

## 7 – “The Weightiness of the Kingdom” // Luke 14:15–26 // Kingdom Come

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**Happy Easter...** in my experience, believers are usually pretty excited on this day. So, I'll just give you a chance to express yourself... if you believe that Jesus really rose from the dead, and it wasn't some hallucination or big-fish story invented by power hungry monks in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but you really believe He was bodily raised from the dead, say Amen.

If you don't believe that, or aren't sure, that's OK. That's, in part, what today is about.

**Here's your Easter factoid:** When Christianity first began, Easter was not part of the first Christians yearly calendar.

- You say, “Why? Were they not excited about the resurrection?” Unfamiliar with those little peeps marshmallow things? No. They were excited about it.
- In fact, they were so excited about it they celebrated it *weekly*, not yearly.
  - The whole reason they worshipped on *Sunday* rather than Saturday was because that was the day Jesus had resurrected. Every week they thought about it... it was the whole basis of their worship!
  - The idea that they would only think about the resurrection of Jesus 1x per year would have been preposterous to them, because the resurrection was central to everything else they did.
  - In fact, the Apostle Paul said if it wasn't true, everything else about Christianity caved in on its head.
- In fact, the earliest Christians had a greeting for one another. They'd see each other on the street and one would

say, “Christ is risen;” and the other would say, “Christ is risen, indeed.” It was like people today would say, “Go heels.”

What I am going to do for you today is try and show you what Easter (the resurrection) means for you, personally. Most of us know Easter means something beyond the chocolate bunnies and marshmallow peeps (though those are good)... we know it's a significant religious event that happened 2000 years ago... but I want to show that the resurrection involves an offer to you of the most extreme importance—an offer which you've either accepted or you have not—in fact, **I want to show you that most people miss it because they don't recognize how important it is. They don't reject it outright; they just never give it the proper weightiness in their lives.**

*Recently I was at Target with my 2 oldest daughters. We were looking at some furniture pieces and I had left my shopping list sitting on 1 of the tables and I asked Kharis to run back and get it for me. Allie and I were going ahead just a few steps to the pharmacy. (It was a straight shot, wide aisle; I could see her the whole time.) So, I walk up the pharmacy and I turn around and I can't see her. She had mentioned something about going to the bathroom... so I go over there to check, even though it's not like her to not tell me. I ask the Target worker to go in and check for me. She comes out and says “There's no one in there.” At this point I'm still not panicked, though I can feel that little knot growing in my stomach... the Target worker says, “Are you missing your daughter?” I said, “Well, I'm not sure where she is right now,” thinking she and I might go retrace my steps. Oh no. Before I finished words in my sentence she is screaming on her walkie-talkie: “We've got a code yellow. Swarm, swarm.” The whole place goes into lock down, and this office door opens up and Target workers in red shirts come pouring out like they're piling out of ant colony. (I was like, “Where are all these people coming from?”) 30 seconds later Kharis comes ambling up... she had gotten distracted looking at a toy or*

*something. I was more embarrassed than anything. (I was like, "Everyone can go back to their lives; the story can reopen for commerce..."*

*But, you know, I'm actually grateful that they take a missing child that seriously. That's nothing to play around with.*

Jesus is going to talk to you why this issue of the Kingdom is such dire importance that it ought to trump everything else you're thinking about... **(Is God relevant? Jesus would say "Compared to God, is anything else relevant in your life: where you work, who you marry are all details compared to where you stand with God because those things are here for only a brief time and God is eternal)** and most people let it slip through their fingers not because they reject it outright they never give it the proper weight.

Last week in the story of the Prodigal Son we saw Jesus explain how important this issue is to God; this week He's going to explain how important it is to you.

