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Sermon Notes

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Christ Spreads a Feast in Your Heart

Ephesians 3:16-17

Ephesians 3:16-17 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

I. A Meal with Jesus... Again and Again

A. This Text Speaks of an Infinitely Richer Relationship with Christ

1. I'll use the illustration of a spiritual feast... feasting with Christ
2. Sitting at a banquet table with Jesus, enjoying a far deeper relationship with him than you have ever known before
3. Having an overwhelming sense of his love fill you in ways you never dreamed possible
4. Filling you with all the fullness of God Himself...
5. Far beyond anything you could ever ask or imagine
6. The languages just soars beyond our small minds, and beyond the Christian experience of almost everyone in this room
7. Step by step, phrase by phrase, the Apostle Paul lifts the minds and hearts of his readers

B. Paul's Glorious Prayer for the Ephesian Christians

Ephesians 3:14-21 For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of

Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

1. This is a PRAYER and also this is the WORD

- a. These are the ordained means for God to give you a far deeper sense of the love of Christ than ever before
- b. Paul's actual prayer here is recorded for all time, and the words he prayed for the Ephesian Christians become for us the WORD OF GOD, just as the prayers in the Psalms have become the WORD OF GOD as well
- c. The combination of prayer and the word is the way by which you will experience vastly more of Christ's love for you than you ever have before
- d. We are not speaking here of the unhealthy mysticism that characterized some of the mystics in church history... whose meditations were not based in scripture and were more like eastern mysticism... a desire constantly for being emptied, negated, annihilated, made nothing, like a drop in an endless sea
- e. We are instead advocating a healthy, Christian, spiritual, biblical mysticism... a supernatural EXPERIENCE of Christ's love that swallows up all conceptions, that flows over you like a river of pure pleasure, something so strong and overwhelming you will wonder if you can long survive its flow... a sense of the love of Christ that is completely based in the TRUTH of scripture, that comes as a direct ANSWER to prayer
- f. PRAYER and the MINISTRY OF THE WORD... this is what the Holy Spirit uses to minister the love of Christ to our hearts

2. This prayer is for Christians, not non-Christians

- a. Today, we are going to focus on one phrase in the middle of this flowing prayer,,,

Ephesians 3:17 ... that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith

- b. So many evangelists have zeroed in on this phrase... saying "You must ask Christ into your heart..."

- c. We are so used to hearing this kind of language associated with the end of a gospel presentation... so we wonder how Paul could be praying this for the EPHESIAN CHRISTIANS
- d. If they are Christians, some might say, don't they already have Christ dwelling in their hearts?? Isn't he already there?
- e. So why would Paul be praying that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith??
- f. But of this we can be sure... his is praying this for the EPHESIAN SAINTS... for the Christians in Ephesus

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus

They are ALREADY born again:

Ephesians 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit

If they are Christians, they have Christ's Spirit living WITHIN them:

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

Romans 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

- g. This Spirit of Christ was ALREADY indwelling all of these Ephesians
 - h. And yet he prays that Christ would DWELL IN THEIR HEARTS by faith
 - i. So also, we would well imagine that Paul would pray the same for all of us... this prayer is for ALL CHRISTIANS... to have a vastly deeper sense of the love of Christ for us
 - j. This he likens to Christ DWELLING IN OUR HEARTS by faith
 - k. This prayer is for Christians, not non-Christians
3. This prayer is for all Christians, not special "super-Christians"

- a. It is so easy for us to think that this kind of astounding, vastly deep, infinitely rich sense of the love of Christ for us—something so overpowering that it takes your breath away, that it is unforgettable and supernatural, a foretaste of heavenly joy as far above the normal Christian experience as the normal Christian experience is above the non-Christian’s daily life experience... that something like this is only for the “all-stars,” the “super-Christians”... the specialists... the mystics, who withdraw from daily life and live in a cave or monastery and forsake all normal life, who fast and pray and wear a camel-hair shirt and live a WEIRD life
- b. The word “saints” can throw us off here:

