

Blessing or Curse **by Carl McMurray**

In reading Luke the fourteenth chapter this past week I was once more brought home to how relevant the Scriptures are to our life today. In the account beginning in verse 15, Jesus described the big dinner given by a "certain man." At the appointed hour, as was their custom, a servant was sent to tell the invited ones to come because everything was ready. Verse 18 then states that they all alike "began to make excuses."

One begged off because he had bought some land and needed to go out and look at it. We are left to believe that this man bought a piece of land, sight unseen? But that's how business is, isn't it? Because it's business, it's a good excuse. Today a man has to support his family doesn't he? So if spiritual things are put on hold temporarily we all understand. But then his second job, or the teenager's job down at McDonald's also makes up their schedule irregardless of spiritual commitments. Is one type of "business" more important than another? "Tell the Master to please excuse me," they said.

The second example follows closely on the heels of the first as the invited man asks to be excused because he has bought a yoke of oxen and he was going to try them out. Again we ask, a yoke of oxen were purchased with no knowledge of their ability to work? And even if so, they won't wait to be tried because of this prior engagement? Here we might see the power of possessions to possess us. Some can't serve in the kingdom because they are possessed by their yard that needs mowing, their car that needs washing, their vacation homes that need seeing to, their education that needs study care, or their hobbies need seeing to. Instead of seeing all these things as blessings, they become idols in the heart that replace the one that truly should be enthroned there.

Lastly is the one who pleads to be excused because he has married a wife. Saddest of all excuses is this one. When he should have been bringing his wife to meet the Master or at least impressing her with how important it was for him to go, he instead uses his family relationship to make excuses. Like the one who can't worship if their mate won't go with them, or the one who won't attend because the children won't behave. (Note: later they won't attend because no one else in the house is interested.)

The end result is that the Master is angry. He turns his back on the invited guests and instead, get this, the ones who are invited are the ones who don't have business, possessions, or family to hinder them. What irony. Will our blessings become a curse for us? Will our possessions possess us? Will we lead or follow our family? The time is ready now, the servants have come, and the Master is waiting.