

Thoughts for Young People.

The Gospel Feast.

1. *God invites men to enjoyment.* Not to disagreeable, burdensome duties. His service is one of pleasure and of privilege. The Gospel is the greatest of blessings.

2. *The Gospel table is ever spread.* All mankind are welcome.

3. *Excuses are easily framed.* But (1) an excuse that is not a sufficient reason is a falsehood; (2) As the acceptance of this invitation is a duty, an excuse becomes a sin; (3) Christian life is a perennial delight that culminates in heaven; the self-excused shuts himself out from a life of privilege and an eternity of bliss.

4. *None are too unworthy or too wicked to find a place in God's kingdom.* Not the righteous but sinners Jesus came to call to repentance.

5. *People should be urged to seek salvation.* We are God's servants, sent with a personal message to all whom he purposes to save, and that includes everyone. We are to go to those who have already had a distinct divine invitation, and remind them that all things are now ready. We are to go behind every hedge, down every highway, along every thoroughfare, and up every lane, and bring into the Gospel banquet hall the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

Messengers are sent on the occasion of a Hindu feast to invite the guests, when not only relatives, but all persons of the same caste, are invited from the neighborhood. A refusal to come is a great affront. In the East an invitation to a feast, to be considered sincere, must be repeated two or three times. When this man sent his servant at supper time, they had already been invited and had accepted the invitation. Invited guests were summoned while the dishes were coming in. Morier gives an account of his dining with one Ameer-ud-Doulah, a vizier who was giving an entertainment to an ambassador and his suite in Persia, on a day appointed, when the messenger came as usual at five o'clock to bid the guests to the feast, though every one had been previously invited and all had already accepted the invitation.

It is little wonder that, sending out among the poor of the East, this man could get a large attendance, for the scant meal of orientals in general leaves them always ready for a full meal. Bishop Thoburn says there are millions of people in India who never know what it is to eat till they are satisfied; Dr. Trumbull tells of Bedouin Arabs who for weeks together live absolutely on milk alone, and Professor Palmer affirms a well-authenticated case of an Arab in North Syria who for three years had tasted neither water nor other food than milk only.

Hospitality seems to have been a very ancient

virtue. A writer has recently made an analysis of Homer's *Iliad*, which shows that in Homer's day it was recognized as a duty alike to strangers and foreigners, even to beggars. The height of courtesy was to treat a person to refreshments or even entertainment, sometimes extended through some days, before asking his business. The *Odyssey* as well as the *Iliad* is replete with multitudinous instances of hospitality to strangers and suppliants, even down to common beggars. So it may not have been so forced and unnatural as seems to us that this man should have diverted his hospitality to the poor and crippled, who always abound and often wait near the premises to secure relief.

The excuses these men made are in keeping with Eastern life. In fact, the oriental is a practiced diplomat in his most common speech, and thoroughly ingenious in finding plausible reasons for doing or not doing. Even when there is no necessity for it his speech will be preferably or by habit indirect. One must be experienced to know what he means, though his speech may or may not enter into the data by which he judges. But these excuses have a natural form. Buying a farm would not be a tract of land fenced in, nor would the contract be concluded as among us. Proving it might mean closing the bargain, which in India would be by the purchaser in the presence of the seller being permitted to dig the soil with either spade or pick. That is stronger than any written deed. It gives possession. The purchasing of five yoke of oxen would not be unusual, as some of these farmers now own this many, the number of oxen indicating the number of acres to be cultivated. The oxen of today and for some centuries mean also the water buffalo, which was introduced from India, and is stronger and thrives in malarious districts. It must have water and mud to wallow in to keep it healthy. The excuse of having married a wife would have a base in certain technical freedom from civil and military obligation or compelled absence from home for a year after marriage, recognized in old Jewish law and usage.

By Way of Illustration.

Verses 15 and 16. "A great supper." Christ often compared the Gospel to a supper or feast. What suggestion does this bring to us? First, food, a necessity of life, and also companionship, entertainment, joy. This the Gospel brings us. "Good tidings of great joy." Dr. Joseph Parker says: "Christianity has given to the world more poems, hymns, melodies, and manifold utterances of joy than any other influence which has touched the nature of man. It is not an accident that in the science and practice of music harmony was unknown until Christianity became dominant."

Verses 17. "Come." During a religious awaken-