

Weekly Devotional - Guess Who's Coming To Dinner 3-20-19

When one of those who were reclining at the table with HIM heard this, he said to HIM, "Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) is he who will eat bread in the kingdom of GOD!" But JESUS said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many guests; and at the dinner hour he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, because everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have purchased a piece of land and I have to go out and see it; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have purchased five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' And another said, 'I have [recently] married a wife, and for that reason I am unable to come.' So, the servant came back and reported this to his master. Then [his master,] the head of the household, became angry [at the rejections of his invitation] and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and the disabled and the blind and the lame.' And the servant [after returning] said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' Then the master told the servant, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled [with guests]. For I tell you, not one of those who were invited [and declined] will taste my dinner.'" [Luke 14:15-24 AMP]

In 1967 a movie called, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner", was a story about when Joanna Drayton (Katharine Houghton), a free-thinking white woman, and black doctor John Prentice (Sidney Poitier) become engaged; they travel to San Francisco to meet her parents, Matt Drayton (Spencer Tracy) and his wife Christina (Katharine Hepburn), wealthy liberals who must confront the latent racism the coming marriage arouses. It is an understatement to say that they were shocked at who came to dinner! In Luke 14, JESUS tells of another dinner, but the invited guests give excuses as to why they cannot attend. People, today, make excuses as to why they can't come to dinner from Sunday to Sunday. The following are nine excuses used by people, today, for **Not Going to Church - 1. Sundays are my only days to sleep in; 2. I have to**

work on Sundays; 3. People judge me; 4. I don't have the right clothes to wear; 5. I don't need to; 6. I don't get anything out of it; 7. All the songs they sing are old; 8. People aren't very friendly; and 9. I have been feeling discouraged lately. There are even more excuses given than these! We need to make every effort, not every excuse, to worship with other saints. When you want to be at worship, you can almost always find a way. If you don't want to be at worship, you can almost always find an excuse.

The Parable of the Great Banquet, found in Luke 14, is similar to the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22, but with some significant differences. The story in Luke's Gospel was told at a dinner that Jesus attended. JESUS had just healed a man with dropsy and taught a brief lesson on serving others. JESUS, then says that those who serve others "will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous". At the mention of the resurrection, someone at the table with JESUS said, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of GOD" (vs 15). In reply, JESUS tells the Parable of the Great Banquet. In the parable, a man planned a large banquet and sent out invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to contact each of the invited guests, telling them that all was ready, and the meal was about to start (vs 16-17). One after another, the guests made excuses for not coming. One had just bought a piece of land and said he had to go see it (vs 18). Another had purchased some oxen and said he was on the way to yoke them up and try them out (vs 19). Another gave the excuse that he was newly married and therefore could not come (vs 20).

When the master of the house heard these flimsy excuses, he was angry. He told his servant to forget the guest list and go into the back streets and alleyways of the town and invite "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (verse 21). The servant had already brought in the down-and-out townspeople, and still there was room

in the banquet hall. So the master sent his servant on a broader search: "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full" (vs 22-23). JESUS ends the parable by relating the master's determination that "not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet" (verse 24). The statement that prompted the parable is key. The man who, in verse 15, looks forward to dining in the Messianic kingdom probably subscribed to the popular notion that only Jews would be part of that kingdom. The parable JESUS tells is aimed at debunking that notion. The master of the house is GOD; the great banquet is the kingdom, a metaphor that was suggested by the speaker at the table. The invited guests picture the Jewish nation. The kingdom was prepared for them, but when JESUS came preaching that "the kingdom of heaven is near" Matt. 4:17], HE was rejected. "HE came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" [John 1:11]. The excuses for skipping the banquet were weak! All three excuses in the parable reveal insincerity on the part of those invited. The interpretation is that the Jews of JESUS' day had no valid excuse for spurning HIS message; in fact, they had every reason to accept JESUS as their Messiah.

The invitation is opened up to society's maimed and downtrodden. These were the types of people that the Pharisees considered "unclean" and under GOD'S curse [cf. John 9:1-2,34]. JESUS' involvement with tax collectors and sinners brought condemnation from the Pharisees, yet it showed the extent of GOD'S grace [Matt. 9:10-11]. The fact that the master in the parable sends the servant far afield to persuade everyone to come indicates that the offer of salvation would be extended to the Gentiles and "to the ends of the earth" [Acts 1:8]. The master is not satisfied with a partially full banquet hall; he wants every place at the table to be filled. John MacArthur's comment on this fact is that "GOD is more willing to save sinners than sinners are to be saved." Those who ignored the invitation to the banquet chose their own punishment—they missed out. The master respects their choice by making it permanent: they would not "taste of my banquet." So it will be with GOD'S judgment on those who choose to reject CHRIST. They will never taste the joys of heaven. No excuse, not home, not job, not even family, is good enough to skip out on GOD'S great banquet.

"Excuses are the tools of the weak and incompetent. They build bridges to nowhere and tunnels to nothingness... Those who excel in

**them seldom do in anything else, therefore, there are no excuses.”
(Frank Ocean)**

**May we always have a mind through which CHRIST
thinks; a heart through which CHRIST loves; a
voice through which CHRIST speaks; a hand
through which CHRIST helps; and be a vessel
through which CHRIST lives!**

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**True Light Christian Min. - Pastor Gary Martin - 3719 Lesh Street
N.E. - Canton, OH 44705 - 330-455-7761 – Sunday Morning Prayer 8
a.m.; Sunday school 8:45 a.m. – Morning Worship 10 a.m.**