To be clear, here's what I'm going to ask from you today at the end:

- I'm going to ask you whether or not you've ever really received Jesus' offer, and, if not, I'm going to give you a chance to do it.
- I'm also going to give you a chance to be baptized, today, if you never have. Baptism is like the public affirmation that you've received Jesus offer. It's like the wedding ring you put on. So, if you receive Christ, we're going to give you a chance to be baptized, today, before you leave. We've got a change of clothes for you and everything. Others of you received Christ a while ago, but never been baptized to show it publicly, and I'll offer you a chance to take that step you've been missing for so long.

**Luke 14:7** Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them,

[8] "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, [9] and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place."

[10] But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. [11] For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

- At first, this just seems like good, practical, social advice.... Right?
  - You get invited to the wedding of the daughter of your company's president. You get to the reception a little late, and you are looking for a seat. There are several seats available at various tables, but you notice some open chairs at **table 1**, where the bride and groom and president of your company are sitting, up on the little platform overlooking all the others. So, you go seat yourself there. *"Hi folks, beautiful wedding. Cheers. Can I ding the glass to get y'all to kiss?"* Well, someone then comes up to you and says, *"Sir, this seat is reserved for the president's friends... you're going to have to move. You don't belong here. There's a seat way back there for you..."* and he points not even to a table, but to the row of chairs sitting around the edge of the room. And we'd ask you not even eat until everyone is done... And so you begin the walk of shame... *"That dork thought he was the president's friend."* Pretty embarrassing, huh? Well, reverse that... say you come in and take one of those chairs, and someone comes to you... "Sir, the president would like you at his table." That's the walk of honor. (Or, kind of like in college I used to try and slip into an empty seat in 1<sup>st</sup> class... Guy looking at me. "Flight attendant would say, "Can I see your ticket?" Your seat is 58E." That's the walk of

shame). **So, take the low place and you can avoid embarrassment.**

- So, this is just good social advice, right... Almost seems like it's random, doesn't it? Jesus is telling us all these parables about the Kingdom and His mission then He throws this one in there. PRODIGAL SON; PRAYER; oh yeah, don't embarrass yourself at work...
- Well, it certainly is good social advice (and I don't want to overlook the fact that some of you would probably do well to heed it because you could probably really keep from embarrassing yourself in the future) but there's something much more important being taught in there that ties in to the next stories he's about to tell... so let's get to them.

[15] 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!"

- So, see, we're staying on the theme of eating at a party

[16] But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

- Real quick... I love the fact that Jesus consistently depicts the coming Kingdom of God as a banquet—a big party.
- The Gospel of John records that Jesus' first miracle was at a party where they ran out of wine... Jesus fixed the tap so that it gave out the finest wine anyone had ever tasted.
  - **Which is pretty significant when you consider the fact that Jesus' miracles were not just magic tricks...** they were signs, which means that each one gave a really important picture. So, why would His first sign of His mission be to fix a broken party? (Why not create a burning effigy of Satan in the sky or at least raise someone from the dead?)
  - His first miracle was fixing the tap at a party because His Kingdom is the restoration of the feast God had intended to throw for mankind.
  - You see, just about every world religion in world history has taught that there is something wrong

with this world—the world is broken: there is death and disease and family breakup and mental illness—but almost every religion teaches that there was a time when that wasn't true: the world was at peace.

- Jesus compares His Kingdom to the ultimate party: where our deepest desires are met and everything our heart has yearned for comes true.

[17] And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

- In those days, for really big feasts, there were always 2 invitations... they couldn't set an exact day because there were too many moving pieces... they had no electricity, so they had to catch and prepare all the food; guests from out of town weren't sure exactly when they would get there;
- So, there were 2 invitations. One telling you the general time the party was coming... and you'd RSVP, and if you did, when everything was ready they'd send out a 2<sup>nd</sup> invitation and say, "Everything is ready. Come now."

So, these people had all responded yes to the 1<sup>st</sup> invitation, but when the 2<sup>nd</sup> one comes, [18] But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'

- Question: Who buys a piece of property before they've seen it? And what's so important about it seeing it now that you can't wait? I mean—it is dirt. Is it going somewhere?

[19] And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them.