Ephesians 3:17-19 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- c. The Roman Catholic error in this is deep and pervasive, and may even mislead some of you
- d. I grew up a Roman Catholic in eastern Massachusetts... I was an altar boy, and was trained in the sacraments—infant baptism, the eucharist, the mass, the confessional, confirmation
- e. I attended two different Catholic churches in my life: St. Jeremiah’s, then St. Anselm’s.
- f. Most of the Catholic churches in our region were named for saints... St. this and St. that
- g. They teach that a saint is someone who has lived an extraordinary Christian life... vastly beyond anything a normal Catholic did... they were conspicuously holy, did some great ministry among the poor, did a miracle or two (or more) and were voted in by the college of cardinals—canonized by a vote of the Roman Catholic hierarchy... that was a SAINT
- h. Normal Christians can’t be “saints”
- i. But that is totally against the way Paul is using the word “saint”... the word here means “holy ones”... “set apart ones” set apart unto God as his possession
- j. He wrote the letter to the “SAINTS IN EPHESUS” (Ephesians 1:1)
- k. Throughout his epistles, it becomes clear that the saints are ordinary Christians, set apart by God for his own possession... not some special class of Christians

- l. SO Paul's prayer is that ALL THE SAINTS would have power to grasp the infinite dimensions of Christ's love
- m. That ALL THE SAINTS (not just some special class of super-Christians) would be able to comprehend this love, and be FILLED TO ALL THE MEASURE OF THE FULLNESS OF GOD!

Application: Please listen carefully to this sermon! Please don't "check out" thinking this could never be for you... that this is "advanced Christianity" and is only for pastors or a few special people

God wants YOU... yes even YOU!!... to have a vastly greater sense of Christ's love for you; a sense so vast and immense that you will never be the same again

4. This prayer is for YOU... so you may evaluate your experience, and find strength to feast in Christ in ways you never have before
- C. What Does Paul Pray for? That Christ May Dwell in your Hearts by Faith
1. The key word: "dwell"... "live"... "abide"
 2. Greek prefix: "down"... so the idea is of Christ SETTLING DOWN in our hearts
 3. What is the "heart"?
 - a. The "inner person"...

Ephesians 3:16-17 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

- b. Heart = The center of your personality... the core of your being
 - i) The part of you that thinks, reasons, loves, yearns, chooses, analyzes, rejoices...
 - ii) The heart does all of these things
 - iii) The idea is that Christ would SETTLE DOWN in your heart and FILL IT COMPLETELY with himself
4. "By faith"
 - a. This is something that can only happen by faith... by trust in God's WORD...

- b. As you hear these words, the Holy Spirit can work this miracle of Christian experience... it is completely WORD-BASED... it is something only experienced by FAITH
- c. You cannot see it with your eyes, you cannot hear it with your ears, you cannot feel it with your fingertips, or taste it with your tongue, or smell it with your nose...
- d. It is BY FAITH alone that Christ will settle down in your heart and fill it to all the fullness of God with his love
- e. Also... it is not BY WORKS, but by faith alone
 - i) There is no EARNING this amazing privilege, this astonishing blessing
 - ii) We do not WORK for it, but simply trust Christ to do it

D. A Meal with Jesus... Again and Again... and Again... and AGAIN

1. Revelation 3:20: One of the most misused verses in church history

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

- a. Usually used by evangelists to “seal the deal”
- b. The image is of Christ, the Savior, standing outside the door of the sinner’s heart and knocking... the sinner is called on to rise and cross the floor and open the door to Jesus
- c. BUT the problem with this is that Christ is speaking to his CHURCH here, the church of Laodicea...not to non-Christians to make an initial profession of faith in Christ
- d. This church at Laodicea is distant from Christ, it is sinful, it is lukewarm, it is worldly...LUKEWARM... NEITHER HOT NOR COLD
- e. Worse, they are self-satisfied:

Revelation 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

- f. Christ wants them to know him deeply and really and powerfully
- g. So he stands outside their hearts, yearning to come into them by the Spirit, just as Paul is praying for the Ephesian Christians
- h. AND what does he say he will do with them? He will EAT with him, and he with me... a MEAL! Feasting with Jesus!!!

