

## ***Pastor Writes***

The theme for our morning's meditation is, 'Our response to the call of God'. Jesus had gone to the house of a leader of the Pharisees on a Sabbath day and he was being watched. In front of him was a man suffering from dropsy and they were looking to see whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath day. Jesus does heal the man on the Sabbath day and reminds them how they had made provision for their ox or child if they had fallen into a well on the Sabbath. So also this man had to be healed immediately. He goes on to teach them about not going for the important seats in a wedding, lest somebody else who is more important comes and you are asked to vacate your seat. One of the dinner guests quips saying, 'Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God!' The man is thinking of a future messianic banquet which the chosen will eat with God in a feast prepared for them.

Jesus then tells them a parable about a great banquet which a man gave and to which he had invited many. The invitation had already gone out well ahead of time. Now it was the day of the dinner and the man was sending his servants to say to those who had been invited, 'Come for everything is ready now.' The acceptance of the first invitation would have been a firm commitment. However, now there are excuses that come up.

The first person said, 'I have bought a piece of land and I must go out and see it; please accept my regret.' The excuse is indeed a bold faced lie. No one in west Asia would buy a piece of land first and then see it. When you buy a piece of land or a house one would do all the background checks of the land, about the soil, wells, springs, trees, rocks, anticipated rainfall and also the history of the ownership. All these take place before the purchase of the land and therefore we can see that is was not a genuine excuse.

The second person says, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out. Please excuse me.' Team of oxen are sold in two ways in most west Asian countries: one would be by oral tradition where the news would be passed by word of mouth about how good the oxen were. The second would be when there is bazaar or a market day when the buyer tries them out and then purchases them. Here the man says he had bought them without doing either of these two and was going to test them now. This would be as absurd now if a husband calls his wife and says, 'I have paid a cheque for five used cars and now I am going to find out their age and their model and see whether it will start.' Even the most devoted wife will worry about her husband's sanity.

The third excuse is that of the passionate bridegroom who had just been married and therefore could not come. Again the excuse is rather flimsy because the wedding and the banquet would not have been held in the village on the same day. It seems to have been in the recent past. The man would not be away from his wife for too long as the banquets were held late afternoon. If the man really wanted to be with his wife he need not have accepted this invitation. Here again we see a flimsy excuse. The master then tells the

servants to go into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the blind, and crippled.

In spite of doing this there was still space and so he sends them further away to the roads and country lanes and compels people to come so that his house would be full. He finally says, 'I tell you, not one of those who were invited will taste of my banquet.'

God's messiah is here, he is inviting us to the messianic banquet—the day of salvation. God is repeatedly inviting us to enter his kingdom by faith through his Son Jesus. We may come up with numerous excuses like being too busy with our work, accumulating property, buying material things and being caught up in a life of pleasure. However, this invitation will not last very long. The curtains will be drawn once we reject him and the invitation will be thrown open to others. That has already begun as more and more people of other faiths are coming closer to God while we are rejecting him. May we truly accept his invitation and participate in the banquet that he has set before us.

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