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Ancient Hebrew tradition preserved a series of tales that represented their take on what the day would be like when the Messiah would come and the Jews would feast with God. What was spread on that future festal table was nothing less than the great Leviathan described in the story of the righteous man of old—Job! (*Job 41*) Now that gives new insight into the question “how do you eat an elephant?”! To them, to be with God was a day of great celebration to be anticipated. There is no greater time of joy to be known in a familial culture than a feast day!

Parable of the Great Banquet Luke 14:15-24 NKJV

- ¹⁵ 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!"
- ¹⁶ Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many,
- ¹⁷ and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'
- ¹⁸ 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.'
- ¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.'
- ²⁰ Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'
- ²¹ 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.'
- ²² And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'
- ²³ 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.'
- ²⁴ For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' "

Following Christ's timely discourse about humility at this “stuffy” meal, one man chose to “lighten up” the conversation by fore-telling that he, among many, would enjoy feasting with God. This Pharisee lifted his voice, if not his gobblet also, to a toast: “Blessed is he who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God!”

The Jews looked forward to that day which Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 6:5-9

And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day: " Behold, this *is* our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This *is* the LORD; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Reclining at the lowest seat of impotence at the Pharisee's house, enjoying a sumptuous meal, Jesus used the opportunity to relate essential truths in a casual context.

It was normal that the host of a feast, especially a wealthy host, would precede the great occasion by months of preparation, including the sending of invitations to “save the date.” While the exact time of day was not always announced before time, the receiving of the invitation without declining it was a commitment to attend. In fact, in near east ancient tradition, to refuse such an invitation was seen as an act of war. No one would refuse a friendly invitation unless he was an enemy!

On the special feast day in this short story, the invited guests are much too busy to attend the feast.

1. One man was absorbed in his business dealings
2. One man was eager to try out his new things
3. One man was more interested in his new wife

These three responses left no one to enjoy the sumptuous hospitality of this generous man. And all three of these reasons would have been perceived by the Pharisees listening to this story as absolutely absurd! Who would refuse being seen with a wealthy man at an extravagant celebration for such reasons as surveying dirt, or breaking in oxen or giving in to a wife's plans?! By this time in the dinner, the Pharisees are chuckling to hear of the ridiculous reasons for a dinner rejection. In their bloated self-image they could not imagine these excuses being similar to their refusal of what God had to offer them through Jesus Christ.

Upon hearing of the declined invitation, the host urgently responded to action. Instead of repeating his invitation to self-important, self-sufficient people, he decided to send forth his kind invitation to those in his society that were poor, sickly, and helpless. He would delight in having these unlikely guests at the great feast! It has been said that "both nature and grace abhor a vacuum."

Once those in the streets and lanes of the city were invited to the feast, and there was still room, the generous host sent out the invitation to those who were outside of the city limits. These were doubly unlikely to receive such kind attention and generosity. For these would be the poor and sickly of society that the society didn't even allow on the streets. These were truly the Pariahs and outcasts. They would come as "beggars," for they truly could not repay the host for his gracious generosity. **Such is the invitation of Christ. His compassionate, urgent plea for those who will humble themselves to believe on Him is likened to those who are without joy to know what it is to experience overwhelming and undeserving life in Him.**

For the Christian, to delight in God is to enjoy a continual feast. His grace cannot be bought, nor can it be repaid. He has made it so. It is far more than

one could ever reach for and supersedes all human expectations.

The symbol of a time of feasting is pictured here for us as the happiest experience of life. It is fitting that Christ would portray the kingdom of God like a feast.

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. **What are the spiritual characteristics of the three who refused to join the banquet?**
2. **Why is the host not content with an empty table? What does that tell us about His character?**
3. **Who did the host open up the invitation to after it was initially refused? What does that tell us about His character?**
4. **Why is the kingdom likened to a story of a great feast?**
5. **Will you be honest enough with yourself to see that your self-sufficiency and self-importance does not qualify you for a right standing before God?**
6. **Will you receive the invitation from God today to trust in His offering of Jesus Christ for your right standing before Him?**
7. **Will you come humbly before Him in prayer forsaking your own failure and sin receiving His feast of salvation and eternal life today?**

If you have done this today, I would love to hear from you and talk with you more. Please be sure to e-mail me!

CAPITOL SQUARE COMMUNITY MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

Staff, Lobbyists & Capitol Community Welcome

Statehouse Room #44 ~ Wednesdays, 12:00

