



## **When The World Gets In The Way - Part 4**

### **Worldly Busyness & Godly Obligations**

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Luke 14:15-24

Well imagine for a moment that I have a present for you. A big present, it's a present I've saved up a lot of money to purchase for all of you. It's an all-expense paid trip to the Four Seasons in Maui, Hawaii. I've not only paid for that for all of you, we're going to fly first-class, I've worked hard to make sure that everything once you get there is absolutely free. All the boating is free, the golfing is free, the horseback riding is free, the tennis is free. All the food is free. Everyone's got master suites, only the best ocean views for everyone. It's awesome. I've already called, I went through the roster early this morning, called everyone's boss to secure the time off. You have time off so everyone is going to be fine, as a matter of fact, whatever bonuses or you know accounts whatever you might have missed in terms of monetary gain while you're gone, I've gone ahead because I've worked so hard to save all this money for this gift for you, I've gone through everyone's value in terms of their job and I've piled up cash on everyone, when you check into your room, you'll find there little coffee table in front of the sofa in the master suite, you'll find a pile of cash that I've quadrupled really what you would have missed out on here, I've got four times as much cash for you to spend any way you'd like. I've even called all the chefs to go on ahead, I want to leave this afternoon by the way so the chefs are already inflight to Maui and they're America's greatest cooks and they're going to work really hard to create and put together some of the most amazing dishes you've ever eaten. Of course there will be the beef and the pork and the chicken, there will be all of that but they've got some amazing meals planed. You've got the fresh fruit, the papaya and the cantaloupe and pineapple and it's going to be amazing and of course they told me they're going to put together some of the most scrumptious and amazingly delicious Hawaiian Bread that you've ever tasted. It's going to be great. Anybody in on this? Want to go? That'll be good. (02:34)

Well we're leaving this afternoon and so what we're going to do after the service is over we'll kind of mingle and if you just kind of stick around a little bit out on the patio by the coffee and donuts out there and just get ready because then I'll announce through the speakers on the patio some instructions for you that we will have to carry out. And while you're out there you might realize just what a great gift this is. You might hear someone say to you, you know how blessed we are to have a pastor like this. Take us to Hawaii, I mean it's amazing, how blessed we are, just so blessed everyone that will be there at the Four Seasons eating that Hawaiian Bread this afternoon, man. How good we've got it. (03:15)

Well if you read ahead in our passage you know there is someone at the lunch after church when Jesus is there in that meal, after he's healed the sick man, after he's talked about, you know, not scurrying for the prominent places at the table after he's challenged the host to consider his motives in calling a dinner together. There's someone now after he speaks about the resurrection, saying you know why don't you do things that you don't expect anything in return for and you know what? God will repay you at the resurrection of the just. And someone breaks out in the middle of this lunch and says, "How blessed are those who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. It's going to be great!" (03:55)



And then Jesus responds in a way you wouldn't expect. He doesn't say, "It will be great!" Like you might expect if you were on the patio, if you said, "How great it's going to be, how awesome this is, it's going to be fantastic." You'd expect everyone to go, "Yeah it's going to be great." And if I walked out there, you'd probably say, "Yeah it's going to be great." But Jesus doesn't say that. As a matter of fact, Jesus tells a story, a story that's quite convicting. A story that's a little bit confusing if you read it too quickly you might miss the point all together. It's a story about those who aren't going to be eating bread at the table and you can tell by the way he tells this story, it's directed at them. It's directed at the man who said this, "Oh, it's going to be great" and it's as though he's not even going. (04:37)

It's not what you would expect because you would think that anyone who wants to eat bread in the kingdom is going to get to bread in the kingdom, particularly if our Sunday School lessons as children was right, but it's all of grace and it's a free gift of God and who wouldn't take that gift? And certainly, if you understand anything about the afterlife and what God offers, I mean if it's there and it's free, it's a free gift, I mean we're all in, and lets just take it. And that's why by the way most people, even if they don't go to church, 90 to 92 percent of the people in our country they believe in God. And if you ask that 90 to 92 percent, are you going to go to heaven when you die? I've given you these stats before, 99 percent of them will say, yes. (05:19)

And if I ask you, in church on a Sunday morning, with Bibles open, "Hey, are you going to go to heaven when you die?" I mean unless you had a really bad Saturday night, I mean our odds are going to be better than the non-Christians sitting at home reading the paper or on the golf course. You'll say, "Of course I am. I'm on God's team." Remember this was a lunch after church so to speak. They're done with the synagogue, it's the Lord's day, it's the Sabbath and they are there and they are having this meal and Jesus now is saying to a man, who's all hyped up about going to the kingdom of God and having the great feast, and he goes, "Let me tell you a story. Maybe you don't understand what's involved in this." Let's read this together and then think through why Jesus responds in such an unexpected way. (06:06)

Starting in verse number 15 of Luke 14. Luke chapter 14. This is the fourth scene that we've looked at in this one lunch setting. He's talked about his binding in terms of his conscience regarding obeying the scriptures and it doesn't matter what their expectations are, he's going to heal the man with edema. He's talked about humility verses pride. He's talked about motives and rewards. In the middle of that lingering thought about the rewards in heaven it says when one of those who reclined at table with him, heard these things he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Verse 16, but he, Christ, said to him, the man who said that, "Let me tell you a story. A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at that time, for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who have been invited, 'Come for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. To the first he said, 'I bought I field, I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another, 'I bought five yoke of oxen, I most go examine them, please have me excused.' And another said, 'I've married a wife and therefore I cannot come.' So, the servant came and reported these things to his master. And the master said, "Well, I understand that, I mean people are busy, I get it, we'll just postpone the party." Because he's an affable, giving, generous master. Is that what it says there? (07:37)

