

now they would never do anything else but refuse—rejecting the invitation, making excuses for not accepting the goodness of the rich man had become a habit which they would not break.

That same thing can happen to us. We hear about the love of God over and over. We hear His invitation to come and see that He is good. “O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Ps. 34:8). But we find excuses why we do not come, we continue to sin, we continue to want our own way and to live independent of God. We refuse to come to the Feast of feasts that He has prepared for us, even the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Conclusion: May we not make excuses to reject the Love of God but rather willingly accept that love and forgiveness and graciousness and humbly enter into the banquet. We need to be ready to hear and to respond positively to these words of our Lord Jesus “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34). Who in their right mind would refuse such an invitation? Only those who have long practiced to refuse it by rejecting God’s love in Christ Jesus over and over again and refusing to repent, to obey, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

At the end of our parable Jesus states that many are called but few are chosen. We might rephrase this; God loves all, but only a few accept that love. Will you find an excuse to once again refuse or will you accept His gracious invitation today? *Amen!*



Refusing Love

“God invites us to His banquet, . . . even works hard to persuade us to come in, but He does not force us.”

Homily given at All Saints Orthodox Church on
the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers of Christ,
2008 by Fr. Nicholas Sorensen

The Lord spoke this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But, one by one, they all began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.' For many are called, but few are chosen." (Luke 14:16-24)

Introduction: There are two main characters in this parable: the man who gives the banquet and the people who are invited to the banquet. The parable is a picture of God and Mankind, of God's love and man's free will, and of the danger of continuously refusing God's gracious invitation to the banquet.

I. The Goodness and Love of God

The man is doing something out of the goodness of his heart for people. He wants to give them a gift. He loves them and wants them to come to his banquet. He works hard to prepare it for them because he loves them.

The rich man is an example of God. He loves us, and He loves us always, even when we sin and are disobedient and reject Him. He is at work to do only good for us. He prepared the world for us, He is preparing heaven for us. He is at work in all things to bring about good for us. Out of His great love for us, He even became a man and lived among us, suffered, died, and rose again. He doesn't just love a few, He loves all, for He is Love. No one whom He has created is not loved by Him. "For God so Loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

II. The Free Will of Man

In our parable the focus shifts rapidly from the rich man

to the people whom he has invited to his banquet. These people for whom the banquet was prepared must accept the invitation to come and eat and enjoy. But they refuse to come. They make all sorts of excuses. The rich man does not force them to come, he invites them. Whether or not they come to the banquet and enjoy the goodness of the rich man is up to them. Even those who are invited, after the first ones refuse to come, have the ability to say no, to refuse to come in to the banquet.

That's the way that God deals with us too? God invites us to the banquet, to receive His good gifts, to receive His love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, His healing, His peace, His joy. God even works hard to persuade us to come in, but He does not force us. He created us with free will and He will not violate this. We are not puppets with God pulling the strings, we are His creatures, created in His image, with the ability to choose good or evil, right or wrong, to accept His invitation or to reject it, to accept His love or to turn away from it.

III. The Danger of Refusing God's Invitation Too Many Times

In our parable, Jesus was referring to the Jews who were given many, many invitations to receive and to experience God's love. But instead of accepting the invitation they rejected it and refused to come in. They were disobedient, sinful and seeking independence from God. They even killed the prophets and God's messengers who carried the invitation to them. Jesus spoke these words: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling." (Matt 23:37). Even though they did not come, God continued patiently to invite them—over and over and over again.

However, there is a danger in refusing the love of God too many times. Just as in our parable, those who were first invited and refused would never taste of the banquet. This was not because the rich man would refuse to let them in, but because they had refused to come so many times that