

Bay Head Chapel

October 2, 2011

Bay Head NJ

Sermon: "Please Come to the Palace for Supper..."

Scripture: Luke 14: 15 - 24

"It was a long time ago, back in the earliest years of my ministry. I was an assistant minister over in Pittsburgh, hosting Pine-wood derbies, chaperoning teen age dances Saturday nights where they taught me to do the twist and tending to the general mirth and morals of teenagers and their parents in the early 1960s. It was all OK, even if I had been trained to do more.

So, I was pleased when I was invited to preach at a well known Presbyterian Church, across the east end of town, a huge gothic edifice whose twin towers were worthy of a Ken Follett novel. Its solid mahogany paneling throughout the chancel, with gold plated altar ware on a hand carved Communion Table, with ushers in Morning Coats and limousines with chauffeurs stretched out along South Negley Avenue - I mean it was the kind of ecclesiastical palace you don't see much anymore. But, sadly, it was already back then mainly empty, and like we say, its heyday had passed.

While once it had enthusiastically sheltered 1200 to 1500 a week, with two or three services, by the time I preached there its Sunday summer attendance was down to 50 or 60 and they had wisely moved the single service to the smaller, though still lovely Chapel in the back of the building with its impressive stained glass. Normally meant for children's' church, small weddings and funerals, it shifted on summer Sundays to two ushers with five dozen bulletins, one organist, one fading tenor soloist and two official greeters.

Well, what they did not count on was that my Mother lived nearby, and although she attended another Church down around the corner, when she learned that her son was to preach there, she got on the phone to all of our relatives. My Dad was one of eight brothers, while mom was one of six, most of whom lived within walking distance. She also called friends and friends of friends, insisting that they be there bright and ready on the morning I was scheduled to preach. Some protested that they did not have suitable clothing for such a fine and fancy congregation; others said they would feel awkward darkening its doors; some others said that they never went to church anymore, but undaunted Mother Cromie kept on drumming up a crowd. You would have loved my Mom: her four children were the apples of her eye.

Well, we have to move along: the day came. I wrote the best sermon I could think up back then. I trotted out the pulpit gown the elders of my church had given me on my ordination day. I shined my shoes and even got a haircut three days before the sermon.

Well, you might have guessed it by now, when the time for worship came the old Chapel was filled to overflowing. There was not a seat left by 11 o'clock except one or two up front and a couple of folding chairs which the startled ushers had hurried into the back of the Chapel at 10:55 or so.

It was that at that very moment, 10:59 and one half, when old Alex Barron, a well known Pittsburgh attorney whose family had practically run the Church for three generations, arrived ceremoniously for worship, expecting of course to plop himself down in his favorite family pew and have a quiet rest, when what to his wondering eyes should appear but a chock-a-block filled chapel with nowhere for him to sit.

So finally we come to the reason I bring you this whole opening scene, Mr. Barron, bewildered by being shut out of his own chapel, and angry as you will hear, looked around at the chapel, glared a quick stare at me, then he stomped back down the aisle to the rear as he snarled out loud, "Where did all these damn people come from? They don't belong here!" Touché, Mr. Barron, touché! You tipped your hand wide open and everybody saw it and heard it, including the Lord God Almighty! "Where did all these people come from; they don't belong here!"

2 stories
one from Bible
"... in life"

"Please come to The Palace for Supper" 4

Alex Barron III

INTRO:
never told
it before

Alex Barron III Third Church, young & inexperienced
Mom got involved, Dad one of 8, born 96, typical of
those days almost all lined in the extended area
filled chapel... Alex Barron III came in - ~~what was~~
down aisle "Where did all these Black people
come from; they don't belong here!" Torches

never
for pattern
never told!

Sounded up of Parable & story Luke 14.