That's why it's good for you to follow along while I'm reading the Bible so I don't read it wrong. The master of the house became angry. And he said to the servant, forget them then. Right? "Forget it, go out quickly to the streets and the lanes in the city. And if these people, these guests of mine that I want to come are full of excuses and will not come, well go out quickly to the streets and the lanes of the highway and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame." Apparently between verse 21 and 22 they did that. The servant said, "Sir what you've commanded to do we've done." It has been done and there's still room. And the master said to the servant, "Go out to the highways and the hedges and compel the people. Go beyond the city streets, get outside into the countryside and compel the people to come in that my house may be filled. For I tell you" – it would be good for you to underline you there because so often, I mean at least most of the time we have great transaction, but so often we're translating from the Greek language very precise to the English language we miss those second person pronouns whether they're plural or singular and unless you're reading the Alabama version you don't know, because we don't know whether it's for I tell you or I tell y'all. And if the Alabama version and we're reading the Greek properly we understand it's for I tell y'all. And if you look back to the antecedent to that pronoun and try to get this into a bubble speaking, bubble off the master then the pronoun doesn't match the noun because it's not a bunch of servants, he doesn't say that the master says to the servants, it's singular so we're no longer talking about the master saying something to the servant. Here's Jesus now injecting himself into this conversation, when he says, for I – Jesus – tell y'all. Who's that? The people listening to this parable - none of these men in my story who felt so invited and privileged and entitled to this dinner, none of these men who were invited shall taste, now we have to make consistent here, the pronoun, if the pronoun I is Jesus then the pronoun my is Jesus. And Jesus says something amazing here, talking about the great banquet in the kingdom of God. It's Christ's banquet. They're not going to taste my banquet. They won't get a taste of that sweet bread. It's not going to happen." (09:56)

Now this is the last time Jesus gets invited to have lunch with the Pharisees and we understand why. Someone wants to finally say hey we're not like the Sadducees, who don't believe in the afterlife, we're on the page with you Jesus. You're talking about the resurrection and rewards, we're all on that page. Hey, praise God. How great it'll be for people who get resurrected and eat dinner there in the kingdom, now that's going to be awesome. And he goes, "Um, ah, I don't think you're going." "What do you mean you don't think we're going?" Even non-Christians think they're going to heaven, of course we've just gone to synagogue this morning, we're having lunch after church and of course we're going." Well it all comes down to the first three verses, let's start to understand the problem. (10:35)

Verses 15 through 17, we're going to make some distinctions, try and think through some, what can be nuanced distinctions between the way people presume upon their entrance into heaven and the way that God would expect us to put our faith in Christ so that we will go to heaven, take a look at the difference. Let's start in verses 15 through 17 and revisit that. (10:56)

A man there at the table, great, I'm all in, it's going to be great, everyone should be really excited about everyone eating bread in the kingdom so it's a blessed group to be a part of. I mean let me just tell you this story, there's a great banquet and invited many. Now those who were invited were assumed that they would come, and I'm assuming even in this story that there's a tacit approval that they are going to come. They've given some kind of head nod to this, yeah,



okay, we're going to come. But at the time the banquet was ready, remember I've taught you about these ancient near eastern banquets, the real big banquets, could last for three, four, five even ten days we learn in the inter-testamental writings about these long banquets. I mean this could be a weeklong event. It's a lot like a trip to Hawaii and a big luau and a bunch of feasting and I mean this is something that could last a long time, it takes a long time to prepare and now it's time to have the banquet. The servants are going to go out now, speaking for the master, and they're going to say this, bottom of verse 17. "Come for everything is now ready." It's time for us to pick up your walking stick to load up the supplies you might need on this trip and put them on your camel, your donkey, to get your wife, get some sandals on your kids, get everybody packed, get them a little snack for the traveling because we're going to go to the rich side of town and we're going to go to this big banquet so everyone get their stuff ready because we're going to the banquet. Right then is the test as to whether or not you are willing to put your good intentions of being a part of this banquet into action because the master has sent word through the servant it's time to go. (12:22)

It'll be like back to my silly story, I'm going to take you all to the Four Seasons in Maui. And you know what I want you to do is linger on the patio until you hear me on the loud speaker say, "I've got some instructions for you and it's going to start with some instructions to lead us over to, what we call 120 West, our big High School auditorium across the parking lot. And we're going to go over there and there's some forms to fill out and there's tables there and they've got some of our staff people ready to help you fill out these forms because we need these forms filled out. And then we're going to move from 120 West to 120 East our Junior High auditorium, we're going to move over there, they've got some things that we need to talk about in terms of you going home and getting your suitcase packed and what we need you to take, what we don't want you to take. And then we want you over in our kid's chapel, our Compass Room over there and we're going to move into that building then and we're going to say Pastor Mike is going to be there and he's going to give you instructions about some things we're going to do on the way. And since we're all flying first class and things about getting on the plane and situated and we're just going to need to know some of those instructions so when you hear me through the loud speakers on the patio, it's time for you to come over to 120 West, to the High School auditorium and start with the process of filling out the forms, and we're going to go get ready to go. Because we're going to go this afternoon, I've got buses to assign you to, they're going to be in the parking lot, just lots of things to get ready for. So, when you hear that, then let's go." (13:35)

