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Joe Pease Sermon WPC

23 Sept 2018

Banquet of God (Lamb), Luke 14: 12-24

Let us pray:

Lord, open our hearts and enlighten minds through the wisdom of your Holy Spirit. Help us rightly divide and understand the Gospel and the Bible. Your Word is exalted here at Wabash Presbyterian Church, and we wait to hear with joy what you say to us today.

And after hearing your Word, help us go into the world to do your Will. Here we are Lord, send us.

Amen

We are continuing from last week's sermon with Pastor Jonathan in the Gospel of Luke. Two groups of people mingle with Jesus: primarily the common people and the religious leaders. At this time in Jesus's earthly ministry, Christ's teachings seem bizarre, illogical, and a threat to some of them.

This passage is complex, so, we will be looking at several ways we can apply it to our lives today. This story starts out in a Jewish home in Israel. It is supper time. It ends with a marriage banquet with God as the host.

SITUATION THE HOST AND THE GUESTS

Let's set the story's domestic stage here in terms of the situation and the audience with Jesus. Jesus is recounting the story of a certain man who wants to host a banquet in his home. He discovers that people react to his invitation to a grand banquet in different ways.

This whole discourse from Jesus starts back in verse 1 of this chapter. The Bible says that it is the Jewish Sabbath. Jesus and others are invited to the house of a Pharisee. This man seems to be a prominent Pharisee.

What is a Pharisee?

A Pharisee was a very religious Jew in the times of Christ, who tried very hard to obey every part of the Jewish Law of Moses and the Oral teachings. Many of them sincerely tried to be holy. Like religious zealots today, some of the Pharisees worried more about keeping every little rule, rather than caring about people.

Even some of the Jewish Apostles initially thought this way. But, there were faithful Pharisees, including the Apostle Paul who accepted Christ teaching and changed into a disciple.

What did Jesus think of Pharisees? Here are a few quotes to help us understand:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. First, clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean...

You are like white washed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean....

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices- mint, dill, cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law- justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides!” You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.
Mt. 23 various.

Jesus is tolerant of the hypocrisy and indifference to some people shown religious leadership and teachers of the law.

Therefore, this meal with this Pharisee is not a place of relaxed conversation --but of a watchful sharpness. This tension derives from the text which states that “he (Jesus) was being carefully watched”.

THEME OF CONFRONTATION WITH IDEAS

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus will be in this same type of situation, again and again. But, this clash of ideas was prophesied in the Bible. The verses in Isaiah affirm Christ’s God-centered values do not accept man’s self-centered values.

Christ’s view is radical, the prophet Isaiah compares our mind to God’s mind. Isaiah (55:8)

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.”

The Jesus clash is unavoidable as a heated argument of words continues with the judging, condescending, and envious Pharisees. In addition, these doers of the law criticize Christ because he welcomes sinners ---and worse, tax collectors.

And then, Jesus eats with them at the same table. In the following chapters in Luke later on, Jesus continues this debate and proclamation process.

In today's text, therefore, the story only says that "a certain man" prepared a great banquet. He had sent out notices. He told his servants to tell those, who received invitations, all is ready, please, come. Some did not come. The host reacted.

The target for the story were people like a Pharisee. We should not be quick to condemn. Let's not judge Pharisees too quickly...

As an aside, I felt humbled when I read this passage of the Gospel. The Pharisees are like me. In the past, Christ words, also, exposed me as a sinner and gladly was indifferent to Him. But, Christ's Presence, Truth, and love won me over --both to serve him as well as to accept his invitation to His Table leading to eternal life with Him. ----

Luke tells us "the certain man", who is the host, may be interpreted as a personification of God. Who would God invite to His banquet of the Kingdom? What is his motive?

For God, the motive is always love; but the guests are only those who accept the invitation. It is an they did not pay for. The host, like God, pays for all, especially the poor. Again, the poor are emphasized.

The Bible says:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor." (Luke 4: 48)

MOTIVE OF THE HOST - LOVE

The Bible says that the guests are to be invited because the host embraces the Christ-like viewpoint of love, mercy, and humility. The guests, who accept, are chosen because of God's unconditional love--not their works, riches, reputation or rank in the world society.

Since love is the prime motive for the host, let's briefly remind ourselves of the description of God's love. God is not lovable; He is Love. The Love of God.

1 Cor 13 is one of the great love chapters in the Bible.

³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,^[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

For me, I especially feel that God's Love is kind- --interpreted. ---Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can read. -- Mark Twain is said to have quoted<

We know that all are equally loved by God because He sacrificed His son to the Cross to prove it. In the history of mankind, the greatest, pure and holy act of Love was the Cross by Grace.

