

Eternity's Values in View

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It came to pass as Jesus went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees. Commentators don't know whether this was a ruler of the synagogue or one of the Sanhedrin. But our Lord went into his house to eat bread on the Sabbath day, and they watched Him.

Then, verse 7, he put forth a parable to those that were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms, that is, the closest seats, saying to them, when you are bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, give this man place, thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher.

Then, Jesus said, you will have honor in the presence of them that sit at meet with thee. For whosoever exalted himself shall be abased, and he that humbled himself shall be exalted.

Now, I talked about that last week. And the rest of this story is that while he thus sat at meet, he said also to him that bade him, that is, to the host, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee. Then thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Now, the presence of our Lord Jesus at this dinner did not imply that He approved everything that He saw there. He went as the custom was in His time, but His being present didn't mean that He accepted it, fell into it in spirit, and took part in it in every way. Because, you see, having the dinner was not wrong, and His accepting the invitation, of course, was not wrong.

But nevertheless, in this social gathering, wrong was present, both on the part of the guests and the host. And our Lord pointed out to them, as we saw above and in last week's sermon, why or where the wrong was among the guests. The guests accepted it as an opportunity to exploit their own fame and to show off. Now, Christ pointed to sin, even the sin of his host.

Now, I want to say something that I know will be shocking to some of you, because you just don't think such a thing should be said, even though it's true. And it is simply this, that in doing what He did at this dinner, our Lord violated one of the first rules of civility.

Now, my friends, the rules of civility, the hollow rules of politeness, forbade that a man should sit down to a dinner and yet, while sitting there, quietly expose the evil of his

host's motive in giving the dinner. Now, this transgressed all the rules of good manners and of good breeding. You see, my friends, Adam's fallen race has not been able to live with itself except by practicing hypocrisy, insincerity and intellectual dishonesty.

And this intellectual dishonesty and this deep insincerity has been codified and made into rules of etiquette and put down in books as marks of good breeding and evidences of good manners. But this Jesus, being Truth itself and being holiness incarnated and thinking as God thought and seeing through the facade of culture and etiquette, dared to transgress one of the first rules of civility, that you don't accept a host's hospitality and yet expose the host's sin.

Now, my brethren, according to society's standards, Christ was not a gentleman. This is the shocking thing. A seeing man among the blind is never a gentleman to the blind. And an honest man among the intellectually dishonest is never a gentleman to the dishonest. And a bold man among the timid is never a gentleman to the fearful.

So, Jesus brought upon Him the odium here and all down the centuries of violating the taboo of the salt, the code of hospitality. But it was not God's code. It was man's effort to cover his sin. It was and is to this day a taken for granted and rarely written but sometimes written set of rules which enables us to get along with ourselves and to live in a twisted, dishonest world like ours with the least possible friction. And our Lord Jesus cared not at all about the friction and cared not at all about their codes. He had come from God and what He had saw and heard He spake and no man received His testimony.

Now, having said this, and you will understand that when I say Christ was no gentleman, I mean to say that Christ did not feel that in order to be right, he had to fit in to the artificial rules which had at the bottom of them dishonesty and hypocrisy. And the dishonesty and hypocrisy that is practiced in society today and even in the church today will burn as fuel in hell below and the Lord would have nothing to do with it and neither should we.

Now, he said this to the host. And of course, the host's face reddened, and he knew that he had been seen through. Our Lord said, when thou makest a dinner, call not thy friends nor thy brethren nor thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors. Now, does this mean that I, under the Lord's commandment, cannot entertain my relatives? Does this mean that when my son, Bud, comes in from Park Forest to have Sunday dinner with us, as they do sometimes, that I were transgressing these commandments of Jesus? Does that mean that when your relatives come in from afar and you go to extra and joyful effort to give them a nice meal, that this is forbidden by our Lord? No.

So, to believe would contradict the acts of Bible saints and Christ Himself often ate with His friends. Therefore, He could not mean that. You see, the easiest way to obey this is the wrong way. And that's often true in the teachings of Jesus. The easiest way to duck out of it is just to obey it according to the letter.

