

# Puzzling Parables

## *Guests of the Bridegroom*

June 4, 2017

Welcome to where we're learning how to rightly serve our Servant King.

Ever give a gift so unexpected that the receiver was overwhelmed?

Isn't that *the best*?

Ever give a heartfelt gift and the receiver was ungrateful?

Isn't that *the worst*?



We're having dinner with Jesus, His disciples, and a host of "undesirables" the night of Jesus' very big day.



The day *before*, we had brunch with the Scribes and Pharisees; and, Jesus warned that inviting only those who return the favor cancels out the reward of the Lord when *He* repays. (Lk 14:12-14) And, He told of ungrateful guests rejecting an invitation to a feast; and, a servant sent to replace them with the "undesirables". (Lk 14:15-24) Now, this very next day, Jesus returns their favor and invites *them* into *His* house. (Lk 5:17-18)



Immediately as He was teaching, many gathered together, so that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And **He preached the word to them.** And **the power of the Lord was present** [through the Word] to heal them [of blind eyes, deaf ears, and hard hearts (Mt 13:14-15; Mk 4:12)]. – Mark 2:2; Luke 5:17 NKJ<sup>1</sup>

What do you suppose He was preaching? Well, we know **He had a custom of revealing himself as the Servant in Isaiah's Songs of the Servant.**<sup>2</sup>

... as was his custom ... he found the place [Isaiah 61:1-2] where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on **me**, because he has anointed **me** to preach good news to the poor. He has sent **me** to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind ... and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled ..." – Luke 4:16-21 NIV

<sup>1</sup> I substituted New King James for NIV, because it translates the word for "them" as "*them*", unlike the NIV that changes it to "*the sick*", or other less literal translations that simply ignore the word and only write, "*to heal*".

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-11, 52:13-53:12, and 61:1-11

Jesus claimed to be the “me” “me” “me” in this song; but, the Pharisees rejected Him *and His invitation*. So, like the story of the feast, He sends *His servant, Matthew* to gather the outcasts.

In the story, the servant is sent into the streets and alleys and told to **“make them come in”**. (Lk 14:23)

**It isn't easy convincing the wounded and jaded, there's a big, free banquet, just for them.**

Picture those poor young disciples asking *prostitutes* to dinner with their holy, superstar, Rabbi.



*“Just say what you want, honey. No need for flimflam.”*

You see, **we don't get to quit till we really try to convince 'em.**

Last week we finished the story of *The Two Pigheaded Sons*, with the resentful brother refusing to join the party. And, like this pigheaded son with his dad, and the Pharisees with Jesus, **when we resent someone, deep down we resent the Lord for loving them.**



This offended son was mad at his Dad for never giving *him* a party; missing the fact that *this is his party* and *that calf* came from *his inheritance!*

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were **fasting**. [This was their *tradition*] [The Pharisees] **said to him**, [condemningly] “John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.” Then John's disciples came and **asked him**, [sincerely] “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered, [with questions, of course] “How can the guests of the **bridegroom mourn** while he is with them? [Why do you suppose He adds *mourn*? The Song of the Servant invites us to trade our mourning for the oil of gladness (Is 61:3)] “Can you make the guests of the **bridegroom** fast while he is with them? [Now He answers for them] They cannot, so long as they have him with them. [And, referring to the cross, He says] But the time will come when the **bridegroom** will be taken from them, then in those days and on that day they will fast. – Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35 NIV

Why does Jesus speak as though these religious fasters already know about “the Bridegroom”?

Because, He knows that they do.

John the Baptist had said to his disciples:

“You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ ...’ The bride belongs to the **bridegroom**. The friend who attends the **bridegroom** waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the **bridegroom's** voice. That joy is mine ...” – John 3:28-29a NIV

Know where John got this “Bridegroom” title?

From the well-known Song of the Servant that Jesus customarily quoted, which says ...

