

Just a Bucket? Better Bring a Tub

The Bible speaks often of God's approach to economics, ("the allocation of scarce means among alternative ends") from famines to feasts. And it all depends on whether one is operating under the law of Moses or under the Grace given us through Jesus and His apostle, Paul. The basic thesis comes to this: the law is about "demand," while grace offers supply. The pharisees were big on the law, while the gospel of bounty is Jesus' priceless gift to a fallen humanity. "For the law was brought by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ."

To sharpen my focus here, I'll not go into the complexities that go with living under the law. Let's simply say that God would have loved to have Moses lead his people out of Egypt fully supplied as they were when they departed, with "not one sick" and loaded down with all the wealth of the Egyptians, all the way to the promised land. But discontent, rebellion and grumbling soon led to the need for restraint and thus the laws were brought down from Sinai for a people confident they would be easy to obey.

But instead of going into all the tribulations the Israelites brought down upon themselves, I'd simply like to point out some of the blessings of Grace they could have enjoyed had they understood that God is, by nature loving and generous and gracious.

Some of God's names and titles reveal that nature: "Jehovah Jireh, The Provider." "Jehovah Shalom, The god of peace"(every need supplied.) "The God of more than enough." Jesus' feeding of the multitude, (20,000 counting women and children) with five loaves and two fish speaks for itself and there were 12 baskets left over.

The widow woman that fed Elijah with "a hand full of meal in a barrel and a nearly empty jar of oil," lived out her life with a jar of oil that never ran dry and a barrel of

meal that was always full. The oil was a type of the Holy Spirit and the meal foreshadowed Jesus, “The Bread of Life.”

At the wedding at Cana, Jesus he turned water into “new wine” that tasted better than the old—a miracle ignoring all the laws of wine making.

But perhaps his great banquet spoken of in the parable says it all. The king proclaimed a feast inviting all of his subjects to “Come and dine, for the meal is ready.” But the busy and self centered elitists came up with dubious excuses as to why they couldn’t come. Angered, the King commanded his servants to go into the highways and byways and bring in all the outcasts, the homeless, the poor and the rejected, and they were treated to all the gourmet food they could hold. The elitists were the pharisees, too uppity to come and the outcasts represent the gentiles, the focus of Paul’s ministry.

That parable is a call to all of us to share in God’s bounty, but many people, even today, are too busy in the pursuit of money and pleasure to consider heeding God’s invitation to “come and dine.”

When he was here in the 90’s, South African evangelist Rodney Howard- Brown’s signature praise song was all about God’s provision. “There is a river/ That flows from God above/ There is a fountain/ That flows with His great Love./ Come to the River;/ There is a vast supply/ God’s is a river/ That never will run dry.”

In one of his meetings in Breckenridge, Mn., Howard-Brown “loosed” that river of the Holy Spirit into the congregation, and many in the flow of it were swept under by the power of that current. I was one of them, and wrote once that it was like trying to stand in the full flow of a big trout stream, like I did fishing the Upper Yellowstone. One needed felt soled waders and a wading staff to keep from being swept down stream.

Yes, I too was swept away by that Holy Ghost stream at that meeting, and under the water, I had a life-changing, timeless moment of cleansing and being loved that I’ve

never forgotten. No cynic will ever persuade me that God is not real. His blessing and provision are beautifully embodied in that fountain “whose river never will run dry.” His mercies, like that fountain, are “new every morning.” And it’s a river in which you can drown, be cleansed, and emerge more alive than you’ve ever been.

Rodney Howard-Brown, after his meetings here and around America, founded a church in Tampa Fla. called “The River.” And he went to jail, refusing to shut that church down for the pandemic. He’s preaching again there now, and his church is bigger than ever. Hurricane Ian was headed in that direction, but it turned and went another way. I think God had something to do with that. No wonder so many are taken by the wonder of rivers.

Gene Pinkney For the Daily News 23-02-14-