

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, August 7, 2024

Today is Wednesday, August 7 and we are studying what the Bible says about preparing a table.

OPENING PRAYER

In the morning, as another day begins, I seek the God who loves me. I quiet my mind, slow my breath and still my body. In these calm moments before the events of the day rush in, I listen for the voice of the Shepherd. He is with me. He calls my name, whispers to my soul and guides my steps. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, "Come, for everything is now ready." 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." Another said, "I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me." Still another said, "I just got married, so I can't come." The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame." "Sir," the servant said, "what you ordered has been done, but there is still room." Then the master told his servant, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full." Luke 14:16-23

REFLECTION

Although the dominant image of God portrayed in Psalm 23 is that of the Shepherd, there is also the image of God the host. He is a host who prepares a table for us. The author of the Psalm, David, wrote, "You prepare a table for me." The image of the host was familiar in the ancient Middle East. Hosts were often wealthy rulers or celebrated kings who threw occasional extravagant banquets for friends and invited guests. The image of the host is an image (alongside that of the shepherd) of providential provision. The image of the host celebrates the sheer goodness of our gracious and generous God.

We are God's guests and He is our host. We are invited to a great banquet where the table has been prepared especially for us. To be God's guest is more than to be an acquaintance - we are special to Him and the invitation is brought directly to our doorstep. I imagine God as an attentive host, making sure every detail of the elaborate banquet is finely planned and well appointed. I imagine a lavish table, beautifully set, perfectly apportioned, comfortable and welcoming. I imagine a fine table with folded place cards. Each guest's name is artfully handwritten in elegant calligraphy. My name is there. I am invited. I have a place at the table. Will I respond to the invitation? Will I attend? Will I arrive and sit at the wonderful table in the presence of my gracious host?

Jesus told a parable of a host who threw a great banquet and invited many guests. When the tables were prepared and everything was ready, the invited guests began to make excuses. They were too busy and distracted by the many things of this world to make time to dine with the Host of hosts. They declined the greatest invitation of all. God has invited me to come to the banquet feast. Have I said "yes?" Have I believed in His Son and accepted my place at the Great Banquet table? I consider the places in my daily life where God has prepared a table for me - places of Sabbath rest strewn throughout a busy day. Moments when I can take a breather and inhale the peace and calm of His precious Holy Spirit. Am I ignoring the invitations that are all around me?

Ask: Have I overlooked the Spirit's invitations to come and dine at the table of God? How can I be more attentive and responsive to the opportunities to be in God's presence throughout my upcoming day?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Come, Holy Spirit, remind me to stop throughout the day and rest in God's love, dine at His table and enjoy the blessings of His presence. I am grateful for a gracious Host who generously supplies me with exactly what I need, if I will just pause and recognize the great gifts He offers me. The feast for my soul is one of abundance and beauty and I am an honored guest. Let me not be too busy or distracted to miss out on the hidden treasures of the upcoming day. Amen.