

Director/actor Woody Allen is known for many quotes, but his most famous quote is this one. “**Ninety percent of life is just showing up.**” But Woody Allen is famously wrong. **Ninety percent of life is what we do AFTER we show up.**

Why do we want to believe Allen’s computations so badly? We eagerly embrace Woody’s calculus because it takes us off the hook for all but ten percent of our lifetime of screw-ups, fall-flats, and meltdowns. **It is easy to just “be there.”** It is much harder to be there for the long haul, the tough times, the big tests, the final curtain.

Just “showing up” at your wedding might get you married, but it does not build a living, loving, fighting, mortgage paying, in-law juggling, overdrawn, children challenged, lifetime relationship.

Just “showing up” at the birth of your child might make you a “parent,” but it does not make you a changing diapers, up-all-night, learning dinosaur names, cheering at rain-soaked side-lines, doing Algebra homework, enforcing curfews, saving for college, Mom or Dad.

Just “showing up” at church every Sunday morning might make you a member-in-good-standing, but it does not automatically put feet on your faith. G. K. Chesterton used to say that “Just going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in your garage makes you a car.” **To be a Christian, means action; it means day-to-day commitment to follow Jesus wherever he leads.**

IN JESUS “WEDDING BANQUET PARABABLE THERE ARE (2) MESSAGES THAT CALL US TO LISTEN UP!!

The first is for the specially invited “guest list” who reject their invitation, rudely, cruelly, and murderously. Jesus is addressing his parable to a particularly rude, then cruel, then finally murderous audience — the religious authorities in Jerusalem who were opposing his presence and were vigorously trying to maintain and protect the status quo. **The chief priests** were completely committed to the continuation of the temple and its lucrative administration — daily sacrifices, the temple hierarchy, rituals, routines. The **Pharisees were committed to a different kind of routine** — a routinized morality, prescribed and proscribed by a devotion to the details of the written Torah. Neither group could find a way to respond outside their chosen boundaries to Jesus’ message and mission. **Neither group could accept the possibility that there might be Truth outside of their deeply rutted trajectories.**

In Jesus’ parable of the wedding banquet the first group of invitees reject their invitation. In fact, they do more than reject the invitation. They “kill the messenger” that brings them their invitation. Their refusal to join in the “party” is complete and curtailed.

THE 2ND GROUP OF THOSE INVITED IS EVERYONE—YES ALL WHO HEARD ABOUT IT.

Everyone who heard about the wedding party was invited. ***But with the invitation there came an expectation. But it was not one of perfection. Not one of excellence. Not one of economic ability. Not one of exceptional giftedness.*** **The expectation was that each guest** would acknowledge their entry into this new place, this “wedding banquet,” this waiting room for a new future, by **making some changes in themselves.**

In the parable the “change” required was in CLOTHING. *In the life of faith the “change” required is not a change of clothes but a change of mind. A change of heart. A change of spirit.*

God is the King who is inviting us to the wedding banquet. We are all invited, whether the world judges us to be “good” or “bad,” rich or poor, worthy or unworthy. The invitation is without restrictions. But that does not mean that the invitation is without expectations.

We are all granted full admission to the kingdom of God through the gracious “free pass” offered by Christ.

BUT THERE ARE REQUIREMENTS. *We cannot remain unchanged. We cannot keep wearing the same world-weary “clothes” of indifference, prejudice, hatred, judgment, cruelty, coldness* that we sported before walking into the wedding banquet. **We are required, by the grace of the one who invited us, to “spruce up” for the party. For a seat in God’s kingdom, “sprucing up” doesn’t take cash or charisma.** It takes a commitment to changing something more than what is skin deep.

God is a “party person.” God wants to be in relationship with the amazing creatures that God created in God’s own image. Perhaps the greatest miracle of creation is that despite everything we have done, God enjoys us. God truly wants our company. But God’s enjoyment of creation is not just an emotional reflex. It has a reactional requirement.

