

1 June 2018

“On Nuptials”

Since June is wedding season, so called, let’s look at wedding business!

One parable of grace is Jesus’ **“The Parable of the Wedding Banquet.”** The version I offer came not from the Gospels, but rather from *The Boston Globe* (June 1990).

Accompanied by her fiancée, a woman went to the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston and ordered the meal. The two of them poured over the menu, made selections of china and silver, and pointed to pictures of the flower arrangements they liked. They both had expensive taste, and the bill came to thirteen thousand dollars. After leaving a check for half that amount as down payment, the couple went home to flip through books of wedding announcements.

The day the announcements were supposed to hit the mailbox, the potential groom got cold feet. “I’m just not sure,” he said. “It’s a big commitment. Let’s think about this a little longer.” When his angry fiancée returned to the Hyatt to cancel the banquet, the Events Manager could not have been more understanding. “The same thing happened to me, Honey,” she said, and told the story of her own broken engagement. But about the refund, she had bad news. “The contract is binding. You’re only entitled to thirteen hundred dollars back. You have two options: to forfeit the rest of the down payment or go ahead with the banquet. I’m sorry. Really, I am.”

It seemed crazy, but the more the jilted bride thought about it, the more she liked the idea of going ahead with the party—not a wedding banquet, mind you, but a big blowout. Ten years before, this same woman had been living in a homeless shelter. She got back on her feet, found a good job, and set aside a sizable nest egg. Now she had the wild notion of using her savings to treat the down-and-outs of Boston to a night on the town.

And so, it was that in June of 1990 the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston hosted a party such as it had never seen before. The hostess changed the menu to boneless chicken—“in honor of the groom,” she said—and sent invitations to rescue missions and homeless shelters. That warm summer night, people who were used to peeling half-gnawed pizza off the cardboard dined instead on chicken cordon bleu. Hyatt waiters in tuxedos served hors d’oeuvres to senior citizens propped up by crutches and aluminum walkers. Bag ladies, vagrants, and addicts took one night off from the hard life on the sidewalks outside and instead sipped champagne, ate chocolate wedding cake, and danced to big-band melodies late into the night (Philip Yancey, *What’s So Amazing About Grace*, HarperCollins, pp. 48-49).

The gospel is more than a set of propositions for us to figure out. The gospel is not a religious hammer to thrash and batter people into submission. The gospel is not a sentimental story to make us feel deeply the pain and grief of Jesus. No! No! No!

The gospel is God’s invitation to live life and live it abundantly.

**Come, Worship
Stay, Learn
Go, Serve**