- i. This is a recurring theme in the gospels... a sense of close, intimate fellowship with Jesus
- 2. The beginning: John 1
 - a. The Gospel of John was very selective... John only covered a few of Jesus' miracles and amazing teachings
 - b. John 1: An amazing chapter, filled with incredible truths
 - i) John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"
 - ii) John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory..."

JOHN the BAPTIST:

- iii) John 1:29 "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world..."
- iv) John 1:34 "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God..."
- c. Then... come these surprising verses:

John 1:35-39 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

 - d. WHY??? Why did John include this homely little account of "hanging out with Jesus?"
 - e. Though it doesn't say so, I assume they must have shared a meal with Jesus that day
 - f. And I think the reason John included this was this was his FIRST ENCOUNTER with Jesus! Unspeakably precious that memory was... and all it was was a TIME SPENT together... spending the afternoon, from 4:00 PM through the evening...
- 3. The Last Supper:
 - a. Jesus' yearning desire

CSB Luke 22:15 Then He said to them, "I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

Amazing in the Greek... redoubled word... "with deepest desire I have deeply desired to eat with you"

It shows his heart after his bride.... How much he yearns to sit at table with us and share a meal... to break bread, and dine, and satisfy every desire of body, soul, spirit

- b. The establishment of the Lord's Supper: this is why the Lord established the regular observance of the ordinance... that we would think back at that meal, and look ahead
- c. The promise of the future

Luke 22:16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:18 For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

- 4. The resurrection feast: the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus
 - a. How often I have YEARNED to have been one of those who fellowshiped with Jesus that day... the resurrection day
 - b. How blessed were these two unnamed disciples to walk and talk with Jesus, and in the end, to sit at table with him and break bread

Luke 24:30-32 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

E. This is What I Want to Present to You Today... a Spiritual Meal with Jesus

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

John 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

The feast is nothing less than INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP with Jesus Christ, an overwhelming sense of his love for you

II. The Banquet Hall Prepared

A. Before a Great Banquet, the Banqueting Hall Must Be Prepared

1. Esther 1: King Xerxes, the most powerful man on earth, ruled over an empire of 120 provinces that stretched from Egypt to India... the largest empire the world had ever known; covering 3.2 million square miles, and including half of the population of the world at that time... MASSIVE
2. He wanted to put the glory of his empire and kingly reign on display, and had a festival for 180 days; it culminated in a feast in the capital city, the citadel of Susa... it was in his palace garden, in a walled garden in the palace, for all the officials who lived in Susa
3. The feast was lavish

Esther 1:5-8 When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest, who were in the citadel of Susa. ⁶ The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. ⁷ Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. ⁸ By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

4. What kind of planning and expense and preparation and labor went into making this a magnificent feast?
5. Everything had to be gotten READY... the banqueting hall had to be made ready
6. So it is with this spiritual feast you're going to have with Jesus Christ

B. The Hall is Your Heart: Christ is Coming to YOU

1. You are not travelling to his palace... he's coming to your heart
2. But the place must be gotten ready first
3. The initial part of the prayer we looked at last week

4. Now look at it again in this light... the Holy Spirit has come to get your heart ready for this spiritual feast

Ephesians 3:16-17 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

5. The Holy Spirit is the agent of preparation
- a. He is sent in advance of Christ to get your heart ready... just as Jesus' disciples were sent in advance to get the Upper Room ready for the Last Supper
 - b. The Holy Spirit begins by cleaning up the heart
 - c. Sinlessness is not required, for then no one would have ever experienced it
 - d. But Christ will not bless people living in willful sin
 - e. The Holy Spirit goes out first to clean us up, get us ready for the feast... to make us more obedient to Christ's commands

John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and disclose myself to him.

DISCLOSE = MANIFEST...