In another view, a banquet is eating and drinking, possibly over-indulging. In the story, you need to have lots to eat and drink and be merry when you are at a banquet. The host in the story could not get enough people in his house, so he must have planned a bountiful banquet. The abundance of the banquet would be extraordinary.

Just as the host in the story, with God, the suggestion is that all are invited; all is given through Christ. Nothing is held back. No one on earth can out give God.

REJECTION

There is a soberer view of the banquet. There were people who rejected the invitation. They did not offer a courteous and prompt response, or "No thank you". From the time the host sent out the invitations to the time the banquet was ready, the Bible says there was no news as to accepting or declining the invitation. They seem indifferent or rude toward the gracious invitation.

The Bible calls their tardy responses: -excuses-:

"I just bought a field", "I bought five yokes of oxen", yet another said, "I got married". This set of excuses seem reasonable to them. All three require either large sums of money or a major commitment.

To be specific, each declined his own personal invitation from the host. The analogy to Christ is unmistakable. We see how Christ feels when he is rejected, worse yet

dismissed. For us in our lives today, God's Servant stood at the door and invited us to the House of the Lord.

When the pre-occupied people declined the invitation to the banquet, the host seeks others which are the ostensibly off scourings of worldly society. He extends the invitation to the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

For the insult, the Host is justly angered. His abused mercy will turn into anger. None of them that were invited will taste His supper. The invitation will never be extended to them again.

One lesson offered: It is wise to accept the personal greeting God extends to each of us. There is only one invitation, given by one Servant, in one Gospel, in one Bible to each one of us.

Just to prove a point, let's quickly look at other examples. There are people in the Bible who rejected God's grace or blessing, which is like an invitation to His Kingdom. These actions have unforeseen consequences.

The Old Testament story of Jacob and Esau: Esau, the first born of Isaac, sells his birthright to his manipulating brother and mama's boy, Jacob, for a meal bread and stew. What happened? We hear of him or his descendants no more from that point on. Like the guests are declined the host's invitation, Esau despised his birthright given as a free gift. The consequences were severe.

Likewise, there is the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Matthew (25) tells the story saying the Kingdom of God is like ten virgins who went out with their lamps to meet the Bride Groom. 5 were foolish, and 5 were wise.

The foolish virgins took no oil for their lamps; the 5 wise virgins took oil in jars for their lamps to refill when their lamps ran out of oil. To make his short, when the Bridegroom comes, the foolish virgins' lamps use up their oil, and they did not bring extra oil to fill them. When the foolish virgins go to buy more oil, the Bride groom comes in the meantime.

The wise virgins, with lamps still lit and still there, are the only ones who go into the wedding banquet with the Bride groom AND THE DOOR shuts behind them not to open for anyone else. The door remains shut even when the foolish virgins return and say, "Sir. Sir. Open the door for us".

God is a God of Love; but He is also a God of Justice. His justice must decisively and absolutely deal with sin and our sin nature.

The lesson is that God instructs us to have a sense of urgency. You do not tell God what your terms are for Him. When God invites, He needs a decision from you now. If you are a procrastinator, or reject, or delay your response, the consequences are severe.

Another lesson learned from God's teaching is humility. We learn that humility is the path to promotion in the Kingdom of God, both now and in the future.

HEAVEN'S BANQUET

Our last observation about our host and his banquet shows the story as it foreshadows the future Christ in His Second Coming. In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, Jesus, presented as the Lamb of God, hosts a final banquet in heaven.

At that time, we faithful are face to face with Him, and it will be a celebration of unending joy in the everlasting arms of Jesus.

Today in the church, we need accept the invitation to the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. He will take care of the rest.

- We are loved, we are forgiven,
- we are with Him, and we are like Him.

In closing, what is our response to God's invitation? Let's hear God again in the Bible:

1 Tim 2:4

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

Revelation 19:5, 9.

"Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great...Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding Supper of the Lamb."

Revelation 3:20-

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

The last is, -- Psalm 27:4-

- “One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

Amen

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Let us pray: The Bible says that upon hearing the word of God, we are to act on it. If there is anyone here that has been moved by the Scriptures today, we ask the Holy Spirit to come along side of her or him and begin to walk with them.

God, thank you for the Bible. We know that there will be banquet and a place for all of us in in heaven. We have the assurance of eternal life. Jesus, we trust your words when you say, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Amen.

-----Joe remains standing and goes to Prayers immediately.)

Slides when needed:

- Lords’ Prayer full text
- Apostle’s Creed full text