Script was at

[redacted] Matthew
a wedding feast; Luke calls it a banquet. [redacted]
[redacted] In Matthew it is the
King himself who had the banquet. [redacted]

Mark
his own
take

[redacted] whatever...
arrived

The trumpets sounded; the chariots [redacted]
[redacted] the
beaves on the cobblestones [redacted] the
guests were introduced by name. Then, [redacted]
[redacted], just as the first course was about to be
served, a crippled old derelict in rags came
shuffling in, uninvited and under-dressed, to say the
least. It doesn't say why he chose to come, but it
seems that [redacted] he heard Jesus Christ
was there and he wanted to ask Him for a healing.
"Party or no party. I'm tired of being dropsied and
crippled. [redacted]"

It was fun
& fancy

[redacted] Where is the Healer?"

I wonder what you would think [redacted] OR do it a derelict
[redacted] wandered in
[redacted] room
looking for one of the guests. "Hey, who let this guy
in? we need some better ushers
next time."

what I read in
your hearing.
Jesus was at
the house of
a leader of the
Pharisees, Lk
* writes
Gospel writers
often differ on
details

5

NOT Jesus as you know, He never belittled anyone.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Blind man

[Redacted]

Whatever they brought to Him, He renewed and elevated all the time. He drove the demons out of a man. He healed a widow's son. He took an old locust post cross and gave us back new life. He upgraded things. He was at dinner in the palace of a wealthy friend when a sick and needy man crashed the party. It could have spoiled everything, but Jesus turned it into a parable.

Then He told the parable: "A man gave a great banquet, ^{He invited} invited many. When the day arrived, he sent his servants to call for them, but they began to make excuses." Too many parties, maybe. Too many obligations. "No Honey, let's stay home tonight!" One said, "I must check the field I bought." Another had to tend his oxen. (Now there's an excuse you don't much hear these days!) A third said, "I got married, therefore I cannot come." I wonder why . . . "Why do we always go to your friends, Honey!? What about my old gang?"

That's True w/ you + me. Offer Him your life, with all of its faults and foibles, and He will return it to you new and whole inside. . . . ~~So~~ He healed the man. The Pharisees complained because it was the Sabbath. It was not permitted to do healings on a Sabbath! (Isn't that silly?)

When he heard their excuses, the host became angry. He had planned a fine banquet and ~~his~~ invited guests were not coming. "Smarty gave a party and nobody came." So, he said to the servants, "Go out into the highways and byways and bring in anyone you find. It doesn't matter. Let's fill up the seats!" Invite them to the palace for supper. Those who refused my invitation are off my list for good. "Dear neighbor" Please Come to The Palace for dinner. And they did. And the party was a great success!

Jesus said ^{to them} "But what if you had a son who had fallen into a pit (or a well) on the Sabbath, wouldn't you go and rescue him?" "That's different!" they replied. He said, "No it isn't. This poor man is a child of God."

What does it mean? * * * * * WWCameron
Well, let's bring it to us in the Chapel today. I thank you for being here. I pray that the Lord will bless you. ^{Work} but there are a lot of other people ^{around our worship table} who are not here: some in your home, or down the street, across the lake. Some are frail and unable to drive. Some are fearful; ~~they~~ Some are lonely. Some can't come by themselves. Some are so depressed, it never occurred to them to get up and come. ~~Work~~ ^{Work} in our Worship. ~~God~~ ^{God} has blessed it as ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~doors~~ ^{doors} are open.

He loved the Rich ones too; but he never favored anyone. * * * *

The ~~He~~ ^{He} ~~said~~ ^{said} and said, "You ~~are~~ ^{are} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~poor~~ ^{poor} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~blind~~ ^{blind} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~lame~~ ^{lame} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~crippled~~ ^{crippled} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~deaf~~ ^{deaf} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~mute~~ ^{mute} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~blind~~ ^{blind} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~crippled~~ ^{crippled} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~deaf~~ ^{deaf} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~mute~~ ^{mute} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~blind~~ ^{blind} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~crippled~~ ^{crippled} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~deaf~~ ^{deaf} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~mute~~ ^{mute} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~blind~~ ^{blind} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~crippled~~ ^{crippled} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~deaf~~ ^{deaf} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~mute~~ ^{mute} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~blind~~ ^{blind} 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always.