6. The Spirit ministers POWER to the INNER BEING for this feast
- a. Verse 16 mentions STRENGTHENING WITH POWER
 - b. Verse 18 mentions POWER again
 - c. Why is power needed?
 - d. Because this is a spiritual CLIMB... spiritual exertion
 - e. The Spirit has to strengthen your heart for this experience
 - f. He sets the heart to DESIRE THIS as never before... a strong yearning for something more than you've ever known before
 - g. We get bored with the striving, bored with the effort, feeling it's not worth it after a while
 - h. We are "far too easily pleased"

C.S. Lewis:

If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

Richard Roberts, minister of God, early 19th century... died of consumption at age 36

[He writes in his journal] "Frequently, all around me thought me about to expire. My cough was so dreadful, so were the pains I felt in my chest and side; and above all the languor which oppressed me for a while seemed almost overwhelming. But while I was thus sinking I felt more of the consolations and supports of religion than I ever had experienced before. O, with what strong and assured confidence was I enabled to look upon my Redeemer, and how gladly would I have resigned my soul into his hands! What glorious manifestations of His love and mercy did He make to my soul, and how did I rejoice to believe that in a few days more I should be with Him in glory eternal! For the sake of my dear wife and friends, I was willing to live, and saw it my duty to use all proper means to promote my recovery... but for my own sake I had a desire to be with Christ. Thus I lay in sweet suspense, as it were, between earth and heaven, and indeed, so I have remained in general ever since."

Later on, a friend said to him: "I should be glad to enjoy your happiness." Richard Roberts could not speak at this stage of his illness, but he wrote this on a slate: "Believe constantly on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you may be much happier than you are. Had I been more faithful in this respect I should have enjoyed more consolation and done more for the glory of God."

[the account continues] "In the course of this day he experienced an ecstasy of heavenly joy. His eyes were bathed in tears, and he uttered words of praise, consolation and triumph; it appeared as if he was transported into Paradise. It was evident that he experienced a foretaste of heaven." He said, "Oh, I am happy in my God, in his love. I am going to possess Him forever. I shall enter into that city whose streets are of fine gold, yes, the New Jerusalem from above, the City of the Living God."

[the final entry] "Since my last attack three weeks ago the Lord has been near and has manifested His love to my soul in an uncommon degree. I have been deeply humbled under a sense of my unworthiness and past unfaithfulness, but I have felt myself firmly fixed upon the Rock of Ages, and have been enabled to anticipate my departure from the body with unspeakable delight. **One thing has much occupied my mind, namely, the great proneness I have ever felt to rest**

short of all the fullness of God. Often, it seemed within my grasp, often has my soul seemed to take possession of it, but never did I enjoy a constant sense of it, of all the great salvation of God. However, I never gave up the hope of possessing it fully, and I trust that I shall now obtain my heart's desire."

This full grasp of the love of Christ for us will always, in this world, elude our grasp... but the Holy Spirit is STRENGTHENING OUR HEARTS for this feast... to reach out for it, to hunger for it, to thirst for it as never before

7. The Spirit prepares us also by meditations on God's Glory as revealed in His Word and in His Son
8. The Spirit prepares us by means of PRAYER
 - a. Paul prays this for the Ephesian Christians
 - b. Paul wants us to pray this prayer for ourselves and for others in this church
 - c. This feast will never occur apart from prevailing, faith-filled prayer
 - d. Having seen the purpose of Christ in giving us far more of a sense of Christ's love, he wants us to set ourselves to pray for it relentlessly

Luke 11:11-13 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

9. So... the Spirit is going ahead of this feast of Christ's love to prepare you for it
 - a. By holiness in obedience to His Commands
 - b. By meditation on his glory in His Word and in His Son
 - c. My prevailing prayer

III. The Aroma from the Feast

A. Believers Have Testified Again and Again to this Feast

1. It's not as though this is something impossible, something that could never happen to us
2. Many Christians have experienced this great elevation of soul that comes by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit

B. The Prophets and Psalmists Speak of this Rapture

Isaiah 12:1-3 *In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. ² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." ³ ¶ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*

Psalm 63:1-5 *O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. ² I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. ⁴ I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. ⁵ My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.*

Job 42:5-6 *My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.*

Psalm 73:23-26 *Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

C. The Disciples Experienced It

Matthew 17:2 *There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.*

Matthew 17:5-6 *While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.*

Luke 24:32 *They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

Revelation 1:13-17 *among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. ¹⁷ ¶ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.*

D. The Hymnwriters Too

1. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

Amazingly godly Cistercian monk, one of the sources John Calvin quoted the most in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, wrote extensively on meditation and spiritual union with Christ, preached 86 sermons on Song of Solomon, which he used to speak of the soul's marriage to Christ

"In this kind of spiritual marriage there is now and then an experience of ecstasy and a recession from bodily senses so that the soul is so aware of the Word (Christ) that it is no longer aware of itself. This happens when the mind, enticed by the unimaginable sweetness of the Word, is somehow stolen from itself. It is seized and snatched away from itself so that it may find pleasure in the Word."

