

48. Jesus Gave the Parable of the Great Supper

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our children how to show the love of Jesus to the poor and needy. We saw those who show the love of Jesus to the poor and needy will be rewarded at the resurrection of the just. This means that those who show such love have placed their faith in Jesus and are acting in obedience to Him. Jesus told a Pharisee that if he truly wanted to experience the blessing of God, his actions would be the result of true faith because he would invite the poor and needy as well to his feasts. In this topic, we are going to see that a question was asked of Jesus which gave Him the opportunity to teach about the Great Supper.

One of those sitting at the table with Jesus heard what Jesus had said to the Pharisee. We see what Jesus said in response to his comment in Luke 14:15-17 where we read, “Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, ‘Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!’ Then He said to him, ‘A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, “Come, for all things are now ready.”’” This person realized that those who eat bread in the kingdom of God will be blessed. At that time, many of the Jews thought that all of the Jews would eat bread in the kingdom of God except for the tax collectors and sinners. Many Jews also thought that it would only be the Jews in the kingdom of God.

Jesus then told a story about a man who gave a great supper to help those present understand who will be at the Great Supper. A supper was a formal meal that was usually held in the evening. Sometimes, the word was also used to talk about a wedding feast which could last for an entire week. For example, the marriage feast in John 2 seemed to last for several days because they ran out of wine. In this parable, Jesus said that the man who gave the supper invited many people to the supper. Then, when the supper was ready, he sent his servant to tell all of the people who had been invited to the supper that it was time to come, because everything was now ready.

However, Jesus went on to tell what happened when the servant told the invited guests that everything was ready for the Great Supper. Luke 14:18-20 says, ““But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.” And another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.” Still another said, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”’” None of the people had said that they could not come when they had been given the invitation to the supper. That suddenly changed when the servant came to say that the supper was ready. We see that the invited guests immediately began giving excuses why they could not come to the supper.

The word translated “to make excuse” means *to refuse, to reject or to make an excuse*. The word is used twice in Hebrews 12:25 where we read, “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven.” This was a warning written later to the Jews urging them not to refuse Jesus as the Mediator of the New Covenant. Although we see that the people were giving various excuses for not coming to the Great Supper, we see that the excuses

are actually a polite way to refuse the invitation to come to the Great Supper.

As we look at each of the excuses that are given, we see why these excuses are really just a polite way of refusing the invitation to the Great Supper. The first person said, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.” There are at least two reasons why we can see that this excuse is actually a refusal. In that day, no would buy a piece of land before they had looked to make certain that the piece of ground was the kind of ground that they needed to grow their crops. Even if someone had already bought such a piece of ground without looking at it first, the land would already have been purchased and it would not matter if the person waited a few days longer to go and see the land that he had bought.

The second person said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.” A yoke of oxen was actually two oxen because a yoke actually hooked two oxen together side by side so that they could pull a plow or a wagon. We see that this is just a refusal to come because of the fact that the people always tested the oxen before they bought them. If a team of oxen could not pull a heavy load, a person would not buy them. The fact that this person said that he had five yoke of oxen to test and not just one yoke showed that this person was either very foolish or was refusing to come to the supper.

The excuse of the third person was, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” A supper provided a special occasion for a new husband to take his new wife to meet other friends at the supper. Newly married couples look for special events that they can enjoy together. Here, we see that the person was actually refusing because he was not interested and did not want to go to the supper. Jesus was speaking to lawyers and Pharisees who were refusing Jesus’ invitation to receive forgiveness of sins and become a part of the kingdom of God. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, “For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Jesus told this story because He knew that they were refusing the invitation to salvation.

However, Jesus also wanted to make it clear that others would accept what the Jewish religious leaders were refusing. Luke 14:21-24 says, “So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here *the* poor and *the* maimed and *the* lame and *the* blind.” And the servant said, “Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.” Then the master said to the servant, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.”” Jesus went on to tell how the master of the house would fill his supper with guests.

First, the master told the servant to go out into the streets and, “bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.” Here, we see that Jesus included four groups of people the powerful or rich often neglect. These lawyers and Pharisees had just seen Jesus heal a man that had dropsy. The word translated “poor” was used to speak of the helpless, the powerless and those who had nothing. The word translated “maimed” was used to speak of a person who was injured or had arms or legs that were disabled. The word translated “lame” spoke of one who was missing

a foot or a leg which made it difficult or impossible to walk. Of course, a blind person could not see. The Pharisees felt that Jews with such physical problems were unworthy or unclean.

The servant went out and invited all of these people with their various needs and they came to the Great Supper. The servant told the master that he had followed the instructions of his master but that there was still room for more guests. We see that the master responded, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” The highways and the hedges spoke of those lands where the Gentiles lived. Jesus was speaking to Pharisees and lawyers who thought that only the Jews would be in the kingdom of God. By this statement, Jesus was saying that the Gentiles would also be invited to the Great Supper.

The word translated “compel” means *to invite with gentle persuasion, entreaty or even by force*. Paul used this same word when he spoke to Peter in Galatians 2:14 which says, “But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?’” In that case, Peter was acting as a hypocrite because he had been eating with the Gentiles until other Jews came from Jerusalem. Suddenly, when other Jews came from Jerusalem, Peter acted out of fear and sat at a separate table. In this case, he suddenly showed by his actions that he wanted the Gentiles to act like the Jews, because of his own fear. However, Jesus used the word “compel” to speak of sharing the Gospel with the Gentiles by gentle persuasion.

Jesus then said something that personalized this parable. He said that none of the men that had been invited would taste his supper. Jesus was inviting these lawyers and Pharisees to become a part of the kingdom of God and share in His Great Supper. Instead of responding and becoming a part of the kingdom of God, these lawyers and Pharisees were looking for excuses to condemn Jesus. God wanted them in His kingdom but they were refusing to accept that invitation. Paul later said that the Gentiles would hear and accept. Acts 28:28-29 says, “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it! And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there are also many proud people who will reject the message of the Gospel because of their pride. In contrast, many of the poor and needy and many that the proud reject will hear the Gospel and will respond to that message. Jesus made it clear that all those who will respond will be a part of the kingdom of God and enjoy the Great Supper. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand why the proud will often reject Jesus.