Now we're not on the tarmac of the airport, we're still here. But when the instructions come down for those that are going to Hawaii with me, it's time for you to interrupt whatever you're doing and get ready to move through the process that ends at the Four Seasons in Maui. You maybe though, chomping on a really good tasting doughnut and your coffee was really tasting good this morning and you hear on the loud speakers it's time for everyone who's going to Maui to move over to 120 West and you say, "Well, not right now." That decision to disregard the directives of the master who's taking you to his banquet is the decision that proves whether or not you're going to end up at the banquet. Now this whole doctrine is very hard for people to process, particularly people like me who grew up in churches and a generation where everyone is concerned about the cult groups adding good works on the wrong side of the equation thinking that if you do enough good works you'll get saved and therefore in pulpits across the country people kept talking about you know it's all about grace. It's all about grace. And it is about grace



because there's no way you can save yourself. There's nothing you do that can contribute to your salvation. There's no good work that'll earn you a place and a seat at that banquet, nothing. But because we drop any discussion about good works, unless it was some seminar about the cult groups, we don't understand that when you come to a situation, while you're still on the patio of this facility, and you choose in that situation to disregard the master's instructions that leads you on a path that gets you eventually to the Four Seasons, you show that you're really not part of the group that's going. And that's the difference between being well intentioned and being obedient. If you want to make a distinction on your notes this morning, let's start with this one, number one, distinguish between obedience and good intentions. (15:26)

## 1. Distinguish Obedience from Good Intentions

You need to distinguish obedience, that's what you do when God asks you to do one of many things that he asks you to do in his word that are not about you sitting there in a grave being called out by an angel to kind of be reminiscent of a, you know, Jack Chick, Crick Tract if you even know what that means. Two of you? No one? Okay, I'm by myself on this one. And you're called up and you're going to go up and you die, your spirit is leaving and now do I want to go to heaven? Do I want to go to hell? Well, I want to go to heaven, well here are the buses leaving to heaven. Well, okay I want to get on it. That's not the decision, non-Christians have that in their mind, of course I want to go to heaven and I don't want to go to hell. And since most people in our country and in our culture, believe in heaven and in hell, of course they're going to say, "Well, if it got down to it and the plane is leaving, I want to get on the plane and go." But there's a whole process of things that God expects us to do on the road to heaven and every time you hear the master call, it gives you a choice to prove whether or not you're in the group that's going. And if that sounds unbiblical, let me give you some examples. (16:28)

Psalm 23. In Psalm 23 it ends with this, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. That's how it ends. You know how verse one starts? The Lord is my Shepherd. The Lord is my Shepherd. Now I'm in this group and I'm in this flock and I'm following the master and I'm going to go down this path and I'm going to end up dwelling in the house of the Lord forever. This little pathway being led by the Shepherd is what I'm calling the godly life or in the New Testament, the Christian life and it's going to end up in the kingdom. But what I recognize is that the Lord is my shepherd, I'm going to follow him. He may take me to a place, and I want to pass quickly through it and he's going to make me lie down in green pastures. And he's going to lead me beside still waters, or to be more specific and drop the analogies. He's going to lead me in paths of righteousness for his namesake. And then sometimes he's going to take me on paths I don't want to go down, and I'm thinking I don't want to go down to 120 East. I've been in there, I've seen it, it's a mess, I don't want to be in that building. But though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me. Now those are defensive tools to bat away the wolves, I understand that. But they're also corrective tools, especially that rod, that short stick that was in the belt of the Shepherd. And if that lamb was straying away, that stick was used to wrap that lamb on the nose, bam, bam. You've got to stop doing that, get back with us, it's dangerous out there, follow us. And in the end, that's the thing, they enter the house of the Lord. Well you follow the Shepherd to the banquet, that's how it works. (18:08)



This is a good one to jot down, John chapter 10 verse 27. Jews recited Psalm 23 for centuries, the Lord is my Shepherd, Yahweh is my Shepherd. Jesus comes on the scene in John 10 and he says this, "I am the good Shepherd." He talks about the reality of him being the one calling the shots and he is in charge just like he says in our passage that it's his banquet. And when it comes down to the Christian life he defines it this way in verse 27. This is a great text. My sheep, my group, my flock, they hear my voice, I'm giving them direction, I know them, we have relationship. Do you know the rest of that verse? And they follow me. See the definition of real sheep who are going to enter into the banquet hall are those that when the servant comes and says, "Come on, the master says let's go." They're willing to drop what they're doing and follow. They're willing to go through the matriculation process of 120 West, 120 East, Compass Room on the buses, to the airport, in the terminal, on the breezeway onto the plane. They go through the process. They walk to the kingdom because they follow the Shepherd. Now your neighbor doesn't do that I assume because the Shepherd is saying things like do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the habit of some. But you should be gathering together to stimulate one another with love and good deeds and you should be doing that all the more as you see the day approaching. And they say, when I die I'm going to choose to get on the bus to go to heaven. If I see anybody with pitch forks and you know red skin and pointy things on their head, I'm turning away, I'm going to go to heaven. Well, it's way too late at that point because the Shepherd is calling the people that are going to enter into the banquet hall and he's saying, "Follow me. Follow me. Let's go." My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me. (19:59)

Simpler words of Christ. Matthew 7, he says not everybody in the flock that's hanging out with us is really in the flock. Matter of fact they're not sheep at all, they're just wearing sheep's clothing. He says, "You know the way you can tell a want-to-be-sheep?" Here's the next verse, you will know them by their fruits. Mix of metaphor I understand, but it's like a tree. A tree is going to bear the fruit that is organic and natural to its production. It is going to be, if it's an apple tree it produces apples. If it's a sick and diseased tree it's going to produce bad fruit. Real sheep are going to bear fruit. What does that mean? You'll know them by their deeds. That's how the passage ends up. You'll see their life and you'll know that when Jesus says you're my ambassadors, they'll say I'll take that seriously, if that's what you tell me I am. 2 Corinthians 5, I'm going to be your ambassador. If you say you should be good stewards of the gifts that God has given and use those gifts, and employ them in the service of the church. I know that's what you've asked me to do and so on my way to the great banquet, I'm going to do it. And every time I have the crossroads to listen to what the master says through the voice of the servants, codified in the scripture. I'm either going to obey it and listen and hear your voice and do it and prove that I'm sheep, I'm a real part of your flock. Or I'm going to disregard it for whatever reason and I'm just going to move on, and say, "Well, I'm sure I'll be on the plane. But right now, I'm too busy with this doughnut and coffee to go over to 120 West because it's not really a good time for me right now." (21:32)

You may not see the decisions in your life that you make every day as a journey, a pathway, some kind of line that matriculates you into the kingdom. But that's how the Bible sees it. And the Bible says you've got to follow the shepherd and the shepherd will lead you into the kingdom. And we're afraid of that doctrine because we're afraid that somehow, we're adding good works to grace. You're not. But here's what James said, if you say you have faith but you have no works, can that faith save you? Answer? No. Even the daemons have that kind of faith.