... to bestow on them a crown of beauty ... For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a **bridegroom** adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. – Isaiah 61:3-10 NIV

According to Isaiah's song, the Bridegroom's "**crown of beauty**" is a "**garment of salvation**" "**adorning his head like a priest**".

The High priest wore a gold band stamped with: *Holy to the Lord* (Ex 28:36-37)



Two chapters earlier, Isaiah refers to this "crown" as the Messiah's "**Helmet of Salvation**", (Is 59:17) which is what Paul quotes in his list of God's armor. (Eph 6:17)

**And, God commanded that a special model of silver and gold be made just for Jesus.**

Take the **silver** and **gold** and make a **crown**, and set it on the head of the **high priest, Joshua** [the Hebrew pronunciation of *Jesus*] ... the Lord Almighty says: "Here is the man whose **name** is **the Branch** [that's why the angel told Mary: "**you are to give him the name Jesus**" (Lk 1:31)] ... and will sit and **rule on his throne** [as King]. And he will be a **priest on his throne**. And there will be harmony between the two [Conquering King and Sacrificing Mediator]." – Zechariah 6:11-13 NIV

That's what the gold and silver Helmet of Salvation symbolizes: **Jesus, the Branch and Bridegroom, received as King and Priest.**

He's also covered in "**righteousness**" "**as a bride adorns herself with her jewels,**" which is why Paul warns us to build on the foundation of Christ with gold, silver, and precious gems. (1 Cor 3:11-13)



In Proverbs, **wisdom calls us to search the Word of righteousness for hidden treasures, more precious than rubies; because, lips that speak truth are rare jewels.** And, **this is what adorns our Servant-King and Priest.** (Prov 2:1-5, 3:13-15, 8:8, 20:15) Just a few days before the Bridegroom was taken from them (as Jesus predicted at Matthew's dinner), the prophet Zechariah had foresaid ...



Rejoice greatly O Daughter of Zion! ... your **king** comes to you, **righteous** [like a bride's jewels] and having **salvation**, [like a bridegroom's priestly crown] gentle and riding on a donkey ... Then the Lord will appear over them ... The Lord their God will save them on that day ... **They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown** [of silver and gold]. – Zechariah 9:9, 14-16 NIV

Those who receive and serve Christ, sparkle with righteous truth, in the realm and rule of our Conquering King and Mediating Priest.



You are the light of the world [fueled by the oil of gladness]. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they **put it on its stand**, and it gives light to **everyone in the house**. In the same way, [take your stand] let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. – Matthew 5:14-16 NIV

Know who's on the Bridegroom's guest list: **anyone in your life who wouldn't expect your invitation or your generosity, which includes those you wouldn't think to invite or want to invite.**

**Undesirability is so subjective; it includes anyone we happen to be uncomfortable with, awkward around, or bothered by.**

But, if you don't want your lamp to go out you need to increase your oil (of gladness).

**And, our gladness grows the more we see how He sees lovability.**

So, don't discount the desirability of the shadier guests on His list.

**Extending His generous grace increases our joyful gratitude.**

**If we're not finding joy and gratefulness in any real measure in our life, we better take a serious inventory of what's missing.**

Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife [you deprive yourself in way that removes joy] ... Is that what *you* call a fast ... Is not *this* the kind of fasting I have chosen: ... to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then **your light will break forth** ... then **your righteousness will go before you** ... then **your light will rise in the darkness** ... then **you will find your joy in the Lord**, and [unlike the offended brother] I will cause you ... to feast on the inheritance ... – Isaiah 58:1-14 NIV



Don't fast in a way that just makes you *hangry*.

In the Bridegroom's banqueting kingdom, **fasting should deprive us in a way that overwhelms others, warms our heart, and glorifies God.** And on *your* big day, **the Lord himself will generously reward whatever you gave in His name to those who couldn't or wouldn't repay.**

And on that day, *you'll* be the one who's quite overwhelmed.