

Editor

TEACHING HINTS AND HELPS

The first words of the lesson will recall that of last Sabbath, the feast at the Pharisee's house and the severe but needed lessons on self-sufficiency and pride.

The words of the man who speaks in v. 15 make it evident, both that the lessons were needed and that they were still needed. This Pharisee, at least, has not recognized his own portrait.

The connection is this. Jesus had spoken of "the resurrection of the just." The Pharisee at once says: "Oh, yes, we are the just—we righteous Pharisees. Blessed, indeed, shall we be when Messiah's kingdom comes!"

The parable is spoken to set him right, and to encourage also the nondescripts, the publicans and sinners, who may have been within hearing, and the Gentiles, to whom the words might come.

There is an interesting field here in the matter of Oriental customs. See that the scholars have correct notions as to the preparations for a great feast; the number likely to be bidden ("bade many"—God has never been niggardly or "near" in His invitations; witness Isa. 55: 1); the second invitation when supper was ready; the purchase of land, the proving of oxen, the customs of marriage; the errand to the streets and lanes and the ingathering of the miscellaneous crowd therefrom; the mission to the highways and hedges outside the city; the wrath of the insulted host;—all these points should be made clear.

But leave room for this also, indeed let what has just been outlined lead up to it—the great spiritual teaching of the lesson. These four headings may serve a good purpose.

1. EXCEEDING GRACE. It is a "great" supper. He "bade many." He made "all things ready" and what a readiness, the mission of patriarch and psalmist and prophet, the foreshadowing ceremonial of the Old Testament, the life and teachings and death and resurrection and intercession of the Lord Jesus, and finally, the sending the Holy Ghost, the second invitation!

2. EXCEEDING FOLLY. To turn their backs

on their Lord and His invitations for the sake of the paltry things of this world, and never do they seem so paltry—ground, cattle, personal delights. It was the folly of Esau repeated. (Gen. 25: 29-34.)

3. THE WIDENESS OF GOD'S MERCY. It is verily like the "wideness of thesea." His own chosen and favored ones reject. What then? Others will be brought in—the outcasts amongst themselves (v. 21); the outsiders—Gentiles (v. 23); and what is not taught in this parable, but appears elsewhere, even the nation that then rejected, was to be brought in. (Rom. 11: 25-27.)

4. THE SHARPNESS OF GOD'S WRATH. "Who will by no means clear the guilty," is Jehovah's testimony to Himself. (Ex. 34: 7; Num. 14: 18.) "A consuming fire," the Epistle to the Hebrews calls our God. (Heb. 12: 29.) A judge executing swift judgment, our Lord declares Him here.

Notice that the punishment is simply exclusion: "None of those men . . . shall taste of my supper" (v. 24). There are other and stronger words elsewhere in regard to the fate of those who resist and reject, but even to be shut out of heaven, shut out of the glory and the gladness, shut away from the feast and the Master of it, is enough. "The blackness of darkness forever." (Jude 13.)

Questions for *March 12, 15, 16.* Where was the parable spoken? With whom had Christ been dining? About what had He been talking? How did He represent the kingdom of heaven? Who gave the feast? Whom does he represent? How many invited? Who gave the first invitations?

17. When was the second call sent? By whom? What was the message?

18-20. How did the guests act? What excuse made by the first? On what ground did the second refuse the invitation? What plea was made by the third? What was the real reason in each case?

21, 22. Why was the Master angry? What four classes were now invited? Where were they to be found? How urgent was the invitation?