

CARITAS FELLOWSHIP

Parables #5: *The Wedding Feast; The Great Banquet*

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MATTHEW 22.1-14

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.' 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. 12 And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

LUKE 14.12-23

He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

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!" 16 But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 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.' 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.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' 20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 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.' 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. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

GOSPEL OF THOMAS

Jesus said, A person was receiving guests. When he had prepared the dinner, he sent his slave to invite the guests. The slave went to the first and said to that one, "My master invites you." That one said, "Some merchants owe me money; they are coming to me tonight. I have to go and give them instructions. Please excuse me from dinner." The slave went to another and said to that one, "My master has invited you." That one said to the slave, "I have bought a house, and I have been called away for a day. I shall have no time." The slave went to another and said to that one, "My master invites you." That one said to the slave, "My friend is to be married, and I am to arrange the banquet. I shall not be able to come. Please excuse me from dinner." The slave went to another and said to that one, "My master invites you." That one said to

the slave, "I have bought an estate, and I am going to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. Please excuse me." The slave returned and said to his master, "Those whom you invited to dinner have asked to be excused." The master said to his slave, "Go out on the streets and bring back whomever you find to have dinner."

Buyers and merchants [will] not enter the places of my Father.

REVELATION 19.6-9

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

8 it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure"—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

ISAIAH 25.6-8

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

7 And he will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples,
the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.

ANTHONY ESOLEEN

I have always wondered about Jesus' use of the passive voice in describing our prospects for salvation: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (e.g., Matt. 22:14). The parables show a great deal of choosing, of exactly the day-planning and life-determining kind that we now deem central to human existence.

When the king proclaims a feast for the wedding of his son (Matt. 22; Luke 14:16-24), a lot of people choose not to attend because they have already chosen better ways to be the busy deities over their own time; they have already chosen their nap in the lair of the dragon. One man chooses to tend his field, because he has already chosen that good harvests of grain will direct his life. Another man is busy with his merchandise. Another has recently married. Finally, the angry king sends his servants out to find those whose very poverty and debility have sundered them from the illusions of important business: the poor,



and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

Jesus does not sum up such parables by saying what we might expect, “Many are called, but few are they who choose to attend.” That is certainly because salvation lies in God’s choice and is a gift of his grace alone: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

But it is also, I think, because some people have chosen never to be chosen. They have hooded themselves, have plugged up their ears. They are too busy, in the godlike disposing of their means and of their lives, to be put at God’s disposal. Many would cry out, “Lord, Lord, we chose you!” What they did not do, what they thought it beneath their dignity to do, was let the Lord choose them.

KLYNE SNODGRASS

The Kingdom is still like a banquet. The invitation may still go out because all is ready and people may come and enjoy the feast now. The Lord’s supper is just such a celebration and anticipation. The Kingdom is still—and will be—like a banquet at which those who are supposed to attend were to preoccupied to come and others not expected to attend come and enjoy the feast. The expected are absent and the unexpected are present...

Both parables teach that we cannot have the Kingdom on our own terms. The invitation of grace brings with it demand. At stake is the issue of a person’s identity. It is not enough to wear the right label (“invited one”); rather, the Kingdom must shape the identity so that one has a whole different set of concerns. The warning of Luke must be heard: the biggest obstacles to discipleship are possessions and family, but they are also the biggest opportunities *for* discipleship...

At this point I need to respond to the question U. Luz, “Does the concept of judgment negate the power of the promise of salvation?” Without the concept of judgment one does not even need salvation, and any urgency about life and its importance, about justice, or even about God is, if not lost, at least greatly diminished. Grace is only grace if the outcome should have been otherwise, and the significance of life depends upon the accountability of life.

N.T. WRIGHT

...There is a difference between this wide-open invitation and the message so many want to hear today. We want to hear that everyone is alright exactly as they are; that God loves us as we are and doesn’t want us to change. People often say this when they want to justify certain types of behavior, but the argument doesn’t work. When the blind and lame came to Jesus...he healed them. They wouldn’t have been satisfied with anything less. When the prostitutes and extortioners came to Jesus...his love reached them *where* they were, but his love refused to let them stay *as* they were. Love wants the best for the beloved.