- And that doesn't make a whole lot of sense, either. Buying 5 yoke of oxen was a major investment, like buying a car today. Who buys a car without ever looking at it? "I just bought a car over the internet." "What kind is it?" I don't know. I need to go see it.
- That makes no sense.

[20] And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

- Right... because the last thing a new wife wants is to get dressed up and go to a nice feast and eat finger foods with a bunch of rich people. She'd much rather stay home, watch ESPN and eat foods that end in -itos: Cheetos, Doritos, tacquitos...

You see, these are pretty lame excuses.

[21] So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

- *What?*
- 2 shocking things about this story. The 1<sup>st</sup> is that the original people didn't come to the feast of this really important guy; the 2<sup>nd</sup> is that this guy would fill up his house with the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

[22] And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' [23] 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.'

- Now we go a step farther. Highway people; hedge people: In Jewish culture, that's a way of referring to outcasts. They were so outside of the pail they weren't even in the city. Prostitutes; people with rough pasts. Sinners.

[24] For I tell you, (Notice: Jesus switches now into the 1<sup>st</sup> person; He's been telling them a story up to this point, now He's pointing right at them talking about them) none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

- He's talking about the Jewish rejection of Him. The Jews were the ones who had been invited to God's party. The first invitation came through all the prophets who told them Jesus was coming, and they said 'Yes' to those prophets; but now Jesus is here and they're are 100 reasons

why they're not coming to Him—they're preoccupied with day to day life and getting married and making a living.

- So now, Jesus says, God is turning from them and sending this message out to the outsiders; to the Gentiles; because they will realize the incredible opportunity it is to be invited to the King's banquet.

(This really bothers Jesus, because look at what happens next. Vs. 25, it says that He turns to the great number following Him, and says,

[25] Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned to them and said, [26] "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

- 'Hate': Bible tells us to hate? No, Bible leads us to love. It's just that compared to the importance of Jesus, everything in our life looks like hate.
- This invitation is so weighty it trumps even our most intimate and important loyalties. Beyond just lame excuses, this invitation is so important it trumps *everything*.)

**OK: What Jesus does in this parable is show you the 2 reasons people usually miss the kingdom of God.**

### **1. Some fail to recognize the importance of the invitation**

The excuses given in this story are not outright evil (None of them were like, "Sorry, I can't come... I've got a drug deal I'm doing; I've kidnapped a little kid; I've got a dog-fight ring I'm running). No, they're not evil—it's just that these people didn't give any real weight to the invitation they are receiving.

All excuses are lame compared to how important this is. Even if these excuses sounded legitimate to you (you're like, "Come on now: The guy is closing on a real estate deal;" "he's got a new wife—wants to go on a honeymoon—sounds fair to me..."), they're

not legitimate when you weigh them against the importance of the invitation they are receiving.

- Example: Sometimes when I'm at my office I'll get a phone call... and if I'm meeting with someone else my assistant says, "I'm sorry; he's meeting with someone right now..." , Sometimes I'm just really in the zone, working on something, and my assistant will say, "He's really tied up and shouldn't be disturbed." These are usually legitimate excuses. Now, my assistant knows if the person on the end of the line says, "The President would like to speak to J.D.," she interrupts me. Or, "your wife is in the hospital." Or, "Harrison Barnes is coming back to UNC next year." These things all take precedence over what I'm doing.

**So, question: How important is an invitation from God?**

- If there is a God, and He is the Creator of everything there is, and every breath you take is a gift from Him, how important is a message or an invitation from Him? I mean, nothing exists without Him! He is the One who upholds everything; He invented the atom and the molecule and sits across the expanse of eternity... His opinion of your life is the only one that matters.
- I once heard Jack Welch (legendary of CEO from GE) say that the way to succeed in an organization is to figure out whose organization it is and how they keep score and then score. Well, this is God's universe and God's scorecard is really the only one that matters.

**So, if there were an invitation from God, wouldn't it trump everything else on earth?**

**Any excuse we could ever give pails in importance to the invitation we have received.** This is to be treated as a matter of life and death.

