keen insight, and shrewd calculations. There is a conflict between the demands of business and the demands of Jesus.

Jesus places the soul first. *³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?* Jesus thinks more of the living individual than of dead fields and dull oxen. However, business thinks more of profits than human souls. Souls are dirt cheap, and often people are heartlessly and mercilessly sent away. Why have them around if they do not bring in business.

We can see a person grow rich, but we are often too blind to see a person develop in Christian faith and nobility of character. Therefore the nobler things are brushed aside for dead fields and dull oxen.

4. Excuses Are Revealing

We cannot hide behind buying fields and testing oxen without revealing the true state of our heart and mind. When we make light of Jesus' invitation to read and hear His Gospel, we definitely show that we have other interests which are more important to us.

Looking at dead fields and dull oxen, we shut Christ out. We close the door on Him. He does not come into the focus of our eyes. We do not see Him at all. This is revealing. It shows that we are not thinking straight; that we are not giving the proper evaluation of things.

Anything which closes Christ out of lives is slaying the soul. Such an attitude reveals that we get more thrills out of fields and oxen than out of the joy

of forgiveness. That we get more satisfaction out of adding field upon field, house upon house to our estate, than we derive from the peace which comes through the Cross into our hearts.

For many of us fields and oxen are more exciting, just as gambling is to many people more thrilling than digging. Therefore reading the Scriptures, worshipping God, coming to the Lord's Table are given secondary consideration.

However, Jesus demands complete surrender to Him. He will stand for no compromise. He tolerates no lukewarmness. Remember what God says in Revelation 3:16, ***16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.***

He also gives no room to indifference, falsehood, or error. He demands that we go all out for Him, abide in the truth, defend the truth, and hold fast to the truth. He forbids us to add or take anything from His Word.

He warns us against the cunning devices of man and the traditions which distract from the real issues of salvation. Constantly we must be on guard lest we compromise with the world in our Christian thinking and living. On all sides we are tempted to sacrifice uprightness, truth, honesty, and decency.

Jesus is looking for spiritual and moral pioneers. The line of least resistance is taboo in His kingdom. So often we say: This or that church member does this, why shouldn't we? Whole groups will say in the church: That group can do so and so in their church, why shouldn't we?

Jesus demands that we become pioneers in resisting evil influences and tendencies in our day. He pleads with us to forget ourselves in our services to Him and God. He demands that we be different. We are to refuse to live on the low level of the world and are to set our heart and affections upon things which are above.

For many people these demands are too great. The love of the world is so appealing and so promising. When the invitation comes to follow Him, many people excuse themselves and go on buying fields and testing oxen. Do we too?

5. Living Dangerously

Hiding behind the excuses of buying fields and testing oxen is dangerous. If we do this, we are going around the curves of life at 180 km an hour — headed

for eternal destruction. There is no greater hazard to life than the divided heart. No man can serve two masters.

Those who try it come to ruin in spite of the lip worship they give to Jesus. After all, oxen and fields are temporary. Even the fields, which seem more permanent than the oxen, shall be taken from us in death. Fields and oxen sustain the body but can never nourish the soul. Without the Gospel of peace in Christ we shall die in our sins and perish.

The conclusion is, that the host on being rebuffed said, ²⁴ *For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper*²⁵ We ask: Will we be so discourteous to Jesus, who gave His very life to obtain eternal life for us, and then refuse to heed His gracious invitation?

Jesus likewise says that those who make light of the Gospel and turn from it shall not eat with Him at the heavenly feast. They shut the door upon Christ in time, and therefore they are closed out of the glory of eternity.

Truly we take a hazardous risk when we neglect our soul's salvation. Therefore let us not make the buying of fields and the testing of oxen the chief concerns of our lives.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:33, ³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* We need food, clothing, and shelter, but we need more than these — peace with God through the forgiveness of sins, joy in believing that Christ died for us, the hope and the assurance through Christ's resurrection that heaven is our eternal home.

To those people who are faithful till the journey's end Jesus promises that they will sit down with Him in the glories of eternity to enjoy fully the abundance of heaven with Christ and all saints and angels.

Let us conclude with this word of Scripture, *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*⁶ Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Timothy 6:10

² John 5:39

³ 2 Corinthians 6:2

⁴ 2 Tim. 4:10

⁵ Luke 14:24

⁶ Revelation 2:10