It's not about you believing, not about you looking out for your interests, not about you being duh, I'm going to choose good over bad, it's about whether or not in the daily walk of your life you recognize that your agenda, as someone who's going to be at that great banquet, is going to make sure that you follow the voice of the shepherd. That's obedience, it's a resolve to do what the shepherd says. (22:27)

Good intensions won't cut it. Everyone in our culture that believes in God has good intensions about entering into the kingdom. And this man coming from church is part of a church group, certainly assumes he's going to be there and all of his friends sitting at this dinner are going to be there. And Jesus says you better make sure that if the servant comes and says something like follow me, you're ready to follow me. (22:51)

King Saul was an intension kind of guy. As we move to the middle of this passage, in Luke chapter 14 you start to see all these excuses in verses 18 through 20. Time to go, get your cane, get your walking stick, get your family together, get sandals on your kids, it's time to go across town to the big mansion and go to this dinner. But they started to make excuses. I bought a field I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. I bought five yoke of oxen I've got to examine, please have me excused. I have a new wife here, a newlywed I can't come. Excuses. Think of excuses I can't help but think of King Saul. When it comes to King Saul I recognize that his excuses are simply the symptom of a problem and so in this text when I hear preachers preach about excuses that's really not the point of this passage. It's about that last line in verse 17 when the servant says with the authority of the master, "It's time to go here." Are you willing to drop what you're doing and go there? Which is why the next section we're going to look at starting in verse 25 will make this super clear. All the way to the end of the chapter. We need to realize that it's time for us to obey and not try to wrap our disobedience as the reason we can't do exactly what God asks us to do because we've got a lot of other things going on in our lives. I understand we all have a lot of things going on in our lives. (24:14)

We have a lot of desires, we have a lot of interests, so did Saul. Saul told to go out and kill the Amalekites, who were the regional bad boys, really bad, they were as bad as the Canaanites. Really from God's perspective who were sacrificing their children to Molech and all the ancient gods in Canaan. Here was Saul, told to do what Joshua was told to do, and that is to use his military army to go and be an instrument and an arm of God's justice and wipe out these horrific people. Go kill the Amalekites and take all their stuff, just like Joshua, and devote it to destruction. And that means when you go into the towns and the villages, nothing are you to keep. I know it'll be tempting, just like the Canaanites were very rich. It was tempting as they went into the Beverly Hills of the ancient world. And they recognized these people are to be judged. We're there as an army to judge them on behalf of God, all the stuff that they've got is to be destroyed. So, when I walk into a big mansion in Beverly Hills and I'm saying it's time for this to be devoted to destruction. If I see a nice Rolex on the counter, it doesn't matter, I've got to destroy it. If I see the keys sitting next to it with little Ferrari emblem on it and I recognize there's a nice red Ferrari in the driveway when I walked in, you've got to leave it and destroy it. (25:23)

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It was hard for the rif-raf Israelite, Achan, do you know the Bible story? Well you say, "I've got to have some of that stuff." So, he goes out and hides it under his tent. Now look at the same



exact scenario going on in 1 Samuel with Saul and the Amalekites. He's the king. He's told to go wipe out the Amalekites and he comes back and he's got the trophy which is the king and he's going to keep him and humiliate him just for his own sake of importance and superiority in the ancient near east. And then he's got all the Ferraris and Porsches and you know all these beautiful, you know, very expensive things that came. All the bounty of the Amalekites behind him as he's coming back from battle. Now he was told to destroy everything. And Samuel the prophet shows up and says, "Did you do what God asked you to do?" And of course, his answer was, "Yeah" and then that classic line, he says, "Well what's this bleating of sheep that I hear in my ears?" I hear the roar of Italian sports cars. Why are they in the parade here? I don't understand. And he thinks on his feet, and really the passage in 1 Samuel is not about excuses just like this passage isn't about excuses but he had one. What was it? "We're going to sacrifice them. We're just going to drive them back and we were just going to put them on an alter and burn them to the Lord, you know. You know then some of it's going to go to help the worship center and kind of help you holy guys because it'll go into the offering. I'm just trying to do something nice for the Lord." (26:55)

Now do you believe that for a minute? I don't, and even though it was not true, just to play along with this, here's Samuel by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, giving us a classic line. He says, even if that was true to obey is better than sacrifice. It would be better for you to do what God said regardless of your stupid excuses about how you know, somehow I just realized it's more important for me to keep talking and having this conversation, seems to be a good conversation with my doughnut and my coffee and I don't think I should leave this, this is kind of important. I know I heard through the speakers that it's time to move onto 120 West but right now, I just don't think it makes sense. And I just want to make sure that Pastor Mike is happy by the way I kind of deal kindly with the people on the patio so I can't do what he says. (27:42)

