

The Communion of the Dinner Table

‘Two men were talking. One of them asked, “I heard you ate out last night. Where did you go?” “Let me think. It was — it was — my memory sure is getting bad. Wait a minute and I can tell you. What’s that beautiful flower that smells so wonderful and has thorns on the stem?” “Sounds like a rose”. “That’s it! That’s it!” he replied. Then he hollered to his wife in the other room, “Hey, Rose! Where did we eat out last night?”” You know, I always thought that when you shared a meal together with someone, or even just a snack, you were fellowshiping with the other person. Seems like this man may have been having fellowship with his wife, despite not remembering her name! But that will never happen at one very special table—our Lord’s table.

Our Lord gave us a description of His table in the parable in Matthew 22. This was no ordinary feast. Here was a banquet to end all wedding banquets. The preparations were meticulous beyond imagining. Only the finest of ingredients had been used in every exquisite, cost-is-no-object dish. Everything was perfect. The guest list was equally extensive—everybody who was anybody. When all was ready, the host of the feast, the King, sent out servants to personally escort all the guests to the banquet. But incongruity of incongruities, no one on the guest list wanted to

attend the social event of the century! (Sounds like there were some never-Trumpers in those parts.) Every last scoundrel one of them spouted excuses for refusing the king's invite. All involved one or other worldly concern. Some claimed their farms needed urgent attention, others their businesses. In the similar parable the Lord told recorded in Luke 14, the excuses were more specifically identified. One involved the purchase of some land, another the acquisition of farm animals. The last noted excuse was for a man who had just gotten married. This excuse was particularly galling because this feast was itself a wedding feast, and how appropriate would it have been for this man and his wife who had just gotten married themselves, to be so honored to attend this greatest of all wedding feasts.

So all the guests on the list had refused the invitation. Some had even become violent and murdered the pesky servants sent to escort them to this banquet they had no interest in attending. For supposedly even Heaven itself "knew" that they themselves were far more important than anything this "king" could come up with. The king was necessarily enraged that His magnanimous kindness, generosity and honor was being thrown back in his face, as if even he was beneath the invitees. So he dispatched his army and burned their city to the ground.

That taught a painful lesson to those who had refused his care and taken his beneficence for granted. Never would they be invited to the king's side ever again. They had had their chance,

but they would rather do their own thing. And so they forever lost their chance of fellowshiping with the king. But here was this magnificent banquet, all prepared and waiting. And so the king sent his servants to the “street corners”. In the version in Luke, the servants went not only to the streets and alleys, but in order to fill the palace with guests, they went also to the highways, the country roads, even behind hedge rows, to find folks to attend the banquet. And so, at last, the huge wedding feast had guests, and the banquet hall was filled with honored celebrants.

All were properly attired for a grand wedding, in long white robes, as was the ancient custom. Similar raiment of “pure white linen” is provided for the saints during their heavenly marriage at the great Supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:8: “[The bride of Christ] has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear”. For the fine linen represents the good deeds of God’s holy people.’ But there was one man at this king’s feast that curiously wasn’t wearing the proper white robe. Matthew 22:11-13 reads: “But when the king came in to meet the guests, he noticed a man who wasn’t wearing the proper clothes for a wedding. ‘Friend’, he asked, ‘how is it that you are here without wedding clothes?’ But the man had no reply. Then the king said to his aides, ‘Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’.” For this man had no good deeds, for he was not one of God’s holy people. This man who was forcibly evicted from the wedding feast and cast

into the outer darkness, also known as hell, was representative of all people who want God's blessings without following God. Such people may claim to be Christians but rarely if ever darken the doors of a church. Some though maintain church memberships in good standing, but their hearts are far from the truth of God. In recent weeks, we've just heard how former vice-president Joe Biden claims to be Roman Catholic while Senator Kamala Harris claims to have "faith". As democrats pulling the party line of unlimited abortion in all circumstances, their claims are patently hypocritical. A number of Catholic bishops have committed to refusing communion to Biden unless and until he repents. As things look now, don't hold your breath. But we can keep praying for him, and Harris as well. As well we should and must.

The Lord Jesus also commands such "fake" Christians in no uncertain terms to "depart from Me" in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (NASB). Speaking of lawlessness, we're seeing a whole lot of lawlessness in our streets and courtrooms and government bureaucracies these days. Even many who are supposed to uphold and execute the laws are lawbreakers them-

selves. Father God, truly help us!

This passage brings up another point. Our Lord says to these imposter believers, “I never knew you”. This reveals that even though people can claim to know God, calling Him, “Lord, Lord”, they don’t actually know Him, but only pretend to know Him. And if they never knew Him and He never knew them, then they never had fellowship with Him. They never shared a meal together with Him. They never in reality received His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. They were thoroughly fake. If they never fellowshiped with Him, obviously they never “abided” in Him, thus their lives never joined His, and they were always among the rebels, the enemies of God. Among Christ Jesus’ most ardent critics were the Pharisees, and most of the leading priests as well. The Lord had harsh words for these people, and though several of them actually conversed with Him, not always on cordial terms, He never “knew” them personally. He knew who they were, He knew of them, but He didn’t know them because they didn’t know Him. There was no relationship.

Like the Pharisee we spoke of last week who went to the Temple to pray and, perhaps unaware of his own arrogance and pride, prayed “I thank You, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give You a tenth of my income”. I don’t think that can even really be called a prayer. It was more on the lines of an announcement, a proclamation to God, of just how

good and worthy this person is. Of just how much this person deserves to receive God's blessings. For he has worked so very hard, so very "religiously" to please God, that God actually owes him blessings, and ultimately salvation with eternal life, because he has "earned" it. Yet Lord Jesus judged him saying that he was not justified before God. For he had refused God's offer of grace.

That Pharisee had attempted to gain salvation by working for it. That doesn't work, and never will. All other religions of the world try this too, including the warped form of Judaism that Lord Jesus confronted and which exists yet today. Human beings can never begin to be good enough. Which is why we must introduce ourselves to Lord Jesus, and in initiating this relationship, discover that He already knows us, because He knew that we would eventually come to Him in humility. And then receive His invitation to a seat at His banquet table, and partake of His Body and Blood, His Own Self for our spiritually-enlivening, eternal-life imparting food. But this table is but a foretaste of the truly glorious banquet that was foretold even back by the prophet Isaiah, in 25:6-8: "In Jerusalem, the Lord of Heaven's Armies will spread a wonderful feast for all the people of the world. It will be a delicious banquet with clear, well-aged wine and choice meat. There He will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears". That is a time of fellowship worth our very lives!

