

THE GREAT SUPPER

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Reading: Luke 14:14-24

In this parable the Lord told a story about a rich man who gave a beautiful dinner and invited lots of people to come to it. The people were invited, and then the rich man sent his servant to remind them about it. But they all said that they couldn't come. They knew about the party, but they just decided at the last minute that they wanted to do something else.

Did you notice how bad their excuses were? One of them said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused" (Luke 14:18). Now, the man could have gone and seen his field any time, couldn't he? But no, he had to go on the day of the party. Another one said, "I have bought five yolk of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused" (Luke 14:19). He wanted to see how the oxen would pull his carts and plows. He could have done that anytime, but, no, he wanted to do it right when the party was taking place. A third man said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come" (Luke 14:20). This man didn't even ask to be excused. He pretty well admitted that he was not interested in the party. It seems so rude of them all, doesn't it? And it seems foolish that they would give up the party, and that they would make the man who had invited them angry by being so rude.

Now what does that have to do with our lives today? Well, we believe that the Word that the Lord has given us is like a wonderful feast. The Old Testament and the New Testament and the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church are like great food and drink. You know that when your body is hungry it needs food and drink. Otherwise, it gets weak. Well, when your spirit is hungry, it needs food and drink, too. It needs the truths and the good things that the Word teaches it, so that it can have happiness. These are what the Lord is giving to us in His Word. So the Word is a wonderful feast that can lead us to heaven and make us happy forever.

But sometimes it doesn't feel like that, does it? Sometimes, just when we should be reading the Word or worshiping the Lord, we decide that we've got to go and do something else. The Lord doesn't say we've got to read His Word all the time, just like that man didn't invite all those people to his party every day, all day. It was just one special time. And there are special times we should read the Word or say our prayers or come to church to learn about the Lord.

But sometimes we feel that we are too busy. We might think, "There's a show on television I want to watch this morning, and I can't miss it." Or, "I want to read my book now, I don't want to say my prayers or do my reading from the Lord's Word." This is like the man who had bought a field and wanted to go look at it, or like the man who had bought the oxen and wanted to see how they worked, or like the man who wanted to stay with his wife. Sometimes, it just seems as though anything else is more fun than reading the Word or going to church.

So what did the master of the house say? He said to the servants, “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” (Luke 14:21). Well now, if you were a poor person in the streets of the city and someone came and invited you to a wonderful party, to the best meal you had ever had, how would you feel? You would be pretty excited and thrilled, wouldn't you? What a difference, compared to the people who were invited and didn't want to come!

Now the Lord is actually telling us about times when we are excited and thrilled with His Word. Sometimes we are a little unhappy or we have done something we know we should not have done. Sometimes we feel humble—we see that we're not as good as we should be. We feel poor or blind or lame. We don't know where to go or what to do. These are the times when we know that we really need the Lord. We really want to read His Word, or go to church, or pray to the Lord.

So in this parable, the Lord is telling us about two kinds of people. The first are the people who thought that other things were more important and that they didn't need the supper. These people who made excuses represent us at the times when we feel we don't really need the Lord's Word. Anything else is more important. The second kind of people are those who didn't expect to be invited to the great supper and who were thrilled to go because they were poor or blind or had something wrong with one of their legs. These people represent us at the times when we know we need the Lord's Word and are so happy to have its help.

At the end of the story, the servant told his master, “It is done as you commanded, and still there is room” (Luke 14:22). And the master said, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). Well that's the way the Lord feels, too. He wants to invite everyone that He possibly can to come into heaven. It doesn't matter where people are from or what religion they belong to. He wants to give them the wonderful truths of His Word. He wants His heaven to be full.

And so the Lord looks into each one of us, and every time He finds us feeling poor—like we need Him—and every time He finds us feeling blind—like we don't know what to do—and every time He finds us feeling lame—not quite sure how much strength we have to do the things that are right—at those times He says to us, “Come, for all things are now ready” (Luke 14:17). He asks us to come to His supper, to learn from His truth. And when we come, then we find joy.

So remember this parable the next time you think, “I should be doing my reading from the Word or I should be saying my prayers but I just want to do something else.” Remember that the people who made excuses not to come to the supper could have done all those other things at a different time. Then say to yourself, “No, I am poor. I am lame. I am blind. I need the spiritual food and drink from the Lord's Word. And if I do this, then, in time, I will come to the wonderful supper of heavenly happiness.”

Amen.