

The Parables of Jesus #2
The Parable of the Friends of the Bridegroom
(Mk. 2:18-20)
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INTRODUCTION

A. Samson's bride from Judges 14

1. Samson chose a wife from the city of Timnah of the Philistines
2. As was the custom, there was a great feast and celebration that lasted for 7 days
3. It should have been a time a joy and great happiness
4. But Samson's wife had terrible crying spells
 - a. she accused him of hating her
 - b. she whined, pouted and fussed for the whole week
 - c. we will grant that she had been threatened to find out the answer to the riddle Samson had put to the men or they would burn her and her father's house
5. What should have been a celebration turned into a catastrophe
6. No one wants a celebration turned into a disaster like that

B. After Jesus called Matthew Levi to be a disciple, the Bible tell us that he went to Levi's house to enjoy a meal

1. It must have been a situation similar to any of the times when we might gather for a meal
2. We don't get together to be miserable, we get together to enjoy the time and each other

C. As is often the case, those critical of Jesus saw an opportunity to find fault

1. In that setting, Jesus told one of his short parables to communicate something important about himself and God'd kingdom
2. There is a contrast of the old and the new here, and he gives reason to look forward to what God is doing

I. CRITICISM AND FAULT -FINDING (Mk. 2:15-18)

A. At the dinner, Jesus chose to eat with a suspicious crowd

1. Lk 5:29 -- there was a great number of tax collectors present
2. Mk 2:15 -- also others, generally described as "sinners"
3. Despite the kind of people present, it seems that there was an air of enjoyment like one might expect at any large gathering

B. However, others knew about the dinner party

1. Scribes and Pharisees -- how can he eat with this bunch of riff-raff?
2. They could not understand that Jesus come to help just the group that he was eating with
3. We still struggle with that same conflict today

C. Even the disciples of John were critical

1. They and the Pharisees made a regular practice of fasting
2. Some believe that the text suggests they might have been fasting on the very day that Jesus was enjoying the dinner party
3. To them, religion was composed of rigorous rules and traditions, and there was little to enjoy about it
4. They could not understand Jesus or his disciples -- much of their criticism came out of an inability to explain what seemed like non-religious behavior

D. We might note a couple of points about the critics of Jesus

1. It is very easy to take one's own religious practice, that may be acceptable as one's own personal expression, and turn it into something that is equal to God's standard and requirement
2. Those who already harbor ill-will or prejudice against someone tend to always see or believe the worst about the other person

E. It was in that setting that Jesus then told the story which answers the criticism

II. THE PARABLE OF THE FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM (Mk. 2:19-20)

A. Mark 2:19-20

And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." (NKJ)

B. This little story was intended to communicate a single point -- the presence of Jesus is reason to celebrate, not mourn

1. John 1:5

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (NKJ)

2. John 1:10-11

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. (NKJ)

3. 1 Cor 1:18

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (NKJ)

C. The real question is not, "Why isn't Jesus and his disciples fasting?" -- It's really, "Why isn't everyone else celebrating the fact that God's Son is among them?"

1. These people had no idea who was with them

a. John 4:10

Jesus answered and said to her, "'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

b. if people had only realized who Jesus was, it would have changed their entire outlook

2. Consider these facts

a. Jesus the Son of God

b. Jesus the Savior and Redeemer

c. Jesus the one who brings a new covenant

d. Jesus the Forgiver of sins

e. Jesus the one who binds up the broken, brings home the outcast, lifts up those full of burdens

f. Jesus the healer of souls

g. Jesus the one who restores our relationship with the Father

h. Jesus the giver of grace, mercy and love

D. When one realizes who Jesus is and what he came to do..... how can one not celebrate?

III. EXTENDED APPLICATIONS

A. Jesus relieves us of tedious religious ritual like fasting

1. There are examples of fasting, but there is no regulation or burdensome ritual to follow... only the expression of a heart full of faith
2. We still struggle to keep our practices from becoming ritualized

B. Jesus came to bring joy

1. He does speak of a time when the bridegroom is taken away and there would be no feasting then.... fasting would be appropriate because of their sorrow
2. However that time is short-lived..... celebration again because of the resurrection
3. John 3:29
He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. (NKJ)

C. People tend to resist changes even when those changes are created by God

1. Look at how the religious leader resisted what Jesus taught
2. Look at how the masses resisted Jesus' effort to change them
3. Look at how people today resist following God's word
4. Look at how, even religious people, so often make their religion a chore rather than a change

CONCLUSION

A. In the setting of this parable, the people are asking, "What's wrong with you, Jesus? You and your disciples?"

1. But again, the real question isn't what's wrong with Jesus, it's, "What's wrong with us?"
2. God has given us reason to celebrate and experience a soul-deep joy
3. Jesus is reason enough to discard every burden and every sorrow

B. Does this challenge how you see Jesus fitting into your life?

1. He came to change it for the better
2. Why not learn how to celebrate with joy what God will do for you through his Son

C. Invitation