

The Lord Wants to Have Supper With You

A Sermon by the Rev. Malcolm G. Smith

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Readings

Isaiah 55:1-3

- 1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, go to the waters;
And you who have no money, Go, buy and eat.
And go, buy wine and milk, Without money and without price.
- 2 Why do you weigh out money for what is not bread, And your toil for what will not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And your soul shall delight itself in abundance.
- 3 Incline your ear, and go to Me. Hear, so your soul may live;
And I will make an eternal covenant with you – The faithful mercies of David.

Luke 22:14-20

- 14 And when the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. 15 And He said to them, "With longing I have longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I will not eat of it any more until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."
- 17 And receiving the cup, He gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the produce of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."
- 19 And taking bread, He gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
- 20 And likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you."

True Christianity 717

Being redeemed means being liberated from hell, forming a partnership with the Lord, and being saved.... These then are the fruits that are given to us in the Holy Supper. They are not given us to the full extent that the Lord would like, however. Moved as He is by His Divine love, He would prefer to give us all of these gifts [at once]. Instead we are given them in accordance with our own receptivity....

True Christianity 484:2

My friend, abstain from evil, and do what is good, and believe in the Lord with your whole heart and your whole soul; and the Lord will love you and give you love for what you do and faith in what you believe. Then you will do what is good because of love and you will believe because you have faith, which is confidence. And if you persevere like this, a reciprocal partnership [with the Lord] will develop and become permanent. This is salvation itself and eternal life.

Introduction

- Today's sermon is just a reminder of a very simple fact that you already know: the Lord wants to have supper with you.
- When we're thinking about taking Holy Supper we often focus on whether or not we feel ready or worthy to take Holy Supper.
 - There's a use to that train of thought.
 - But it can go a little too far – to the point that some people would rarely, if ever, take Holy Supper because they never feel ready or worthy to take it.
 - To combat that kind of thinking I want to remind you of how the Lord feels about the idea of having supper with you.

Expressions of What the Lord Wants

- Here are a few instances of the Lord expressing what He wants.
- In Luke He said to His disciples, "With longing I have longed to eat this Passover with you..."
 - Other translations say, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you..."
- Either way the point is that the Lord really wanted to have that meal with His disciples.
 - We might think, "Well, but those were the disciples – they were better people than we are."
 - But we need to remember that the Lord said that He longed to have this meal with the disciples, despite the fact that He knew that one of them was about to betray Him, another one was going to deny even knowing Him, and almost all of the rest of them were going to abandon Him and run away.
 - In spite of all that, He still really wanted to have that meal with them.
- As another example, in the book of Revelation we find the Lord writing letters to seven churches.
 - In the Lord's letter to the Laodiceans – probably the worst of the churches – the Lord says this: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).
 - In this case the people aren't even being expected to go to where the Lord is.
 - The Lord is coming to them; all they have to do is open the door.
- Another example that's worth spending some time on is the parable of the great supper.
- Luke 14:16-24
 - ¹⁶ Then [Jesus] said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, ¹⁷ and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready.' ¹⁸ But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' ¹⁹ And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' ²⁰ Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹ So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' ²² And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' ²³ Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' "

- Who are you in this story?
 - Are you one of the people making excuses about why we can't come to the supper today?
 - Or are you one of the poor, maimed, lame, and blind people lying in the streets?
 - The teachings of the New Church tell us that the first group mean people who have gotten caught up in pleasures of the world who don't care about internal things "because they do not read the Word and look to the Lord" (*Apocalypse Explained* 1162).
 - Whereas the other group generally mean people who are trying to lead good lives who are longing for more goodness and truth (*Secrets of Heaven* 2336:4, *Apocalypse Explained* 118:3).
- Notice that, whichever group you might be in, either way you do receive an invitation to the great supper; the question is whether you will actually come when you are called.

When We Should Not Take Holy Supper

- So what are the times when a person should *not* take Holy Supper?
 - There must be certain circumstances when someone is not in the right place to come to the supper.
- We can see this depicted symbolically in the parable of the man without a wedding garment.
 - We read the parable of the great supper from the Gospel of Luke; there's a very similar parable in the Gospel of Matthew of a king inviting people to the wedding feast for his son.
 - In that parable, once all the guests have been gathered from the highways, the king goes into the hall to meet his guests.
 - Matthew 22:11-14
 - ¹¹ "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who had not put on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was silenced. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'
 - ¹⁴ "For many are called, but few are chosen."
- That's a scary story to think about.
 - The teachings of the New Church can help us understand what's going on.
 - The person without a wedding garment means a hypocrite – someone who, like the scribes and Pharisees, can put on a good moral, religious, spiritual act on the outside but on the inside they have no interest or desire in following the Lord (*Secrets of Heaven* 2132, *Apocalypse Explained* 195:11).
 - The person without the wedding garment means people whose inner and outer self are "formed by contempt for the Lord, contempt for what faith teaches as good and true, and hatred for the neighbor" (*Secrets of Heaven* 3513:2).
 - We can understand why someone who is in that state is not welcome at the Lord's supper.

- But someone who loses the contempt and genuinely wants to be made new by the Lord is welcome.
 - When the Lord was on earth, the Pharisees were shocked by who he would share a meal with
 - He would eat with tax collectors and sinners.
 - One time when the Pharisees were asking the Lord’s disciples why He did this, the Lord said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matthew 9:12,13).
 - If you’re feeling spiritually sick but you want to be made well, please come have a meal with the Lord; He wants you there.
 - The Lord is not asking us to have a perfect record.
 - He is asking us to come to Him, willing to work on trying to stop doing the evil things that we incline to; He says,
 - Matthew 11:28-30
 - ²⁸ “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
 - Yes, there is work to do – there is a yoke to put on our shoulders and there is a burden to bear but it is so much easier and lighter to bear than the oppressive weight of trying to satisfy all the desires of our hellish slave drivers.
 - The Lord says,
 - “Why do you weigh out money for what is not bread,
And your toil for what will not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And your soul shall delight itself in abundance.” (Isaiah 55:2)

Conclusion

- The evil spirits would love to keep us enslaved and would love to convince us that we are never going to be worthy to eat with the Lord.
- In spite of that the Lord is still working to get the invitation to you – it’s sometimes almost like He’s sending a secret message to reach us behind enemy lines.
- The Lord is the one who gets to decide who comes to His supper, not the hells.
 - And He would love to have you there.
- As He says in the Gospel of John,
 - John 10:7-10
 - ⁷ “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”
- Amen.