

PARABLES, "THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!"

Study 46, "The Great Banquet," Part XI, 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

1. Theological motifs (Continued)
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Grace is unbelievable. This is so true that some special pleading is required for the undeserving to be convinced that the invitation is genuine.
 - d. 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).
 - e. 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.
 - f. 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!"
 - g. 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.
2. 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 then an extension of the same celebration? For our 'Lutheran' theology it is "A foretaste of the feast to come!"

3. One final consideration that is also beyond the scope of the study of the p. itself, but worthy of note passing, is to observe the different ways Matthew and Luke deal with the problem of presumption. In Luke there is a series of p. that proclaims the concepts of God's free grace. These include (in order) the GB, the Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, the Prodigal Son (as we understand it), and the Unjust Stewart (Bailey, Poet). The reader of Luke's Gospel may well ask, if grace is free, is it not also cheap? The arrangement of material gives the reader the answer. In between two Grace p.'s, each declaring pure grace (The GB and The Prodigal Son), is a collection of sayings that speaks of the high cost of discipleship in clear and demanding terms (See Luke 14:25-35). Matthew deals with the same problem in a different way. There, in a sequel to the GB, the guests (also freely invited) are held accountable to appear in proper garments. The GB is free, but acceptance carries with it certain responsibilities. (Matthew 22:11-14). Thus the GG sets for weighty theological themes in a brief, but unforgettable p. that continues to speak with power in every age.

THE OBEDIENT SERVANT: LUKE 17:7-10

4. This little p.'s significance outweighs the attention that is usually receives. In the Luke account the reader has been told that the master who returns from the GB will serve His servants. (Luke 12:35-38). In a few verses, the reader will discover that the Jesus is among His disciples; not one who sits, but one who serves (Luke 22:27). For the insensitive these texts are invitations to presumption. If Jesus came and is coming to serve us; fine; here we are, expecting to reap the benefits of his service! While in no way denying the thrust of the above p.'s. here Jesus clearly asserts his authority over His disciples. He is the master! They are His servants, and let there be no misunderstanding! Because this p. uses some of the precise imagery of the p. of the Waiting Servant in 12:35-38, that p. will need to be examined prior to our study of 17:7-10.
5. In the overall outline of the central section of Luke (Bailey) 17:1-10 appears as a miscellaneous collection of sayings on offenses, forgiveness, faith and duty. Thus we need to find no tie between this p. and the dialogue with the apostles' that proceed it. We would rather examine it in the light of two other major discussions of the master-servant theme

mentioned above. If, then, this p. is part of a miscellaneous collection, to whom is addressed?

6. The three previous paragraphs are addressed to the disciples and to the apostles. In this p. the text of Luke assumes the same audience. The phrase, "which one of you", is used to introduce sayings to the disciples, crowds and opponents. (Bailey; Jeremias). It seems like Luke is correct and the disciples are his audience. The major argument against this view is the assumption that the disciple would not have had servants, but this is not the case. In the West having a servant puts one in the upper middle class, but not so in the East. The poorest of the poor let their children out as servants so they can be fed, and the people of very little means have had such servants in their homes. James, John and their father, Zebedee, own a boat and have hired servants, (see Mark 1:20). Other disciples may be of similar means. Furthermore, only one servant is involved. The Herdsman/plowman is also the cook. Thus the master is a man of modest income. Applebaum writes, "Talmudic traditions assume, as a matter of course, that the ordinary man has at least one slave." (JPFC II) Also the p. does not assume that the master is a landowner. The servant may be plowing a rented field. There is no specific hint in the Gospels that the disciples were from among the poorest of the poor. Finally, the p. appeals to the audience on the bases of commonly known cultural assumptions. It does not necessarily peg the listener to a specific economic class. That is, the p. does not say, "Listen, you master of servants." Rather it says, "Does not the servant-master relationship as you know it presume such things?"
7. The same is true on The p. of the Lost Sheep, where Jesus addresses Pharisees with the same identical introductory phrase uses here ("Which one of you, having....."). Shepherds were among the proscribed trades for the Pharisees (Bailey, Poet). Thus there were really not shepherds. In the same way Jesus is appealing, here to the common Middle Eastern understanding of how servants and masters act and is not necessarily affirming that they owned slaves or engaged servants. Thus there seems to be no remaining for questioning Luke's judgment that the p. was originally addressed to the disciples/apostles.