Jesus the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills the breast
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest

No voice can sing, no heart can frame
No can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Jesus' name
O Savior of mankind

2. Fanny Crosby: "Blessed Assurance"

Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood!

Perfect submission, perfect delight
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love

Perfect submission, all is at rest
I in my Savior am happy and blessed
Watching and waiting, looking above
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love!

3. Jean Pigott: "Jesus I am Resting, Resting..."

Jesus I am resting, resting
In the joy of what thou art
I am finding out the greatness

Of thy loving heart
 Thou hast bid me gaze upon thee
 And thy beauty fills my soul
 For by thy transforming power
 Thou has made me whole

O, how great thy lovingkindness
 Vaster, broader than the sea
 O how marvelous thy goodness
 Lavished all on me
 Yes I rest in thee beloved
 Know what wealth of grace is thine
 Know thy certainty of promise
 And hast made it mine

Simply trusting thee Lord Jesus
 I behold thee as thou art
 And thy love so pure so changeless
 Satisfies my heart
 Satisfies its deepest longings
 Meets, supplies its every need
 Compasseth me round with blessings
 Thine is love indeed!

Ever lift thy face upon me
 As I work and wait for thee
 Resting 'neath thy smile, Lord Jesus
 Earth's dark shadows flee
 Brightness of my Father's glory
 Sunshine of my Father's face
 Keep me ever trusting, resting
 Fill me with Thy grace

E. So Also Many Believers from Church History... we'll speak of their testimonies
 next week

F. The aroma from these ideas is wafting through this sermon... enticing you and
 calling you a vaster and greater sense of Christ's love for you

IV. The Invitation Given: What Will You Do?

A. Non-Christians: Invitation to an Eternal Banquet

Matthew 22:2-5 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. ⁴ "Then he sent some

more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' ⁵ *"But they paid no attention and went off-- one to his field, another to his business.*

Luke 14:16-20 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸ "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' ¹⁹ "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' ²⁰ "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

The gospel is an invitation to receive the gift of forgiveness by the blood of Christ

All of us have sinned... we have rebelled against Almighty God

We deserve to die under the wrath of God

But instead of killing us, God sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ

Christ came to die on the cross in our place, to give us full forgiveness of sins

He is inviting each one of you to spend eternity with him in glory, in heaven, in a rich, wonderful banqueting hall

WHAT WILL YOU DO??

B. Christians... a similar invitation is going to you now

1. You have honestly had a very mediocre experience with Christ
2. You believe that he is the Savior of the world
3. You believe that he died on the cross for your sins
4. You come to church regularly
5. But honestly, you don't feel much of these things in your heart
6. Your life is full of MANY THINGS... busy with the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth
7. You don't spend much time in prayer or Bible study
8. You have a sense that there must be more, but ...
9. I PLEAD WITH YOU TO SEEK THIS BLESSING!!!

10. Set aside the pursuit of the world for a time... set aside time to seek his face... pursue Christ, turn toward him, ask him to reveal himself to you
11. Forsake any known sins... cry out to him to pour out God's love into your heart by the Holy Spirit
12. Take Paul's astounding prayer and go through it line by line
13. Pray it for your family members
14. Pray it for other Christians
15. Pray it for yourself
16. Open the Bible and read something from the Gospels about Christ
 - a. Read one of the miracle stories
 - b. Or one of Jesus' teachings
 - c. Read of his interactions with his disciples
 - d. Read of his death on the cross
 - e. Go to Luke 24... pretend you are one of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus
 - f. Ask the Lord to open your mind to understand the Scriptures as they testify to Christ!
17. WAIT ON HIM TO DO THIS TO YOU!!
18. More next week!