

THE FEAST OF MERCY

Text: Luke 14:1-24

Introduction:

1. The feasts commanded by God were physical observances that had mental and emotional benefits.
2. Of course, they also taught important spiritual lessons.
3. Under the New Testament, the only feast commanded by God is the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper.
4. However, the concept of feasting and the principles learned from the Old Testament feasts are used frequently in the Gospel.
5. One example comes from the parables of Jesus and describes the feast of mercy...

I. The Culture of Dining in First Century Judea

- A. Hosting or participating in a social meal was a highly ordered affair.
 1. Plutarch wrote: "The greatest profuseness in a feast appears neither delightful nor genteel, unless beautified by order."
 2. He went on to describe the importance of seating people according to "age, honor, or the like."
 3. These occasions served to show how "the man in dignity might be honored, the inferior learn to give place, and the disposer be exercised in distinguishing what is proper and convenient."
- B. Thus, the seating arrangement was structured strictly according to class and position in society.
- C. As a result, these meals were often exclusive – limited to one's acquaintances, especially those who would reflect honor upon the host.
- D. These meals were arranged largely to serve one's own interests, not to practice hospitality or generosity.
- E. A necessary part of this system was reciprocity – one who was invited to a meal must later host a meal for others (cf. Luke 16:1-9).
- F. Naturally, in such an arrangement, the poor and destitute would not be welcome guests at one's table.
 1. In Jewish society, the physically deformed or disabled were often viewed as unclean or suffering due to sin (cf. Leviticus 21:17-21; John 9:1-3).
 2. In Greek culture, they were generally seen as objects of derision and ridicule.
 3. Occasionally they would be included at a meal to entertain the guests, like a sideshow at a circus.
 4. They were often mocked and ridiculed as "the uninvited."
- G. Jesus sought to change society's order and views of cultural honor.

Bible Feasts

- II. Three Lessons from Jesus' Parables (Luke 14:1-14)
- A. **Lesson 1:** All men have value as children of God and are invited to enter the kingdom of Christ (14:1-6).
1. The man who would have been ridiculed to honor the host of the feast was healed to honor Jesus the Christ.
 2. To others, this man was beneath them due to his social standing and his likely sinful lifestyle.
 3. To Jesus, he was a child of God worthy of decency, respect, and healing.
 4. They viewed him as lower than a donkey or ox; Jesus viewed him as a man made in the image of God.
 5. There is no room for prejudice or social hierarchies in the kingdom of Jesus!
- B. **Lesson 2:** The humble shall be exalted for the lowest seat is the place of honor (14:7-11).
1. They sought for honor (or, at least, the appearance of honor) among men.
 2. Jesus declared that trying to exalt oneself (even with a false humility) would only result in embarrassment and rejection – ultimately by God.
 3. Instead, the humble will be exalted by God into His kingdom.
 4. There is no place for pride in the kingdom of Jesus!
- C. **Lesson 3:** Do good simply to do good; for only the reward of God will endure (14:12-14).
1. They sought to do for others in order to be repaid by them.
 2. Their kindness was actually self-interest disguised as hospitality.
 3. Jesus proclaimed that the “uninvited” should be invited – out of generosity motivated by true love and compassion.
 4. There is no home for selfishness in the kingdom of Jesus!
- D. These lessons prepared the audience for the parable that followed.
- III. The Feast of Mercy (Luke 14:15-24)
- A. The children of Israel looked forward to dining in the kingdom of God, but for selfish motives of position and pride.
- B. When they learned the truth about the spiritual nature of Jesus' kingdom, they would excuse themselves rudely from partaking in it.
- C. On the other hand, the “uninvited” would answer the Lord's invitation with gladness, gratitude, and praise!
1. All men were poor, maimed, halt, and blind because of sin.
 2. It is the mercy of the Lord that invites such sinners into His kingdom.
- D. All who dine at the Lord's table in His kingdom participate in the feast of mercy.