- I knew an atheist professor who once asks his class every year, "How many of you believe the Bible is the Word of God?"

Then he asks, "How many of you have read all of it?" Then he says, by way of comparison, "How many of you have read the Twilight books?" "I'm not so sure you really believe it's from God. Because, if it were, wouldn't you have read it?"

- I tend to agree with him. There are 2 kinds of atheists: There's intellectual atheists (where you don't believe God exists), and then practical atheism where you say you believe in a God but then conduct yourself like you don't. Both of them are atheism.
  - Now, some you guys say, "Well, I haven't read Twilight. I don't really read books." Fine. I know a lot of guys who can tell me all about their profession, or their favorite sports teams—you're tracking 9 different fantasy football teams—but you know virtually nothing about a book that you believe comes from God?
- Listen, I can understand someone who says, "I really don't believe in God. So, I don't give Him any weight in my life." That makes sense to me.
  - But what doesn't make sense to me are people who say they believe in God but then live like He's not really there. Don't give Him any weight.
  - Or people who are agnostic or flippant about whether or not He exists: "Maybe there's a God; maybe there's not... Who cares? That makes 0 sense."
  - **Adam from Duke.** Most of you believe in the resurrection, but it carries no weight to you. To follow Jesus means this becomes the weightiest matter in your life.

**Question: What if the things the Bible talks about are true?**

- The Bible teaches that all people will spend eternity in 1 of 2 places...
  - Heaven, a place of unimaginable pleasure and bliss. The party of all parties where everything you have yearned for comes true.

- And hell... a place that the Bible describes as real. *Jesus* describes as being a place of anguish and torment... Jesus, the most loving, tender Being to ever walk the earth. (Not OT angry God but NT loving God). *Jesus* told us that. He wasn't a hateful preacher. He told us that because He loved us; to warn us. **What if that was true?**
- **What if Jesus' death really had the meaning He said it did?** Suffering your penalty for sin... in your place. That He was brutalized; beaten; punished for your sin... He said "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes..." and you just treat it lightly or neglect it?
- **Sometimes I get notes here from people saying I'm too passionate... There's a reason I preach like I do.** I believe this stuff. How could I do otherwise?
  - Story I've often shared with our church: **Man standing on bridge.** I believe that's where I am and where you are.
  - When you understand what the Bible says, you have 3 choices... 1) a lot of people twist Scripture to make that happen. 2. This is more comfortable. 3. I preach it with all my heart and give my money and my time to getting it out there.

Most people miss Jesus because they don't realize the absolute weightiness of the issue. Jesus would go so far as to say that *it's more important than mothers and fathers and property and land and even children.* It's more important than everything! *The person who dies without God loses everything. The person who has God has the one thing that will matter in eternity.*

***Well, Jesus is teaching us something else in this story. He shows us a 2<sup>nd</sup> reason people miss God. Write this down:***

## **2. Some don't understand how willingly Jesus receives the unworthy**

Did you notice in this story who received the invitation and went to Jesus' party? The poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. This probably sounded absurd to the audience.

- Go get some street people; some poor; some homeless—bring them to my birthday party. What rich person would do that?
- Who do you invite to your parties? Other rich people; people who have accomplished something; people that can offer you something. People who have worthiness.

But God only invites the lame and the poor and the crippled because that's what we all are before Him... and a lot of people miss the invitation because there's something instinctive in us that feels like we have to earn our way there...