Christ was never much of a letter man. He was all for the spirit of things, all for the spirit. And therefore, the easiest way is to do what you're told according to the letter. As I said a year or so ago in preaching on John 13, that the easiest and less expensive way

to obey the foot washing commandment is to wash your foot. The easiest way for me to do would be to wash my feet right after he'd carefully washed it and perfumed it. That would be the easiest possible way to get out of that commandment. And often to do literally what we're told to do without a thought of the spirit of the teaching is the easiest way out. Tithe, give your tenth. That's the easiest thing that you can do. And go to church and go home. That's the easiest way and the least effective and the least meaningful.

Now, the easiest way to fulfill this would be to withdraw from your friends and relatives and show no love for them and renounce the tithes of blood and friendship and never invite your father-in-law or your aunt to a dinner and never show any interest in your kin and your friends and neighbors.

Now, our Lord never taught that here because He didn't practice it Himself. And the saints haven't practiced it and the holiest of them haven't. And He taught hospitality back from the day of Abraham and they showed it from that day down. And the Lord placed His tender approval upon it.

Now, what is the true meaning and what did our Lord say? Well, you see, the Pharisees sought religious merit, and this was not a social gathering here at all. It's entirely possible to have a social gathering and not expect it to be a religious thing, and not intend it to be a matter of reward or merit, and not expect a crown or recompense for it.

It's perfectly easy for us down home to, when the doorbell begins to almost come off a wall or the chimes, why, to run and open the door and have a lot of kids bounce in and fall over everything, begin to yell, we enjoy it. And we love to have them, and it is not a question of religious reward or merit. Not a question of showing off or doing something with the smug belief that we shall be recompensed in the judgment.

No, but the Pharisees did it for that very reason. They sought reward and their dinner had religious meaning, and it was given to discharge the obligation of hospitality as taught in their Scriptures and they smugly and self-righteously believed that in doing this, they would get a crown and that there would be a reward and recompense come to them in time to be.

Now the catch, Jesus said, is here. He said the catch is, that if you throw a dinner that costs \$100, over the next year, you will be invited often enough to eat up that so that actually, you will get as much out of it as you put in it and you're back where you started from.

How simple that is. He said if you hope to have reward, \$100 worth of reward in heaven, by giving a dinner that costs \$100 and inviting people in that will give a dinner that will cost them \$100 and so you'll get recompense. He said if you expect that, why, you're all wrong because you'll get your reward right now. You'll eat your reward at a half-dozen tables over the next two weeks, He said.

Now he said if this had been just a social thing, if it had just been simply a matter of friendly greeting, saying come over and have lunch with us, stop by and have coffee, that had been something else, but this was a religious thing, and they expected a reward.

So, here's what Christ said in effect. Christ said in effect, you are to inhabit eternity and it's unworthy of you to seek reward in time. It's unworthy of you to do that, hoping for reward which doesn't cost you anything, for you get out as much as you put in. And He said you trade gifts with only this world in view or if you expect reward in the coming time, you have already traded and bartered to a point where you get all you put into it.

Always remember that there has to be an over plus before there can be any reward or recompense. And He said, you must live for the resurrection of the just. Now unbelieving men are never willing to do this. You can tell where unbelief is because it is not willing to wait for the resurrection of the just.

What amazes me is the almost universal misunderstanding of Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11 is the Westminster Abbey of the Bible where God has buried His great saints, where their monuments are there with their names inscribed and a little bit telling why they're there. They were all men of faith.

But have you noticed that the kind of faith they had was not the kind that gets the immediate answer? The only kind of faith that is recognized now among a lot of Christians is the kind that can reach up and pull down the apples of paradise, reach up in faith and pull them down, reach up and pull them down and have them and eat them and use them and use them up.

