

FEASTING AND FASTING

Mark 2:13-22

A Sermon by Dr. Neil Chadwick

Introduction:

Interesting, Jesus calls Levi, and shortly afterwards is eating a meal at his house with many of his friends. I wonder how that happened. It's what we could call "Hospitality Evangelism", or an "Evangelistic Supper Meeting."

Levi (also known as Matthew) invited his colleagues, his fellow IRS agents, so to speak. He was a wealthy home owner; he had room enough to have a number of guests; this is an interesting use of wealth. Matthew invited those who were despised by the Jewish leaders. Why were they despised? Because they represented the Romans. The Jews were upset because they had to pay taxes to foreigners, the "Gentiles".

The story also relates with the plea of Jesus to find the needy, and invite them to be your banquet guests:

"Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:12-14)

I. Feasting and Fasting

A. Jesus went to the "feast", in association with "sinners".

- 1. This of course was the Pharisees' perspective; they evidently believed that "one bad apple spoils the barrel."**
- 2. Jesus' perspective was different, "a good apple can 'unspoil' the rotten apples."**
- 3. While natural life has many analogies applicable to spiritual life, there are significant differences. For example, when we talk about being "born again", does that mean one can be "unborn"? Well, yes, if by that you mean that a person can lose their relationship with God.**

B. Jesus compares this with feasting with the "bridegroom".

- 1. There is joy in the presence of Jesus. But even though He's gone now, we want to keep on feasting. While we do not want to repeat "Religious**

Severity", it seems many people today only want the joy. It's the American Way, the search of good times, to realize "the ultimate rush", a claim made by the L.A. gunman who shot at 250 cars.

2. Let's not forget Jesus' story of the ten wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25 - the foolish missed out on the eternal feast because in this life they failed to prepare themselves.

II. There are to be new containers for new wine.

A. Jesus' life and message represented something new, which is a problem, the problem of change which upsets our security.

B. What is the Church application? Jewish ways and tradition could not contain the message of the Gospel. Religious structures often become rigid, and there ensues a struggle between bureaucracy and "charisma". Someone has said, "The seven last words of the Church are, 'We've Never Done It That Way Before'." An often heard complaint around the Church: "It's Not Like It Used To Be".

C. What is the personal application? Perhaps we're too willing to accept the "same old, same old".

Conclusion:

Is it time to "Feast" or to "Fast"?

Is there a willingness, an acceptance for what God may want to do today?