Excuses isn't the problem, excuses are the symptom of the problem and the symptom is, you love what you're doing more than you love the obedience to the voice of the shepherd. That's what's going on here. And here the host says it's time to go and you're saying, "Nah, I've got stuff to do." Now if you look at this passage, three excuses, I mean through the ages people try to make a lot of the distinctions between those but I don't think that's the important part of this passage. I've got a field, you've got to buy fields, if you're investing, yoke of oxen you need stuff to do your work in an agrarian society, you get married of course domestic priorities that's important but what's the point? Whatever it is in this world that you're involved in, it cannot be such an involvement that when the master says it's time to move, it's time to go, it's time to do X, Y or Z. That you say I can't because of all these things. You've got to have a certain detachment from your involvement in all those things. (28:35)

Now there has been a segment of the church, a subset of the church that's tried to be so detached from the things of this world that they go and sell everything they have, they put on robes, they shave their heads, they go up to the top of mountains, they build monasteries and they try and sit there and wait until the return of Christ. That by the way is not an option for us if we're going to be obedient to the scripture. So, that's not the kind of detachment we're talking about. So, maybe back in Junior. High, back in the day when you use to tell us we're in the world but we're not of the world. Maybe we're on to something there. I mean, you've got fields to buy, you've got oxen that you need to work the field, you've got a wife you've got to care for and I understand all



that's real but you can't let any of those things be so entrenched in your life that when it's time for you to obey the master that somehow you make an excuse. Because everyone wants to go to heaven when they die. That's not the point, the point is it's time to matriculate through this building, onto that building, then I want you to do this, then we'll make our way there but just obey me. (29:33)

So, don't be too busy for that. Matter of fact that's more than busy, that's preoccupation with the things of the world, let's write it down that way. That'll be our second nuanced distinction, let's distinguish busy, which all of us are going to be, unless you're going to be a monk and you shouldn't be, from preoccupation. (29:50)

## 2. Distinguish Busy from Preoccupied

Distinguish those two. Are you busy? Of course, you are. You're here, living in South Orange County, you've got jobs, you've got mortgages to pay, you've got business, you know, dealings, you've got clients, you've got a family, you've got kids, little league, you've got soccer. You're busy, I'm busy, we're all busy, that's great. But you cannot be so preoccupied with the busyness of this life that there is some kind of roots that these things have in your life that make you someone that when the master says it's time to move over to 120 West, you go, "Um, umm, I'm kind of stuck here with this. I really can't right now." (30:23)

One passage I'd like you to look at in this regard, 1 Corinthians chapter 7. An oft misunderstood text but let's try to make sense of it here. 1 Corinthians chapter 7 that may help us. Let's start in verse 29, we'll read through verse 31. This is what I mean brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. 1 Corinthians 7:29. 1 Corinthians 7:29. This is what I mean brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, - there was no "Amen's" or anything after the reading of that verse, but it's an uncomfortable verse to read, is it not? Well I'm glad it's not a period there, there's a comma so whatever it means, I'm going to hopefully make sense of it, if I keep reading, because that doesn't sound like very good Christian advice. You don't hear that on Focus on the Family or Family Christian Radio. Right? So what does that mean? Verse 30 - and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, - now note the context here before we try to make sense of this. Paul is saying, you know, it would be good for you if you're gifted to be single, to remain single because domestic life will sure complicate your life and it can even be a distraction to you having a pure an undefiled devotion to Christ, able to nimbly move whenever he calls and do whatever he wants. Now here's the thing, you may not be gifted to be single, and if you can't be content as he starts the passage in chapter 1, well then great, go get married. But when you're married, be careful. And here's the balance. Get a wife, you get those kids, you got to live as though you don't have them. What are you talking about? Well, it's like when you're mourning, there's something that makes you really sad, you had a really bad week, it bums you out. Now that's true and there's something that should clearly you're going to respond as a human being and you're going to be sad, but you're not going to be sad like the other people that are sad. Like, this is it, sadness, ultimate sadness. Oh, and the other side of if there's something that makes you happy, you get a raise, you get a bonus or something big happens, something good happens and it's all worth celebrating, well you celebrate but you don't celebrate like they celebrate. And it



not as though it's all that big of a deal anyway. And then the goods you have to buy, I mean sometimes you have to buy some goods and you realize you have to get those goods, you deal with this world. You know it's not as though you even got the goods, it's not a big deal. And even that you think that doesn't help a lot I don't hear that on the Christian programs either. About well if you've got a wife make it like it's not a big deal. (32:44)

You know that's the best family advice I could ever give you. Because here's the thing, for those that have taken Christianity as some kind of gloss or icing on the regular secularized life. And say listen, for you to be a Christian, it's going to make everything in that family fantastic. It'll be so good. And that's really the epitome of Christianity is a perfect Christian family. All that does is substitute the reality of God for your family and when family is your God and let me tell you this, as I like to say. Your family makes a lousy god, lousy god. It'll disappoint you every time. Your wife makes a lousy god, your husband makes a lousy god, your children make lousy gods. And yet people worship at the altar of their family all the time. (33:28)

But you see when my wife is my god and my life is all about that, see then when things are good I'm like a really happy. When things are bad I'm devastated. And I can't handle the reality of my god not providing all my needs. And as my wife likes to say, I'm not going to enter into a relationship like two ticks without a dog, trying to suck significance out of each other because it's going to make for a terrible situation. So, I need to see my relationship with my wife, my relationship with my kids, the things that make me mourn, the things that make me happy, the stuff that I buy as though it's not that big of a deal. There has to be detachment because the whole premise of 1 Corinthians 7 is pure and undefiled devotion to God and if he calls, I go. And I don't say, "Well, I don't think he's going to make my family happy. And I'm really too bummed out to consider that because I'm grieving right now. You know I'm so happy I don't have time to do that, that might be hard." We don't deal with any of that. What's it going to do to my stuff, I just bought this new house. That doesn't really matter. You have to get to that place of detachment. (34:32)

