

PARCHMENT

AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE: FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL.

REVELATION 21:5



Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20

SUPPING WITH CHRIST: HOSPITALITY AND THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

“If the veil which separates the visible from the invisible world could be lifted, and the people of God could behold the great controversy that is going on between Christ and holy angels and Satan and his evil hosts concerning the redemption of man; if they could understand the wonderful work of God for the rescue of souls from the bondage of sin, and the constant exercise of His power for their protection from the malice of the evil one, they would be better prepared to withstand the devices of Satan. Their minds would be solemnized in view of the vast extent and importance of the plan of redemption and the greatness of the work before them as colaborers with Christ. They would be humbled, yet encouraged, knowing that all heaven is interested in their salvation.” {5T 467.2}

An unremitting invisible warfare - as real as any earthly combat - is a thought to shake the hardest of hearts. In it, forces of evil, as well as good, are fighting for your soul. And if the veil could only be lifted, one would see how literal and how dangerous a battle it is. Most importantly, one would gain a glimpse into the immeasurable interest with which God and the heavenly angels regard their life.

In fact, Jesus demonstrated that sharing this truth, rich with encouragement and love, is sufficient knowledge

to transform the heart. When the newly-converted Matthew invited Jesus to share a meal with him, he invited other publicans along to the feast. Matthew had been asked to follow the Son of God despite his occupation, and he desired that his friends might also be touched by witnessing the interest Jesus had in them. Jesus yearned for the salvation of these men, and He did not deny the invitation. As a result, the Spirit of Prophecy reveals that after Christ’s ascension, when “three thousand were converted in a day, there were among them many who first heard the truth at the table of the publicans, and some of these became messengers of the gospel.” {DA 274}

At Matthew’s feast, Jesus revealed divine love through an earthly means. He demonstrated His interest in the souls of others by choosing to rest, eat and socialise with those whom the Jews had deemed degrading to associate with. Thus Christ showed them they were worthy of His time; that He valued their company; and that their lives were important to Him.

A similar scene occurs in the story of Zacchaeus, where rather than being an invited guest, Jesus declared: “I must abide at thy house”. What an honour and privilege for the crowd to witness! Not only did Christ notice Zacchaeus, but He spoke to him as a trusted friend with whom He could call upon to enjoy fellowship and rest.

Of course, this theme of literal fellowship with Christ carries a



deeper, spiritual meaning. As Inspiration reveals, “Zacchaeus had received Jesus, not merely as a passing guest in his home, but as One to abide in the soul temple.” {DA 556.4} Yet on a surface level, what an example Christ has given of practical Christianity and love for our neighbour.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Zacchaeus had “begun the work that made him manifest as a true penitent” before even seeing Christ. While on the other hand, the case of Matthew’s feast presents fellowship as an initiating spark which preceded the publicans’ conversion. Therefore, entertaining others for the purpose of Christ can serve to aid the one whom Christ is drawing, or provide a starting point for the one who is yet to open their heart. Whether performed at a time of reaping or sowing, the work of hospitality is one we should not neglect. Without doubt, it is by this method that many will be saved.

“As the word from Christ came to Zacchaeus, “I must abide at thy house,” so the word will come to them; and the one supposed to be a hardened sinner will be found to have a heart as tender as a child, because Christ has deigned to notice him.” {RH June 15, 1897, par. 5}

To learn that Christ has deigned to notice you; to discover that all heaven is interested in your salvation, is a truth too precious to conceal. And I have seen that the sharing of this truth gains extra potency when partnered with the humble arm of hospitality. It is thus that “the Bible lays much stress upon the practice of hospitality”, enjoining it as a duty, and illustrating the blessings which it brings. We’re even warned that “when the spirit of hospitality dies, the heart becomes palsied with selfishness.” {AH 447.3}

The 72nd chapter of *Adventist Home* expands upon this duty further, stating that even a case of meagre means or poor health is no excuse to deny the entertainment of strangers. Rather, we should strive to entertain those who cannot recompense us, as Jesus said, “for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” Luke 14:14.

Indeed, the sharing of a meal throughout the Bible is analogous to the sharing of God’s Word. When the disciples made known to Jesus that the company of five thousand should depart in order to find food, Jesus told them: “Give ye them to eat”. On a fundamental level, this was lesson in hospitality. {AH 451} Yet after the mighty miracle was performed

and the remnants collected, Sister White reveals another layer of meaning.

“...the people thought of their friends at home. They wanted them to share in the bread that Christ had blessed. The contents of the baskets were distributed among the eager throng, and were carried away into all the region round about. So those who were at the feast were to give to others the bread that comes down from heaven, to satisfy the hunger of the soul. They were to repeat what they had learned of the wonderful things of God. Nothing was to be lost. Not one word that concerned their eternal salvation was to fall useless to the ground.” DA 368.

As the disciples passed on the food they had received from Christ, so the company shared the food which they were given, in addition to the spiritual Words of life. In a similar way, when Zacchaeus was made full through fellowship with Christ, he became a worker for God, sharing with others the Word which he himself had partaken. This leads us to see that in order to effectively bring the gospel to others, one must first have the gospel abiding in their heart. Or else, as Sister White proclaims, “if the salt has lost its savor; if there is only a profession of godliness, without the love of Christ, there is no power for good. The life can exert no saving influence upon the world.” {DA 439.2}

Jesus is calling you to prepare a place for Him. He says: “Return unto me, and I will return unto thee, and heal all thy backslidings. Tear down the rubbish from the door of thy heart, and open the door, and I will come in and sup with thee and thou with me.” {LS88 331.4}

God has deigned to notice you. And like Zacchaeus, “when those sins which God hates are subdued, Jesus will come in and sup with you, and you with him”. As a result, Jesus will work through you, leading others to see His interest in them. Then, as the prophet declares, the most blessed experience of peace and joy will be yours.

“Our peace is like a river, wave after wave of glory rolls into the heart, and indeed we sup with Jesus and He with us. We have a realizing sense of the love of God, and we rest in His love. No language can describe it, it is beyond knowledge. We are one with Christ, our life is hid with Christ in God.” {3BC 1147.8}