But in the 11th chapter of Hebrews it concludes by saying, just in case you aren't familiar as you might be, it concludes by saying they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth, and these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the fulfillment of the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Their faith, the faith that God honored in that magnificent 11th of Hebrews, was in every instance a faith that had no present evidence except the inner evidence of things hoped for and the evidence of things to come. It was all an inward matter. They looked forward to that hour when a just and faithful God should make up to them and make good on all his promises, but they died without seeing the fulfillment of those promises.

This, you see, is upside down and backwards to the modern faith, which, if you have faith, you get instantly what you want. Well, there is a kind of faith that'll get what you want at once, and I believe, as you well know, in praying and getting answers to prayer. This building is a monument to the fact that you can drop on your knees and ask God for something and get it.

Once we had \$5,000 due Monday morning, Monday morning, and we had nothing, nothing, and we called the friends together and we prayed, and when Monday morning came, we had our \$5,000. Where it came from, only God knows. I don't know. The people didn't know much about it, only a few that prayed.

So I believe that it is such a thing as getting an answer now, but God loves more that kind of long-range faith that can look down the years and wait for the resurrection of the just and can live now with eternity's values in view, to quote the song.

Now, He said, you must live for the resurrection of the just, and unbelief is always revealed by our desire to have it now, get the reward now. And that's even true of religious people who talk much of eternity and write songs about eternity and talk much of heaven and all the rest, but heaven to them is a sort of a faraway, remote paradise, light years distance, which they expect sometime to inhabit, but living for now.

Well, Jesus said, that's what's the matter with you, Pharisees. He said, you're hoping to get religious merit by throwing a banquet. But have you noticed, He said, that everybody here happens to be by some queer trick, somebody that can invite you back. And when they invite you back, you eat up your reward with your teeth.

And the Lord said, now a man of faith is deeply convinced that there will be a resurrection. So he counts on it. He counts on it. He's deeply convinced that there will be a resurrection. And he gives up present recompense and lives for that Day. Spell it with capital letters. That Day. Paul talked about it, that Day.

Now, true faith, I say, is a firm conviction that God will perform His promises. If He's promised it now, He'll get it now. But He's promised more in the world to come and at the resurrection of the just. And the man of true faith will not insist on getting his presents now, he will wait. And the man of true faith says, I shall awake. I shall awake to memory, to life and to recompense.

And all the liberals and all the modernists and all the false cultists and all the annihilationists and all the unbelievers in the world can't shake the man's faith. He can rise in the morning and say with St. Patrick, I awake today to a mighty faith, the faith in the belief in the Trinity. And he says, I shall awake to the memory. I shall awake to life. I shall awake to recompense. And so for that reason, I am going to see to it that my good deeds aren't reciprocal. For where they're reciprocal, they're canceled out.

McAfee sometimes, before we come down, will reach up and grab a little sheepskin affair and rub my shoes. But I rub his sometimes. So, if he thinks he's going to get any reward for brushing a prophet's shoes, why, he'll have to think again. He isn't. I've brushed his.

So, if you do a deed and you know somebody will return it and reciprocate it, you might as well not have done it, at least as far as any merit is concerned. There's no merit in reciprocation. And that's what these were doing. And that's why Jesus said, Now, you people, if you want your reward, don't call your rich friends and the people that will call you again. Oh, who is it? The poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind. And these, He said, cannot recompense you again.

I think that's a tender sentence there. These, He said, cannot recompense you again. And these cannot enhance your social standing. These may not be so easy to be around. The maimed man is not the easy man to be around, the lame man, the blind man. But Jesus seemed to love their company, and He tells us too.

So today, today we declare, we believe in a redeeming death. We do show forth His death. Today we declare we believe in a redeeming death. And we believe in the resurrection. We believe in His resurrection and ours. And because He lives, we shall live also. That's what we mean.

Now you say, I don't like the way you have your communion. Well, really, friends, Jesus didn't tell us how to have it. That's the odd thing. The Greek church thought it out one way. The Roman church thought it out another way. The Baptists do it one way and the Methodists did it another. And the different groups do it in different ways. Obviously, there was no rule of thumb telling us just how the communion should be observed. Only that we should observe it, and in doing it, remember His death till He come. That's all.

