

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 45, “The Great Banquet,” Part X, Luke 14:15-24

1. The p. can be even called the p. of “The Banquet of the 7 Speeches.” They fall naturally into 7 stanzas, with ideas in the first four and then other key ideas in the last three;

“And he said to him,

‘A man once gave a GB

And he invited many

- (1) And he sent his servant at the hour of the Banquet to say, ‘Come, all is ready now!’ But they all began making excuses.

- (2) The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field And I must go out to see it. I pray that you have me excused.’

- (3) And another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen. and I go to test them I pray you have me excused.’

- (4) And another said, I have married a bride, And therefore-- I cannot come.’

- (5) So the servant came and reported to the Master. Then the householder in anger said To his servant, ‘Go out quickly, into streets And the lanes of the city, Bring in the poor, Maimed, blind and lame.’

- (6) And the servant said, ‘Sir,’ what you have Commanded has been done, and there is still room.’

- (7) And the master said to the Servant, ‘go out’ Into the highways and the hedges, And compel to enter, that my house may be filled.’

GREAT BANQUET

MANY INVITED

DO THIS

BECAUSE OF THIS
EXCUSES

I DID THIS

I MUST DO THIS

EXCUSE ME

I DID THIS

I MUST DO THIS

EXCUSE ME

I DID THIS

THUS I MUST

NOT COME

MASTER_GO

THE STREETS

FILL UP

SERVANT

I WENT

NOT FULL

MASTER_GO

TO HIGHWAYS

FILL UP

For I tell you (plural)

None of those men who were invited

Shall taste my banquet

to enjoy it must come in. They cannot have the portions sent out for them to enjoy while they busy themselves with other things."

1 The *Spirit of the Lord* is upon me

THOSE INVITED

2 For He has sent me to preach to the poor

MY BANQUET

PREACH

3 He has *sent me* to proclaim to the captives—Freedom

SEND OUT-

FREEDOM

4 and recovering *sight to the blind*;

SIGHT

3' To *send out* the oppressed---in *freedom*

SEND OUT--

FREEDOM

2' and to *proclaim*

PROCLAIM

3' the acceptable *year of the Lord*

YEAR OF THE LORD

2. *"Jesus does not teach here a mechanically operating predestination, which determines from all eternity who shall or shall not be brought into the Kingdom. Neither does He proclaim that t man's entry into the Kingdom is purely his own affair. The two essential points in His teaching are that no man can enter the Kingdom of God w/o the invitation of God, and that no man can remain outside of it, but by his own deliberate choice. Man cannot save himself; be he is/can be damned, damn himself. He Jesus sees the deepest tragedy of life, not in the many wrong and foolish things that men do, or the many good things that they fail to accomplish, but in their rejection of God's greatest gift."* (Sayings, p. 130).
3. This then brings us to an examination of the symbols that the original listening audience would instinctively have identified. In the light of these we will try to determine the single response that Jesus was trying to evoke from the listeners, and finally, attempt to discern the theological cluster of the p.. First then, the symbols; What precisely would the original audience have instinctively identified? At least the following can be affirmed with some confidence. ("Poet and Peasant through Peasant Eyes," p. 110).
4. Now we must add Jesus Himself. To try to identify God as the host in distinction to the servant, who becomes, Jesus or John the Baptist or both is to press the symbols beyond what could have originally been instinctively perceived by the original audience. Granted, many commentators through the centuries of the life of the church have

identified the person of Jesus with the host or the servant. In the Qumran, it was the Messiah who summoned the faithful to the messianic banquet. But the story has a close identification between the servant and his master that is typical of the Oriental world generally. The form is considered a mirror of the latter. We have already noted that the original guests address the servant as master and ask directly to be excused. Indeed, all through the p. the servant is his master's voice. For the reference to this combined symbol is God acting through His unique agent, Jesus. Thus Jesus is able to affirm that this is "MY banquet!"

5. At the same time, he is the unique agent of God, through whom God is acting in the inauguration of the messianic banquet of the age of salvation and the invitations to the different types of guests. How then are these symbols used by Jesus for the pressing the original audience to a concrete response? The original audience could have hardly missed the thrust of the p. Jesus is saying to them;
"God's messiah is here! He is inviting you to the Messianic GB of the day of salvation. The banquet is now ready. Do not refuse! For if you do (with your ridiculous excuses) other will fill your places from among the outcasts of Israel, and in the (future) an invitation will go out to the gentiles. The GB will proceed w/o you. It will not be cancelled or postponed. The eschatological age has dawned. Respond to the invitation or opt out of participation in God's salvation.
6. Like the p of the Prodigal Son, this p. is told in defense of The Gospel to the outcasts. In Luke 15:2, the Pharisaic complaint is specifically that Jesus eats with the tax collectors and sinners. Table fellowship with Jesus is participation in the messianic banquet in anticipation of the completion of all things in the end time. What then are the theological themes found in this p.? A rich cluster of theological motifs combine to give the p. unique power. Among these are;
 - a. Jesus is God's unique agent for participation in the Messianic GB of salvation.
 - b. The Messianic GB is promised by Isaiah 25:6-9 is inaugurated in the table fellowship of Jesus (realized eschatology). But the p. is left open ended. All the guests are not assembled. The p. breaks off with the house not yet full. Thus there is an unfulfilled future anticipated by the p. (future eschatology). The full vision of the Messianic GB is yet in the future, when

- the faithful will sit down in the Kingdom of Abraham/Isaac and Jacob (Luke 13: 28-29). Thus the Messianic GB of the end times is both now and not yet.
- c. The excuses people offer for refusal to respond to the invitation to join in the GB are stupid and insulting. The original guests have their counterpart in every age.
 - d. The invitation to the GB is extended to the unworthy who can in no way repay or compensate the host for his grace. These outcasts may be from within and from without the community.
 - e. Grace is unbelievable. This is so true that some special pleading is required for the undeserving to be convinced that the invitation is genuine.
 - f. There is a centrifugal force of mission taught in the p.. The servant, with his invitation, is told to go outside the city. If God's salvation is to reach the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6) someone must take the message out and present it with all the winsomeness possible. (Luke 14:23).
 - g. There is a self-imposed concept of judgment. Those who by their own choice reject the invitation thereby shut themselves off from the fellowship with the hosts and his guests.
 - h. Time runs out on the invitation. As Charles Smith said, "Places are not kept open indefinitely at the Messianic table and those who assume...that there will always be room for them are likely to receive a rude shock!"
 - i. The guests must be invited. No one "storms the party!" Attendance is by invitation only. Yet the guests must respond and come on in. There is no participation at a distance.
7. There is a rich series of theological motifs contained in this p.. It is little wonder that this p. is not given a prominent place among other p. spoken in the defense of the Gospel to the outcasts. Indeed, it speaks powerfully in any age. The question of the believing communities' continuing fellowship with Jesus is a question that is beyond the scope of study of the p. itself, the p. as we have observed, is not finished. A part of the meaning of the communion service is the concept of continuing table fellowship with the now risen Lord in anticipation of the completion of the GB of the end times. This p. profoundly relates to that understanding. Those who ate and drank with Jesus during his earthly ministry are engaged in the proleptic celebration of the Messianic banquet at the end times. This p. offers at least a part of the theological rationale for that celebration. Is not the communion service than an extension of the same celebration? For our 'Lutheran' theology it is "A foretaste of the feast to come!"