

more delicious than manna, the flesh of Leviathan and the bird Bar Jachus."—Cambridge Bible.

"It is still customary in the East, not only to give to an invitation sometime beforehand, but to send round servants at the proper time to inform the invited guests that all things are ready."—Kitto.

It was easy to do this, because "the guests were close together in an Eastern city." And it was necessary to do it, because "they were not generally supplied with time-pieces." Another reason for this second invitation was that, from the habits of Orientals and their manners of preparing the feast, it was impossible to know just when the meal would be ready. v. 17.

"For each of us all things are ready; the atonement made, the mansions prepared, the Father willing to receive, the angels waiting to welcome, the doors open, the Holy Spirit present, duties awaiting."

Worldly possessions often blind men to the value of the heavenly inheritance. A small coin held close to the eye will shut out from view the sun shining in the heavens.

"A finger's breadth at hand may mar  
A world of light in heaven afar:  
A mote eclipse a glorious star."

Not one of these excuses can stand a moment's examination. They remind one of Mark Twain's Oriental, who declined to lend an axe, saying that he needed it himself to eat soup, and who, when he was reminded that one does not eat soup with an axe, replied: "When one is determined not to do a thing, any excuse is good enough." So all the excuses which men offer for rejecting the gospel spring from unwillingness to accept it.

*Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.* The great commission is not: "Come ye from all the world and hear the gospel," but "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." It is the business of the Church to go out into the highways, in which open and notorious sinners are

found, and into the hedges, where less known and secret offenders lurk, and constrain them by loving entreaties to come into the feast.

In verse 24, we have the application of the parable and also the answer of Jesus to the man whose exclamation (v. 15) had led to it. Our Lord, in effect, says to the guests then present: "I have shown you what the eating of bread in the kingdom of God really is, and how you treat the invitation, while professing to look forward to participation in the feast. It is God's feast, and He invites you to it. But it is 'My supper,' given in My honor, and the invitation comes through me, sent of God 'in the form of a servant.' You will refuse to enter because, in refusing Me and My teachings, you refuse to obey the direct call of God, who previously invited you by His prophets and through His word."—Dr. M. B. Riddle.

Reasons and excuses are often very different things. Men are often ashamed of their real reasons for their conduct, and for rejecting Christ, and have to hide them, not only from others, but from themselves, by some plausible excuses. It is the same with neglect of church and religious services. There is little in the excuses given, as the minister, the sermon, the music, no social recognition, no time; but we must look much deeper for the real reasons. And we should be far more careful to understand and remove the reasons than to try to answer their excuses. It is for this reason that much of the arguing with irreligious men is so useless. It is like scraping the furred tongue, but leaving the fever. It is tearing down a flaunting flag from the enemy's ship, but leaving the crew and the guns.—Peloubet.

If you knew God, and what those "things" are "which He has prepared for them that love Him," all "excuses" would be flung to the winds. It would not be, "Have me excused!" but, "I come!" "Me first—me now—me forever! Lord, bid me—Lord, let me—Lord, make me come!"—Vaughan.