

It's His Banquet

by Richard E. Bieber

We should not worry about the outcome of the banquet, but rather trust in God's sovereignty and serve with love and faithfulness.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, Matthew 22:9, Luke 14:16, John 7:37, Ephesians 2:10

Topics: "Gods Sovereignty", "Evangelism"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the parable of the great banquet from Luke 14, emphasizing that God the Father is the host of the banquet and Jesus is the servant who invites people. The banquet is guaranteed to be great and full because God orchestrates it. Jesus remains confident even when faced with rejection, knowing that some will respond to His call and experience the Father's love. As believers, we are now the servants sent out to proclaim the invitation to all, trusting in God's sovereignty over the outcome of the banquet.

Transcript

A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, "Come, for all is now ready." Luke 14 The man who gives the banquet is God the Father, and the servant who goes out and brings people to the banquet is the Son. The Servant doesn't have to worry about whether the banquet is going to be a success. He doesn't go to pieces when people reject his message or give him a hard time. - The banquet is going to be great. - The house is going to be full. - The Father will see to that.

Jesus probably gave this parable at the last dinner he ever ate in the house of a Pharisee. The fact that his invitation to the Kingdom was being rejected by most of the guests that day, didn't hurt Jesus' feelings, or throw him into despair, or cause him to give up his ministry. There's going to be a banquet, with these men or without them. When the people who say they love God make excuses, Jesus then goes to the people who never said they loved God. And then to the people who are far far away from God, knowing that there will be some who, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.

There will be some who are hungry and thirsty enough for God to come to the banquet. We never see Jesus knocking himself out trying to make people come to the banquet against their will. - Tricking them. - Bribing them. - Manipulating them. - Or, organizing them to death. When he went out into the highways and the hedges, inviting them to come in, the only force he ever used was love. "If any one thirst let them come to me and drink." "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Jesus was confident all the time because he knew that some would respond to his call. Not all, not even a majority but some. And he also knew that every single person who responded to his invitation would taste the Father's love, that God the Father would come in behind every word he spoke and confirm it. That not one soul who came hungering and thirsting to the door he opened would go away empty. That was 2000 years ago. Now we are his body. Corporately we are the servant of the parable. - Now it's we who are sent out to proclaim those who were invited, "Come for all things are now ready." - Now it's we who are sent to the poor and maimed and the halt and the blind, to the highways and hedges to compel them to come in, with that same burning love that drove our Lord to the cross to lay down his life for us.

But we seem to be having a problem. We become nervous and upset when people fail to respond to our call. As if it all hinges on us. - That we have to make people believe, we have to make them understand, we have to make their lives change. And that if we can't make these things happen, the banquet is going to turn into a disaster. It's God's banquet, not ours. God prepared this banquet centuries before we were born. God orders it and rules it. God draws people into it. We are merely a servant in the body of our Lord.

If we will only learn to function as the servant of the parable and leave the outcome of the banquet to the Heavenly Father, we won't be so nervous, or so easily discouraged, or so worried every time the response is negative. After all, our Father isn't helpless. He knows how to fill his banquet hall. It's a foregone conclusion that our Father's banquet is going to be absolutely the most wonderful dinner our minds could imagine. In fact, it already is. At his banquet we are the servant.

As the servant, we are sent to three groups: 1. To those who say they love God - to tell them. 2. To the poor, maimed, halt and blind - to bring them. 3. To the highways and hedges - to compel them. First, we are sent to those who say they love God to tell them that dinner is ready. The Kingdom of God is not off in the future, not something we wait for while we go on messing around in the world. It's here! - We have to know this from our own experience. - We have to be living in the joy of our Father's banquet every single day in spite of our problems and our trials.

"That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves," Jesus prayed the night before he was crucified. And that joy is here and we can live in it, every minute of the day, even when we're walking through a valley of trouble. Then we can truthfully say to the people who say they love God and are waiting for the Messiah, "Open your heart.... God will fill it." "Call on the name of Jesus Jesus will manifest himself." And God will come in behind those words and make them live.

Now, if these people who say they love God come up with excuses when we announce that dinner's ready, that's their problem. We can't force them. We're not going to be upset by their rejection. We're just going to tell them as faithfully and as clearly as we can that dinner's ready. Secondly, we're sent into the streets and lanes of the city to bring in---not just to tell, but to bring in--the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind. Go find those souls who are already so beaten and wounded by the world, they aren't going to argue with you, they're just going to be glad to see you---and bring them into the company of God's people.

How can it be that churches can go on for years and years and never pay any attention to these forgotten ones? Have we not been sent to the poor, maimed, halt and blind? Here we are knocking ourselves out to drag certain special people into the Kingdom with no success, while over here in the streets and lanes of the city is a sea of humanity just waiting to be brought. They'll come without a protest. They'll be so glad to be wanted. You walk up to the man and say, "Come," and he comes!

With a little scratching around, every car that comes to our churches could be filled with these forgotten folks. They don't need to be convinced. They just need to be brought. - They're sitting right now staring at the walls of some convalescent home. - Or watching the roaches run races on the ceiling of their room on Third Street. - Or looking out the window of their lonely home hoping that someone will come to them. - Or they're sitting on their doorstep or back porch working on fifteen cans of beer

What else is there to do? They don't need the "Four Spiritual Laws," or the "Seven Steps To Salvation," or the "Secret Of Successful Soul Winning." All they need is the love of Jesus manifested in the concrete deeds of someone who cares. You say you don't know of any such people? Then, Jesus is telling you to go out and start looking for them. Because if you don't know any, then, my friend, you need them more than they need you. Thirdly, we are to go out into the highways and hedges.... out where people are far, far from God and compel them to come to the banquet with Christ's love.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. When they see our good works and start glorifying the Father, what are they doing but coming to the banquet? The only thing that's going to convince those people out in the highways and hedges that there is a God and that he really cares is love that comes through as deed and truth with a minimum amount of talk. With this, - the atheist is compelled to come, - the agnostic is compelled, - the cynic, and the rich tax collector.

"Zacchaeus, come down out of that tree! I must have dinner at your house today," and Zacchaeus came down. He was being compelled by love right into the Kingdom. Before that meal was over, salvation had come to his house. Notice that Jesus said nothing to Zacchaeus about hell, as he often did to the Pharisees. Zacchaeus already knew about hell. But that day Zacchaeus met a love that was able to deliver him from hell right then and there. Is Zacchaeus finding that love in us?

You don't argue these people into the Kingdom. You love them into the Kingdom by doing those good works for which we were made, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. What a relief when it dawns on us that the banquet isn't our banquet, it doesn't depend on us. It's God's banquet. It's already wonderful and how much more wonderful it will be when all the guests have arrived. Meanwhile, we are to be out there calling men and women to come. - Bringing..... - Compelling.....

Who responds and who refuses is not up to us. But of this we can be sure, there are many out there who will indeed rise up and come to God's banquet with great joy when they hear the servant's voice. God grant that they may hear it from us or from somebody ---- soon.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I abandon my agenda and turn to you. I throw myself on your mercy and cry out for help to walk in mercy toward all.

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