God ENJOYS us. But God also ENJOINS us to act as Mission-al members of the kingdom. We are welcomed with open arms. Yet we are enjoined to put our arms into “as-it-is-in-heaven” action.

It is not enough just to “show up.” The God of all creation enjoins us to create, to bear fruit, to give back, to pay forward, to change ourselves and to change the world. It is true that the first thing we must do is “show up.” But that is just the beginning of our new lives.

The chief priests and Pharisees were not evil. They were not inherently bad. They were, however, stuck in a rut. **They believed that their way was the RIGHT WAY to establish a righteous relationship with God.** The problem with both of those “ways” is that they were artificial paths that missed the truth.

Sometimes alternative pathways seem so convincing—SO RIGHT TO US. For substance abuse addicts the pathway to peace and fulfillment seems to be met by an artificial substance — alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling. All of them create a convincing, but completely artificial “high.” When the drug of choice is gone, so is the feeling of completion and accomplishment.

To “get clean” from any of these artificial substances requires a period of “drying out,” completely cutting oneself off from the addictive behavior. “Drying out” enables addicts to reassess and realize what are the truly positive things in their lives.

In Christianity, the equivalent of addiction might be called “church-ism.” It was the addiction Jesus was addressing in the chief priests and Pharisees in his Jerusalem preaching. It was not that these religious leaders were not trying to do and be good. The problem was that they had completely identified the “good” with the “process.” ***Instead of the person, they trusted Torah and Temple over the living presence of God in their***

midst. Twenty centuries later our problems remain the same. We love our church families, we love our church work, we love our church choir, we love our churches' place in the community, we love our position on committees. ***But for many of us we are “addicted” to the artifices of “the church,” and not committed to the kingdom. We are at the banquet, but we are not wearing our “wedding robes.”***

It is easy to become addicted, to become dependent upon the artificial “substances” of organization, or hierarchies, or social acceptance, of prestige, that are all available by being a “good” member of a respected church community.

Kicking that addiction doesn't take an alcoholic's “drying out.” Instead, it takes a Christ centered “watering up,” a renewed commitment to drinking deep of the true living water that is Jesus Christ. **The cure for alcoholism is to dry out. The cure for church-ism is to water up.**

Christ is the living water, the real thing. We may all drink deeply of Christ without fear of becoming addicted to some artificial stimulant. As a full participant in the banquet of the kingdom, we will both enjoy the presence of God and will experience the fulfillment that comes from participating in the procession of that kingdom.

OUR God enjoys us and first, and foremost, wants all of us to “SHOW UP” to HIS banquet. And if we come, God wants us to bring something to the party. Bring ourselves — bring our songs, our stories, our possibilities, our probabilities. We have been invited to do nothing less than change the world through the power of Christ.

Remember,,, ? Many people still think like Woody Allen did, that...“**Ninety percent of life is just showing up,**” but they are wrong *and with that attitude they miss out on much of life.* The truth is: **90% percent of life is what we do AFTER we show up.**

There's an urban legend about a doctor who received a call late at night to come to the hospital. Someone was near death and needed a physician's attention or death was certain. The hospital was 30 miles away in another town. The doctor dressed and took off in his car. At a stoplight a man jumped into his car, pulled a gun, and told the doctor to get out. "I need your car. Get out," was all he said. The doctor got out and had to find another way to get to the hospital. When he finally arrived the nurse met him and told him the woman just died. "You are too late, Doctor. But would you go and say a word to the husband. He is weeping uncontrollably in the family lounge." When the doctor entered the lounge he found the husband in a corner. To his great surprise he discovered that the husband was the very man who pulled the gun on him because he needed his car. But now instead of a man with a gun, there is a man with a broken heart. **How would you handle this situation?**

Yes, 90% is what we do after we show up. SO, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE SO FAR...AND WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW THAT GOD HAS INVITED “YOU” TO HIS BANQUET?

Amen.