- Have you ever gone to one of those potluck dinners where you are supposed to bring something and you realize you didn't bring anything? How do you feel? You felt like you shouldn't eat? You didn't offer anything.
  - Used to happen to me all the time as a single guy. I'd show up at church and they'd have a potluck dinner and I didn't bring anything. I just learned to get over it and receive grace. After we got married my wife wouldn't let me do that anymore. If we don't bring anything we have to go home. Because we know we have to offer something to be worthy to be there.
- What Jesus has taught throughout the Gospel of Luke is that there is nothing we can bring. We are all the poor, blind, crippled and lame. You and I have sinned against God; we deserve God's condemnation. And anything we think makes us worth doesn't.
- We were in a condition that we could never fix ourselves.
  - It's like you were invited to a dinner at the White House and you show up with some microwave dinners. You really have nothing to offer.
- God's invitation to His feast was *grace*. Christ gave our acceptance to us as a gift that He earned for us.
  - The Gospel is that Jesus lived the life that we were supposed to live, the worthy life, and then died the

death we were condemned to die, and then offered it to us as a gift.

- And a lot of people miss that invitation, because that is too insulting to their pride.
  - We spend our lives trying to establish that we are worthy people, with something that distinguishes us above others.
  - Here's a truth that has been established for 2000 years: Those closest to the nexus of societal or religious power have always rejected the Gospel. They just find it unpalatable.
    - The idea that we are hopeless sinners who need a Savior and Jesus had to die a bloody death to save us... that's not what we want.
    - Saying we need to be born again sounds uneducated and backward...
  - We'd rather have a religion that just teaches us to live a good life; to be a social activist; to be generous; to be a better us; to live strong. So, as Christianity has gone mainstream, people have corrupted it to say just that.
    - But that's not the Gospel. The Gospel is that we have no worthiness. We were the poor, blind, diseased... and Christ died a bloody death in our place to save us because we are hopeless, and we need to be saved, rescued, born again. It may sound redneck to you but it's the Gospel.
  - The powerful almost always reject that, because they are proud and want to feel like they are better than, distinguished from, others, more common people.
    - But the marginal, the outcasts, the metaphorical blind and lame—they get it.
    - (How many places in the Gospels does it show us “the common people” listening to Jesus while the leaders, the powerful, the people of education and influence, rejected

Him? Jesus' crucifixion was a joint project of Roman (political) and Jewish (religious) power.)

- Here's the point: **If you see yourself as the poor, blind, and lame, you'll receive it. If you don't, you won't.**

**And now, you can understand the 1<sup>st</sup> parable on humbling, taking the low place...**

- If you take the lower place (admitting you are the poor, lame, blind and crippled), He'll call you up to the high place at His party. But if you think you deserve the high place, you'll be humiliated and sent back to the low place.
- Jesus, the one who had the high place, took the low place for us, and offered us His position at the table as a gift. He traded places with us.
- The Gospel must be received as grace: God giving us the place we did not deserve.
- And when we admit we deserve the low place; that we are the poor, lame, and the blind who don't even deserve to be at the party, He calls us up to His high place.
- **This is what we call The Gospel irony: Those who try to establish their worthiness before God will be rejected; those who admit their unworthiness will be accepted.**
- Those who take the high place with God will be sent to the low one; those who take the low place, admitting their unworthiness, will be called up to the high one.
- This parable is not just good social advice; it's the only way of salvation.

*So, now, let's return to those last verses... where Jesus turns and says that if we are going to come to Him we must love Him more than father and mother and even our own life...*

**[26] “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. [27] Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.**

- This invitation is so valuable, it has to trump everything. It's more important than even mothers and fathers and lands...

You know, Jesus sure knew how to kill a movement, didn't He? This thing is just starting to get momentum; people are saying, "Jesus, we love you. We get this. Putting fish stickers on their cars and "Jesus is My Homeboy" T-shirts. Then Jesus says this...

But, I want to make this clear to you. Following Jesus means total surrender. **FOLLOWER OR FAN?** No barriers. Nothing held back. Even to the point that your commitment to Him trumps your loyalty to even your family. Surrender is only surrender if it's total.

- **(Go through our baptismal confession)** Why? He's God.

So, hear this: following Jesus is steep, yes. But He is that valuable. With Him, even if you have nothing else on earth, ultimately you've got everything. Without Him, even if you obtained everything on earth, it would be worthless.