Now before I read the next verse which I really want to look at, it's a very important verse, verse 31, I just want to call your attention to another verse. And if you're taking notes, jot it down, it's one of my favorites. Galatians chapter 6 verse 14, which is oft misunderstood as well, but the idea of how I'm supposed to live with this detachment. Here's what Paul says, Galatians chapter 6 verse 14, he speaks of Christ Jesus and he says, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. Now that is the principal that Paul is getting at in 1 Corinthians 7, it's dead to me and I to it. Now I'll be misquoted on this so don't hashtag this one on Twitter or anything. But the best kind of Christian husband I can be is if my wife is dead to me and I'm dead to her in the sense that she is not the kind of earthly priority in my life, nor are my kids, nor is my job, nor is my stuff, nor is the things that make me happy, nor the things that make me sad. They don't have their tentacles in my life that preoccupy me and that's what life becomes all about. I hold all those things loosely. And when there's disappointment, okay, it's not what it's about anyway. I'm ready to drop the conversation if need be and go over where God calls me. I'm ready to realize that these things are not perfect, they're simply things that I'm dealing with on this pathway and this journey to enter the kingdom of God and I'm going to do my best and I'm going to be my best because I guarantee I'll be a better husband when my wife is not my god and my kids are not my god, I'll be a better father. And when I go to work and I realize that's not the



end all of what life is all about, when I experience things and own things that are not what my life is all about, this is where I need to live. I'm dead in a sense to those things. You got to get all that in context, maybe a dumb illustration will help. You've already indulged me with a dumb illustration, let me give you another. (36:24)

We live in a big gigantic pool and in that pool, it's full of octopuses. I know you want me to say octopi but that's wrong. Octopuses. And they're everywhere. And if you go and kind of reacquaint yourself with the grossness and weirdness of these strange creatures that God made, you'll see sometimes, do an image search on Google, and you'll see sometimes they affix themselves to people when they're out swimming around. And people are taking pictures if this. And I'm kind of grossed out by that, these octopuses, I want to say octopi, octopuses come in all different shapes and sizes. And they're gross because God put these weird suction cups on the bottom of their tentacles and they can come around you and go thup thup thup thup thup. And they glom on to you. Now in my dumb illustration we live in this big Olympic size pool and we're all in here and you say I want to be away from all these, well you can't be away from them because commerce under water here all really it functions on the exchange and possession of octopuses so you can't get around it. Matter of fact if you want to do anything down there under the water, you're going to have to have some of these, you're going to have to exchange some of these and you're going to get paid in some of these and you're going to have them everywhere. Now here's another weird thing about my fanciful illustration. Doesn't matter if they're dead or alive so it would be better for you if you don't want the thup thup thup thup all over you, it would be good for you if you kind of detach these from you. You've got to have them in your life, but they're not going to glom on to you by killing them. So, take the dagger out of your little SCUBA suit and crucify these, and make these octopuses dead to you, and you'll be dead to them. And you still have to have them and you'll have to exchange them and you'll have to get them, and you'll have to live in there. But every time you come encounter one of these, you put it alter and you drive the knife in it and say, okay, new house, on the alter, drive the knife. New family, on the alter, drive the knife. New child, on the alter, drive the knife. (38:21)

See Abraham started to become a good father when he no longer idolized Isaac. See what I'm saying? I start to become the right employee when I don't idolize my job. I become the right husband when I don't idolize my wife. These are the kinds of things we ought to see about in my life being busy about the world's things, and I've got to be but I'm really not preoccupied with them. (38:44)

Now, verse 31, 1 Corinthians 7. He summarizes in one phrase, those who deal with the world, now that goes over family life, over mourning and grieving and rejoicing and being happy and having goods. Okay, we're dealing with the things of the world, now this phrase translates to one Greek word. As though they had no dealings with it. I guess there's the negation, may, so in Greek, you've got no and then you've got this one word, now I don't want to give you Greek lessons, unless there's something to be gained from them. So, here's something that I think if you've been around enough, some of you to know that little preposition, kata, whenever kata becomes a part of a compound Greek word, it's usually an intensifier, down. Kata is down, to intensify what comes next. Now the next part of that compound word that translates that phrase, although they had no, as an added word, dealings with it. Is the word chraomai. Chraomai is the word for using something, using something. So chraomai, using something, which comes by the

way, that's a cognate of the core word, the lexical word, the central word, the key word and the key word is the word chreia and that's the word for need, need. And when I need something, chreia, when I use something, chraomai, and then there's this word to describe what I shouldn't be like, and that is kata chraomai. Which means I shouldn't have this intensive use of things. Like what I really need, I don't really need it. I guess I need it, but I don't kata need it. Now this sounds like a real simplified way Jesus put it. He said, you know the pagans when it comes to all this stuff that you're tempted to worry about, they chase after all these things. I'm quoting now in Matthew 6, they run after them I think the ESV puts it. And the Lord knows that you need, you – there it is – chraomai them, not kata chraomai, he knows you need them. (40:43)

But you, why don't you worry about getting to the kingdom. Seek first the kingdom and its righteousness and then all these other things you need I'll take care of that. There will be food on the plane, don't worry about it. You'll get taken care of, don't sit out there saying you have to have those doughnuts right now. It's going to be taken care of. You seek first the kingdom which means you're responding to the righteous commands of the master through the servant, the pages of scripture, and you're willing to follow because you're not preoccupied with the needs. And those who deal with the things of the world, which is everybody, everyone has to, as though they didn't have to have it, as though, I like the way the other translations put it, they're not engrossed in them. I think the NIV put it that way. They're not engrossed in, they kata chraomai, I've got to have it. I want the tentacles of the stuff in my life not to bog me down. I want to throw off every encumbrance and the sin that's so easily entangles me, which means I can't be materialistic. I can't be running the corporate ladder and that's what my life is all about. I can't be mister family man and I mean this is what it's all about, I've got make every little league game. It's not about all that. I'm not asking you to be a bad father, I'm asking you to be a good father. I'm not asking you to be a bad employee, I'm asking you to be a good employee. But it comes when the world doesn't entangle itself in our hearts. Because what's far more important is you don't offend the Spirit of grace. I say that because James chapter 4 says it's so easy to do. The Bible is willing to call you and I adulteresses, not when we climb into bed with the world but when we're simply friends of the world. The passage if you know it, James 4:4, you adulteress people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God. Don't you suppose, don't you know the scripture speaks and says, "He who yearns jealously over the spirit he has made to dwell in us"? (42:38)

