

COME TO THE FEAST

World Communion

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, October 1, 2006



**WORLD
COMMUNION
SUNDAY**

The bible tells a story of a feast that no one could enjoy because those present acted in such a vain and dumb manner that Jesus used their behavior as an example to teach how different and unique God's Kingdom is: Just listen!

Luke 14:1, 7-14

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath, they were watching him closely. When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at

the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

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People can be so funny! They spend money they do not have to buy things they do not need to impress people they do not like. Mark Twain said he spent a large sum of money to trace his family tree and then spent twice as much trying to keep his ancestry a secret.

Some people's pride often makes them a target for humor. A well-known humorist was leaving an elegant salon one evening. As usual, he was at least slightly intoxicated. He found himself face to face with a uniformed man whom he took to be the door attendant. "Would you get me a taxi, my good man?" he requested. The uniformed man drew himself up proudly. "See here, I happen to be a rear admiral in the United States Navy." The humorist responded, "O, Just get me a battleship then."

Jesus was dining at the house of a Pharisee. The Pharisees were watching Jesus closely -- in all probability to "trap" him. It makes you wonder if they are enjoying their meal at all. Certainly, they are missing an opportunity to enjoy the wisdom of the man they had invited.

On that occasion Jesus shared his vision of what the Kingdom of God is all about. Jesus made it clear that God's Kingdom's guest list is different from ours. Annually on the first Sunday of October Christians across the world celebrate **World Communion** reminding us that the table of the Lord is not only for us. In God's Kingdom, there is room for all. There will be room for people who are fleeing injustice. People who have been on the outside looking in -- the poor, the disabled, those who cannot see with physical eyes. The overlooked, the downtrodden, the dispossessed all will have a place in the Kingdom of God. Listen to Jesus'

words, "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you."

We are not the hosts and it is not for us to decide who is welcome and who is not. **It is tempting for all of us to want to restrict our relationships to those who are members of our own "Inner Circle."** At the Lord's Table, there are many surprises. As God's people, we are breaking bread with people we did not even know existed. The kingdom list is substantially different from one most of us would have selected.

This party is specially prepared for those who cannot repay the invitation. **There is a subtle theme present throughout the New Testament--it is of a God who throws parties.** A woman finds a **lost** coin and throws a party--a **lost** boy comes home and his father also throws a party. Remember how Jesus compared himself to a bridegroom at a wedding feast. He contrasted himself sharply with John the Baptist who came fasting. **Jesus was filled with life and joy and a spirit of celebration.** Many Christians even today have a difficult time with this side of our Lord's life. Many of us have an easier time thinking of him as "a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief" than we do as the joyful man the common people of his own day came to know and to love.

Fred Craddock, **the well-known Professor of Preaching and New Testament**, tells of growing up during the depression and how often money was in short supply for his family. The family had to move to town to seek work. Every able family member tried to find some work to earn money. **The family kept a cigar box on the kitchen table where all the funds that were earned were kept in order that his mother could pay the rent and buy the necessary food items.** However, occasionally his Dad on a Friday night would take the money, go to town, and buy **Fred's mother a box of chocolates or a beautiful rose. She would always "fuss" and tell her husband that they did not have the funds.** One day his father said something that Fred Craddock never forgot. **"When our lives are defined by what goes in and out of the box, we will then be poor people. Life would have then robbed us of our joy."**

Joy is an essential part of the Christian life. The Pharisees had that same joyless attitude as Judas, the traitor. It was Judas who was offended when a woman anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume. After all, the perfume could be sold to provide for the poor. Caring for the poor is important. **But it is also important for the community of faith to celebrate the goodness and the generosity of God.** It is important for us to share in the joy of being part of the family of God. After all, God rejoices every time a sinner comes home. God is a generous, gracious God who throws parties.

Our name is on the party list. Did you hear what I said? **Jesus is throwing a feast and you and I are invited.** All we have to do is accept the invitation

However, if you say, "I don't deserve to go to Christ's party." Then I will say, "That's the point." Read the story. **The only people worth inviting are people who do not deserve it and cannot do anything to merit it.** God's mercy and grace, saves us. God's works, **not ours**, save us.

We are worthy to attend the banquet because the Host deems us worthy and clothes us in the righteousness of God. The only thing **that could keep us out** is our **refusal** to accept God's invitation

**COME TO THE TABLE!**

Amen