- This life is like a wisp of smoke, a vapor, compared to eternity.
- There's an eternal banquet coming, and even if you have nothing down here on earth, that eternal party up there is going to make this life look like nothing.
- And if your life is filled with everything down here, and you die without God, you have nothing.
- So God is worth leaving EVERYTHING for. Possessing Him, knowing Him, is the only thing that eternally matters in your life.
- He is GOD! To walk with Him, be at peace with Him, is life's most important question!

*Do you realize how important this is?*

- Imagine you were holding a stick of dynamite, no idea how long the fuse is: *Isn't that what our death is?* At some point the heart attack; the cancer; the car wreck... Don't you think being prepared for that moment is what matters?
- Guy falling out of airplane

- Do you understand how important this is? Do you understand how important God is?
- Fajar. He is the God who was crucified for you and gives you this invitation and does not take it lightly if you spurn it or de-prioritize it. He is the God worth leaving everything for and pursuing even to foreign lands if that is where He takes you.

2 invitations for you today:

- Salvation. To receive His invitation to save you and to follow Him. Quit making excuses.
  - **You say, "I don't know enough about God."** Yes you do. It's an invitation you receive, and then you'll learn about Jesus as you go.
  - **You say, "I'm really not the religious type."** Yes you are. You were created for God. Now, if your definition of being religious is becoming the church lady on SNL or Flanders on the Simpson's or wearing moo-moos and denim jumpers and putting fish stickers on your car, no... that's not what I'm talking about. Religious people are goofy a lot of times, but you were created for God. Your Heavenly Father is calling to you.
  - You say, **"I've got a really messed up past. I'm disqualified."** The invitation is aimed at the poor and blind. The Gospel is that He has earned a place at the table and offered it to you. All you have to do is receive it. He's the Savior; healer. No disease was too severe He could not heal; nobody too dead that He could not raise. No past is so dark that He cannot erase; no life so dysfunctional that He can't make new.
  - Let me make this as plain as I can. The Gospel is a gift. A gift you much receive. To receive it you repent and believe. Repent: acknowledge Him as Lord; believe, means you trust what He has done in your place to save you. You've either done that or you haven't. You've either surrendered all of yourself to



Him or you haven't. You either received His offer as your own or you haven't.

- Have you repented and believed?
- My other invitation is to show that, today, through baptism.
  - I told you that baptism is like the wedding ring.
  - *Some of you have made a bunch of excuses as to why you won't do this:*
- **You say, "I'm not ready."** If you have trusted Christ, you are ready. Baptism is only the public profession of the inward reality... Baptism says to everyone watching, "I know that I'm a sinner and that I need Jesus. I'm ready to publicly proclaim that He is my Savior." *If you say you've accepted Him but you're not ready to go public with that, then I have to wonder how serious you are about Him. You just met God! You need to show it.*
- **People say, "It's not that important..."** uh, excuse me? Who are you to say God's first command to you is not that important? If you won't obey God in this one small step, why do you think you'll obey God in the other areas of your life? That's a terrible way to start your Christian life. *That's like telling your wife on your wedding night you're going to go out with some old single friends to a club.* Not the way to start your marriage. The way to start your walk with Jesus is not by postponing what he's clearly told you to do.
- **You say, "I was baptized as a baby."** No offense, baptism as a baby was not a profession of your faith, but a profession of your parents' faith. And praise God for that. But you need to profess your own faith, which is why baptism is always presented in the Bible as decision you make. Your parents baptized you as a baby. Now it is time to ratify their decision and declare your own faith in Jesus!
- You say, **"Well, it's really inconvenient."** You want to talk about inconvenient... how about what Jesus

went through to save you? Jesus hung on a cross naked for 6 hours for you... I think you can get in a pool of warm water in obedience to His command.