My point is this. You and I are going through our week and we're going to busy about the things of the world. We've got to put gas in our car, we've got to pay the mortgage, we've got to get another client, we've got to make our money, we've got to deal with our kinds, we've got to feed our family. All that is what we've got to do, be busy, fine, busy, we should be busy, but we seek first the kingdom which means none of these things engross us. I'm not preoccupied with the worlds things because if God asks you to drop it, you should be willing to drop it, no matter what it is. Now does this give us any examples of this, we're going to get to it in Luke 18, he's called the rich young ruler, remember him? He comes on the scene and has a lot of things and Jesus says, "Hey, listen you want to be in the kingdom, you want to eat at the great banquet? Well, what do you think you got to do?" "Well I think I've got to keep the commandments." "Great, you keep the commandments?" "Well, yes." "Well, what are they?" "Well, you know, love the Lord your God with all your heart, don't steal, don't..." Great, I mean you go to a lot of things in



that list that you give but really it starts with God being God. No other gods before me. “Now is that really true for you? I’m going to ask you, I’m going to prove this, right now. And that is I want you to sell everything you have, give it away and follow me.” And the rich young ruler probably has a lot of excuses going through his mind that we don’t hear about. He doesn’t dare give any and he looks down at the top of his sandals and he turns around and walks away sad. And Jesus says, “How hard it is for a rich man to obey my commands in the Christian life.” Is that what he says? No, but they’re inseparable, how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Here is someone on the patio who won’t put down his doughnut and his coffee to go to 120 West and Jesus says “How hard it is for people who are rich to sit and have bread with us at the Four Seasons in Maui. What? Do you see the connection? It’s everywhere in the Bible. If you’re not willing to obey the master, how in the world can you say you’re part of the flock that’s going to end up in the house of the Lord forever? And why couldn’t he do it, because he’s rich. And what was the problem of the rich man? He had so many octopuses all over his body and he wasn’t willing to crucify those. Because if they were crucified those suction cups would no longer be [thunk] and he’d say want these? Okay, sch, sch, sch. He couldn’t pull them off. How is the world sticking on you is what I’m saying. I mean it was a dumb illustration but maybe you’ll remember it at 5 o’clock tonight. Oh yeah, how’s the world sticking on you? Are you willing to detach your heart from these things? (45:12)

Yeah, I’m busy, you’re busy. The thing we can’t see is how preoccupied we are by those things but the test will be can you drop them all. Can you drop any of them? Can you drop whatever he tells you? Can you pick up whatever he asks you to pick up? Number 3, back now if you would to Luke 14, let’s start in verse 21. Servant came reported these things to the master and the master of the house became angry. Of course he did, this wasn’t for their entertainment. I know it’s put that way kind of because it’s a party, well it’s a party, well I’ve got work to do, I don’t have time for parties. Well, let me update my silly opening illustration. If I said listen, I’m going to take you to the Four Seasons in Maui, master suites for everyone, free everything, it’s going to be great, piles of cash there for you, it going to be good, I already called your work, but let me add this, I didn’t really need to call your work, because you know what’s going to happen tomorrow on the mainland? This asteroid is going to hit the mainland and it’s just going burn up to bits and so, but we’ll be in Hawaii so it’ll be alright for us. He gets angry not only because he’s like well I have a good party and I thought we’d all have fun. And it was like this is your salvation, you want to love the world, he constantly says this, the world is passing away. I mean if we keep reading in 1 Corinthians 7 that’s exactly what he says. Everything in this world it’s going to pass away. The kingdom is going to endure. You’ve got to recognize this is not an option. You don’t know how dumb this is for us to love the world and the things in the world because all these things are going to go away, they’re going to burn. So, we’ve got to make some decisions here. (46:51)

Go out in the streets quickly and get some more people, matters of fact get the people who wouldn’t even think they would be invited to this kind of dinner at the high end of town, with this nice banquet. I mean the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. Now we’ve done that, there’s still room, well than go, go beyond, go way out there. Get beyond and you can see this theme starting to emerge in Luke and it’s going to go right into the second volume of his work in the book of Acts where the Jews are like, Nah, nah, nah, fine we’re going to the Gentiles then. Get beyond the city, go to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house



may be filled. And the people that thought they were so entitled, they're not even going to taste my banquet. Now as the poor and the lame and the blind and the crippled are hobbling into the banquet hall, how are they supposed to feel about all this? Like I could be kicked out at any moment? No, as a matter of fact, if you start reading these comments about the flock and if you are in it, immediately God says if you understand what it is, to hear my voice and follow me, then you need a sense of security in your life and you see it everywhere. I mean let's quote again Psalm 23. He doesn't get to the end and it says, I might dwell on the house of the Lord, no he says surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (48:12)

Or how about this one? John chapter 10 verse 27, my sheep they hear my voice, I know them and they follow me. Next verse, and no one can snatch them out of my hand. They're secure. Now I know this about the Bible, it wants you and I to leave this church, to get into our cars and drive away from this property feeling secure that we are a part of the family of God and we will eat bread in the kingdom of God. God would like you to feel secure. But you have to distinguish what he wants of you, that humble, I don't earn it, I'm poor, I'm crippled, I'm blind, that kind of humble security is far different than how this conversation started in verse 15, with a guy busting out with, "How blessed is those who eat in the kingdom." Which clearly, he thinks he's entitled to this, this Pharisee at lunch. So, let's lastly make this quick distinction. Distinguish between secure and entitled. (49:04)

