

back the hour when the Baptist first pointed out to them the Lamb of God who was to take away the sin of the world. That holy sacrifice was now about to be made, though these men but dimly understood it. Read this whole chapter very carefully, as requested by the Lesson Committee. Our Lord takes the opportunity to warn the assembled guests against selfishness and pride, and to urge generosity toward the poor. Then he presents the picture of the Gospel feast, with its abundant provision, neglected and despised by those who received its earliest invitation, until others are called to possess their neglected privileges. A similar parable (Matt. 22, 1-14) was uttered in the temple on Tuesday, April 4, the last day of Jesus's public teaching. All excuses from God's claims are groundless. Neither possessions, business, nor pleasure should stand between us and him. None of these excuses were honest. And most modern neglecters of divine grace resemble these invited guests in their failure to squarely meet the divine claims. How often the "children of the kingdom" are left out, while those whose opportunities are not nearly so good embrace God's offers and are saved.

**Verse 15. One of them that sat at meat with him.** Our Lord was the guest of a Perea Pharisee. The dinner was probably served in the evening. Although it is said that the company "sat," we are to understand that they reclined on couches, after the fashion of the Romans and the wealthier Jews, each man leaning on his left side and taking the food from the table with his right hand. As we look back over the centuries on that little company we cannot but feel how honored were the guests who thus sat at supper with our Lord; but (1) *Much more highly honored will those be who shall sit down with him forever in heaven.* **These things.** The blessing which this candidate for the Messiahship had just pronounced on those who gave feasts—not to the rich and the famous, but to the poor. **He said unto him.** We do not know the name of the guest who now speaks, but we owe him a great debt, for it was his ejaculation which led to the telling of the rich story that follows. **Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.** If, instead of the word "blessed," we read, "O, how happy is he!" we will come nearer to the original. "Eat bread" means, of course, partake of food, and would, in the ancient language, refer to a sumptuous banquet as well as to biscuit and water. "The kingdom of God," in the mouth of an ordinary Jew, probably meant the dominion of the Messiah. How far it may also have referred to the glorious future after death we cannot say. On our Lord's tongue, "the kingdom of God" had a broader meaning; it meant the prevalence of God's ideas—the fulfillment of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." But this guest probably used the phrase with a thoroughly secular meaning. Doubtless, he took it for granted that, as a born Jew, he would inherit rights to all the luxuries of the kingdom of God, and it is very likely that he had in his mind expectations of luxurious banquets to which this young Messiah would invite his friends so soon as he was established on the throne of Judah.

**16. Then said he unto him.** The man was right in his theology, but wrong in his application of it. Those that might be thus "blessed" were unconsciously refusing to "eat bread"—to partici-

pate in the Messianic banquet. **A certain man.** This parable and that of "the marriage of the king's son" (Matt. 22) nearly resemble each other, but there are also important differences, and they belong to different periods of Christ's ministry. This "certain man" represents God, and the "great supper" is the feast of fat things which Isaiah mentions—the blessings of the Gospel dispensation. **A great supper.** In the East rich men frequently gave feasts for their own glorification. The guests are not necessarily family friends. They are made up of all sorts of folks, whose presence will increase the ostentatious splendor of the host. Read the description of Sindbad the Sailor's banquets, as given in the *Arabian Nights*, or, better still, the story, in the same strange book, of the Barneide's feast. To both of these were invited the deplorably poor. We are not to suppose that such Pharisees as the one who was now entertaining Jesus invited him because they believed in him, but rather because his presence at the banquet would make the outside gossips talk of the banquet. (2) *God's grace is a feast of the richest fare, the fullest enjoyment, and the most noble companionship.* It is well for us to think much of this figure of speech, "a great supper." The great King, through unnumbered centuries, has been preparing a spiritual feast for your soul and mine, and longs for us to come and enjoy it. **Bade many.** Our Lord here probably would refer to the Jewish people, to whom the Gospel was first preached, but, as in most of his parables, there is a secondary meaning, which applies to all who hear the call of Christ. The Eastern custom, which invited the guests long beforehand, as we do for a wedding, which announced the coming feast to the whole neighborhood and allowed the men and women of the streets to crowd in and line the walls and gaze on the guests, must be kept in mind as we follow the course of the story. (3) *"All who have been brought up in Christian families, all who have been trained in church and Sabbath school, all who have studied the word of God," are bidden to the Lord's banquet.*

**17. Sent his servant at supper time.** The "servant" represents every bearer of the Gospel