- **You say, "But I don't have a change of clothes!"** A-ha. We have them for you... all sizes. Dark colored T-shirts and towels and hairdryers and personal stylists to get your hair back to the exact form you put it in this morning. (Kidding about that last part... but we have the clothes and towels and hairdryers.) We thought of everything.
- **"But I came with people... they're going to want to go eat after this."** Again, I have to ask you about the importance of this.
  - *They'll wait. I promise. They will. If they don't see the importance, send them to talk to me, because they probably need to repent and be baptized, too.*

Here's what's going to happen. I'm going to pray... And then, your campus pastor is going to come at all of our campuses and give you instructions.

#### **Bow heads... By show of hands.**

- How many of you today need to receive Christ? **(Give prayer)**
- How many of you have not been baptized since you received Christ, and you are ready to do it today? (If you raised your hand on the 1<sup>st</sup> question it should be up for the 2<sup>nd</sup>)

**Prayer:** *"God, help these to be bold in this 1<sup>st</sup> step of obedience. When their cp gives them the opportunity, may they step out boldly, and take this step which will mark the beginning of a brand new life for them..."*

# Bullpen:

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- **If I'm driving a car** and I say I'll let you make decisions 90% of the time, that's not surrender. I can veto you at any point. Years ago there was a bumper sticker... God is my Co-Pilot. Epitomized how a lot of people saw God. God is there to give suggestions. Get us out of jams. Kind of our Divine AAA program. To follow Jesus means absolute surrender. You give Him total control because He's God and it's His car.

(Later Christians decided to set a time each year to commemorate the resurrection, and that's good, as long as you don't begin to think it's something we acknowledge 1x a year and then forget about it, OK?)

For most people, it's not outright rejection of God that sends you to hell; it's not giving God the proper weight.

- Blaise Pascal: "If you are typically modern, your life is like a rich mansion with a terrifying hole right in the middle of the living-room floor. What is that hole? It's your own death. So what do you do? You paper over the hole with a very busy wallpaper pattern to distract yourself. You find a rhinoceros in your house. That rhinoceros, of course – is your own death. How in the world can you hide a rhinoceros? Easy: you cover it with a million (post it notes) mice. You multiply diversions." (Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensees*; 169)

- Pascal said, the two widest roads to hell are indifference and diversion.

That's essentially what Jesus is saying here. People miss God because they fail to realize how important of an issue this is.

- The Gospel is that Christ suffered in your place for your sin... Has paid your full penalty; offers you a place at His party, but you have to receive it. Most people will miss it not because they don't believe it but because they never grasp the weightiness or importance in their hearts.

These excuses are fairly legitimate things...

- One guy says, "I've got a really important estate deal I'm closing on"
- Another says, "My wife and I are going on our honeymoon"

Disciples are shaking their head in bewilderment. People were just about to sign on... Kind of like those commercials for the medicines... "Such and such medicine will make your headaches disappear. Use of this medicine has been known to cause bowling-ball sized tumors on the head of lab rats."

## Reflections:

So, don't sulk in self-condemnation, because your invitation is bought and paid for by Jesus Christ.

You see, the Gospel is not about what we are to do for God, but what God has done for us.

These are all lame excuses. No excuse is more important than God. I'd cancel everything if the President called. That's because of his importance. When we prioritize other things besides God, we dishonor God by saying He is not important. Not giving God the weight.

## Baptism

Donald Trump [video](#).

*I believe in God. I am Christian. I think the Bible is certainly, it is the book, it is THE thing.*

*(On going to church): Well I go as much as I can. Always on Christmas. Always on Easter. Always when there's a major occasion. And during the Sundays. I'm a Sunday church person. I'll go when I can.*

*(On people sending him Bibles): Well, I get sent Bibles by a lot of people. There's no way I would ever throw anything to do anything negative to a Bible, so what we do is we keep all of the Bibles. I would have a fear of doing something other than very positive."*

- What if it's true?
  - Bridge out:
  - Falling out of the airplane
  - Driscoll on heaven/hell – what if it's true?

### Goals:

- Those in despair to see the hope of Christ
- Those skeptical to be dazzled by God
- The apathetic to see the weightiness/importance of Christ
- Believers to be deepened in worship
- Unbelievers (different from above) to come to Christ