### 3. Distinguish Secure from Entitled

Distinguish between being secure, a biblical virtue, and entitled, a sinful presumption. They're very different. I want you to be secure, I mean how often, go back to the Old Testament, Isaiah 41, fear not I'm with you, don't be dismayed, I'm your God, I'll strengthen you, I'll help you, I'll uphold you by my righteous right hand. That's Isaiah 41:10. How about Hebrews 13:5? Be content, don't fear man, no, no, no, I will never leave you and I'll never forsake you. End of the great commission he says, "teach them to obey everything I've commanded and behold I'm with you always even to the end of the age." Does God want you to be secure that the shepherd is not going to bail on the flock? That he's not going to kick you out of the flock? Absolutely he wants you to be secure. But he doesn't want you to have the entitlement of the Pharisees. (49:50)

We're a lot like those in Malachi 1, and if you're taking notes that would be a good homework assignment. If you go to a home fellowship group be sure to read that passage before you go there. If you want to really catch the essence of this go get some others because the people that thought they should be there certainly are not even willing to follow the voice of the shepherd, you certainly haven't in Malachi 1. Here they are after the Babylonian exile, they built the temple, they're back to practicing the ceremonies and sacrifices and they're sitting there feeling awfully entitled to their favor from God and it showed by this. They brought the second best to God, they weren't going to give their best as the law had said, they were going to bring crippled and blind gifts. They brought their worst to God, and God said why don't you try and give that to your governor and see if he'd like you. And after all of that discussion, and revealing discussion, how about the fact that you don't honor me. A father gets honor from his son, a master gets honor from his servant, you don't even honor me, and I'm God. He says this, you know, my name will be held in high regard, it will be feared, it will be revered among the nations, pure



sacrifices will be offered. Incense, prayers, sincerity will come from worshipers from the East from the West my name is going to be honored. In other words, if you don't do it, if you don't humbly come to me, I'll get other people, because he's going to fill his banquet hall. (51:13)

There will not be an empty room at the Four Seasons in Maui. Every suite will be filled. And if we sit here presuming upon the grace of God, proving that we presume upon the grace of God by not being willing to do something that he asks us to do, whether it's simple as going to church every week, or serving in the church or doing whatever it might be as an ambassador in your workplace for Christ. Then he'll get somebody who will. And that's the point of this last section, which of course sucks all the air out of the room and he's like, well listen we have lunch next week, but you're not coming. You don't think we're going to be there. Jesus didn't give this real stinging rebuke to the dinner guests after church because he wanted to be mean to them but because he loved them. He only tells the truth because he wants people to see the truth and as he does in John 9, if you would just see the problem in your life then I'd give you the gift of sight. But you walk around saying you see and because you say you see, you don't recognize your blindness, you're going to stay blind. Don't be entitled presuming that you deserve it, that you're qualified, that's why the guest list shifts to the poor and the crippled, the blind the lame by implication in verse 23 the Gentiles, the Heathen, the Barbarians, the Scythian and the slaves they're all being rounded up for this banquet. And he says, "Those of you that think you're entitled, you're not coming to my banquet." My banquet, my banquet, yeah remember that plural pronoun there at the beginning of verse 24 he made it clear he's talking about his banquet. What's that called? Revelation 19, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Last mention of supper in the Bible. The Supper of the Lamb. It's a great banquet you don't want to miss it. (53:02)

But you will not participate in the supper at the end of the New Testament until you understand the supper at the beginning of the New Testament. We call it the Lord's Supper. It's the reason that poor and crippled and blind and lame people have nothing to offer God, get a seat at the table, because Christ earned the seat at the table for you. Just want to wrap up our time this morning by having you contemplate the first supper in the New Testament which we call the Last Supper which comes at the end of the ministry of Christ and beginning of God's New Testament to get you and I to think about what it takes to be qualified and that wipes away any sense of entitlement. I want to eat at the marriage supper of the lamb because I got qualified because I understand the reality beneath the Lord's Supper. Let's pray. (53:54)

God, if we have the experience ingesting these elements, these symbols of how much we want to be alive and associated with the benefits of Christ's death we pray by faith that you would make us the kinds of people that see sin the way that you do. We would recognize the high hypocrisy of saying that we are followers of Christ but when it comes to following Christ we see it as optional. God help us to be more like what we see in the scripture of those who know what it is, as hard as it might be to leave behind things to follow you and do that with a willingness as the Bible says, to have your commands not be burdensome to us. And Peter watching the rich young ruler walk away certainly felt superior at that point, we've left everything to follow you, instead of a rebuke from Christ you have us understand from your Son's response that nothing that we can give up, nothing that we can give up, that would ever rival what you've given up for us. You give us that sense that every sacrifice is one that's so appropriate and so pleasing to you that you're going to reward them richly. We can't even give a cup of cold water to someone in your



name without you saying I'm going to reward that. It's all going to be rewarded. So, God help us to hold the things of this world loosely and know that will make us better everything, employees, parents, spouses. But God when we fail this week and I pray it'll be less than last week, I pray we'll be quick to come back to this moment in our week, when we started our week celebrating the Lord's Supper. May it bring us great comfort and instill that humble security in our hearts knowing that we're going to be participants in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. God dismiss us after this song with a real sense of hope and joy that we don't just say it like that man in the story, hey it's going to be great. But we know we're participants because of what we've learned this morning from your word. In Jesus Name. Amen. (55:58)