So that's all we're asking this morning. It's all we're doing. We're going to think of His being present, His death till he come. The man that's dead isn't coming anywhere. The man that's dead isn't coming. You couldn't say, I put a flower on my dead husband's grave until he come. Dead men don't come. You can leave the light burning from now till the trumpet and he'll not come back. Dead men don't come. What did the apostle mean? We do show forth His death till He come. He's not dead.

That's what he means. He died, but he's not dead. He liveth forevermore. And now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of all that slept and sleep, and we do show His death and take for granted His glorious resurrection and wait for His return. And in doing this, we believe in a resurrection, and we believe in the resurrection of the just. And we believe that all good deeds done on earth that can be repaid again will cancel each other out. They're not bad deeds, they're good deeds. But they have no merit for the day to come.

But we believe that if we, according to the teaching of Jesus, see to it that we serve those who can't serve us in return and help those who cannot help in return, and help to feed those that can never even know our names, maybe, then He said, you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Oh, what strong words. You shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Who said it? Jesus said it. Jesus said it. You shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Now, I hope I can be skillful enough in this that I may not that I may not embarrass anybody. But I heard something that I can't let go. In our young people's work, in our girls' side of it, plans were made and carried through to, sort of as the old Methodists used to do, get somebody, some established Christian woman who would take into her heart and into her prayer life some little girl and sort of mother her. Not interfere, but just sort of mother her. Look after her. Maybe have her out to the house. Maybe pray with her. Maybe send her a little card and thus keep in touch with her. Now, that's a very lovely thing and quite Christian in its spirit and quite right.

Well, of course, these girls had to be assigned. So, the lady in charge assigned to one certain woman in our church a certain little girl. And this woman called up the one who's in charge and said, Mrs. Moore, you have assigned me such and such a girl.

Now, I'm paraphrasing this. I wouldn't guarantee verbatim, but this is the gist of it. You have assigned me little Miss So-and-so as my little charge. And that's all good except for one thing. She comes from a good home. She has good parents. She dresses well. She doesn't need me. Would you please assign to me a little girl that doesn't have any Christian background or any good home? A little girl that comes in Friday evening or Saturday, whenever it is, with torn blouse and dirty face. Would you assign that girl, some girl like that to me? Because that's the kind I want to help.

I've preached the gospel since I was 19 years old. But before my God above, I know that with all my preaching of the deeper life that I've never risen to that height of pure spirituality. Brethren, that's what Jesus taught. That's what Jesus taught.

Let me help the one that can't help me. And let me help the one who may be dirty when she comes to my house. Let me help the little girl whose parents probably drink and swear and smoke and look at television and cuss each other and fight and kick her out on the sidewalk to play.

And so, the little urchin off the street who comes in here. And that's what's happening here. They're coming in and these good folks, Clara and Meryl and their helpers are looking after them. But this woman didn't want a nice one that had a good home and came clean. She wanted one that nobody else wanted.

There is an illustration of what Jesus taught, brethren, that is it. In the resurrection of the just, there will be bishops and cardinals and reverends and pastors and reformers who will not have the reward nor the recompense that people like that have. A meek, self-effacing person who never pushes to the front but wants to help those who can't help back.

The reward such persons will get will infinitely outweigh the reward that a man gets for merely standing up and doing what he likes to do best in the world, except pray. Best in the world, preaching to me I'll never get any reward for preaching. In fact, I have long ago given up any hope of a crown because I'm doing what I love to do and would weep if I was forced to quit it.

But dear friends, shall not we, you and I, go to the Lord in tender prayer and ask Him to help us quietly to find deeds and people that cannot recompense us here. And with our money, and God knows we've got a lot of it these days of inflation and prosperity. With our money and with our hands, don't buy your way out, use your hands sometimes too, help those who can't recompense, who have no social standing, maybe no education, and maybe not the sanitary standards that you are used to, but who need you.

So said Jesus tenderly, these cannot recompense you again, but you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Amen.