

Building Community

Key Verse: *“The lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”*
—Luke 14:23

Selected Scripture:
Luke 14

THIS LESSON IS A CONTIN-uation of our Lord’s remarks made at the home of the Pharisee when he counseled his host concerning being rewarded for doing good deeds. The Lord said, “When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours. . . . But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.” (vss. 12,13)

The Pharisee had done something of the very kind with respect to not expecting something in return in inviting Jesus and his disciples to dinner. He well knew that they were poor and would not be able to ask him in return. The Lord Jesus was giving suggestions along the line of humility on the part of guests, then to entertainers concerning how they might show hospitality to others. The Lord wished to show his host how in inviting himself and his disciples he had really performed a gracious act. A work of charity (love) and mercy, done with the proper motive, will be sure to have a blessing in the future.

We read, as recorded in verse 15, “When one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom.” This comment, probably made by one of the apostles and spoken with a reverent spirit, turns our focus to the future

blessings to come to those who also “waited for the kingdom of God.” (Mark 15:43) The reference to eating bread in the kingdom, would signify being on good terms with the King, and he likened God’s kingdom blessings to a great feast. This is really a common illustration throughout the Scriptures. “A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, . . . well refined,” is the Prophet Isaiah’s description of the blessings which the Lord has in reservation for the world of mankind.—Isa. 25:6

In verses 16-22, our Lord’s parable pictures a great feast. On the day of this feast, servants were sent to notify those already invited to come promptly to the feast. Contrary to all precedent, these guests declined, asked to be excused, literally ‘begged off.’ It was really a shameful, selfish act to allow the host to expect them to come, and then at the last minute to not attend.

Our natural tendency is to put ourselves first, but this makes it difficult to form and function as any kind of essential community. Community can be defined as the condition of living with others, with having friendly association, and fellowship. We may ask, How can we recognize the importance of self-esteem while avoiding self-centeredness and how can we affirm individual worth while maintaining community?

Jesus taught that we need to see things from a new perspective: we need to view ourselves with humility, but graciously accept the recognition and esteem offered by others. “He that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” (Matt. 23:12) Humility is essential to all who would be God’s people, and it is the underlying principle of a Christian character. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” (Rom. 12:10) We are all part of the family of man, and should demonstrate humility, love, and sympathy toward one another. Jesus was the perfect illustration—humbling himself, first to become a man; and then, when a man, becoming “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—Phil. 2:8 ■