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Please don't get nervous. Some of you are sitting there thinking . . . "But Dr. Cromie, we have this lovely little unique and special Chapel. We don't want it to change. If you encourage us to bring all those people into Worship it will."

I know that. Of Course I do. But Jesus told the parable, not me. I think I have made it clear in the three years I have been your Pastor that I am not trying to radically change the Chapel. We have added different ministries, as every pastorate does and should, but mainly different emphases. I have held the line and will continue to do so to see that our Chapel retains its dignity and beauty.

Yet, I still think it would be good for us to have a wider variety of God's children involved. Let me give you an example. What I miss the most here after 35 years of ministry, are young people: little children, teens, young couples, young singles, those with a future, those whose lives could be turned around by the witness and worship of what we say and do. They could be helped by those of us who have been down the road, who have fought our battles, and won most of them. Out of that courage and faith another generation could be helped. A Christian Church is not designed by Christ to keep people out. Its purpose is to share His love and guidance with those who need it. Think of the people who helped and encouraged you when you were young.

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Most of us have settled in. I mean, we still need the Love, Power, and Guidance of God. No question about that. But most of us are not likely to change. We might soften an attitude here and there. We might learn a little bit more about our faith. We could all become kinder to our family and friends. But most of our regular Chapel people could not be swayed to start off on a new course. (Are you with me?) We could help those who have a lifetime to live by sharing who we are and what we have. A timely word in the life of a young

person or a young family can make a world of difference. They need role models, people to look up to.

[REDACTED]

Prayer - they sure do...

Times change. There was a day when a person was not welcome in a Christian Church if he or she was divorced. There was a time when women were not welcomed as equals in the body of the Kirk. There was a time where those who were single, or who had a different lifestyle, were made to feel they didn't belong.

The point I am making here is that the invitation was issued by the Ruler. "Please Come To The Palace For Supper." His servants invited everyone when the ones who were invited gave their excuses for not coming. They chose to do other things. The King chose to invite new people, And, the original invitees missed it.

God said, "O.K., it makes me sad, but here is what I am going to do. I will have my banquet anyway. His servants went out into the streets of the city to bring anybody and everybody in: the poor and the maimed, the broken-hearted and the lonely. Those who felt left out, "Y'all come. Y'all come."

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In Isaiah the Lord gave a final Judgment Day roll call of the Nations. And oh, the surprises. The big strong conquering nations had to remain in their seats, while the humble, quiet, persecuted ones were called to the stage. Like at the Academy Awards, surprise, look who won! And guess who was first? Guess who won the top award . . . little Israel. God's chosen people, who had suffered so

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much. Life had fallen in on them in history, but look what happened there. It all comes down. God is not mocked. Those who humble themselves will be exalted; that which is hidden will one day be made known, those who exalt themselves will be humbled.

In Matthew 25, there is a more personal rendition of the same story. Again, it is Judgment Day. The Lord is making His final decision about who will come in and who will not. (That's scary.) By name He says, "You here . . . no, no . . . you over there." "But Lord," they say, "we called upon Your name. What's going on?" He said, "You did not help the sick, or visit the lonely, or welcome the stranger. You did not feed the hungry, or take care of the widows and the children." Some did. Some do. . . . Then He added, "If you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." *If you have not, you have not done it unto me.*

Not all who called upon my name will enter the Kingdom of God!

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I don't know. . . . Maybe it's because as a Pastor I see every day how fragile life can be and how suddenly it can change. (Are you listening?)

When I think what we are missing & how complacent churches can become - I can't help think back all those years to Mr Alex Baron III & his exclamation Where the blank did all these people come from?

I want to close on a deep cosmic theological level. It's also personal. I want to remind each of us that whatever age we are, Christ issues an invitation to each and every one of us, too. Your name is personally engraved on it. The One who made the starry universe knows you and me by name. And, He cares enough about us to issue this personal invitation which reads: "Please Come To The Palace For Supper . . . Please come to my palace for supper now; and then one day stay with Me there, forevermore." ~~_____~~ The table is spread throughout & around the whole world this W W Communion Sunday. Please come to the table today. In the Name of the father, Son & Holy Ghost Amen

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