

LESSON #25 **"SUPPER IN THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL"**

We have assembled again to look into the book *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. We have progressed in the story of this account of an individual who has been converted from his sin, and is on his pilgrimage to the Celestial City, which, of course, is a type of heaven. From the time he left the City of Destruction until he enters the Celestial City, he will be going through many experiences which are also common to you and I as Christians.

We now find Christian in the House Beautiful, which represents his profession of Christianity in a local church assembly. That is, he has made his profession of faith and entered into the local assembly. We found in our previous studies that the House Beautiful stood by the wayside, which represented that church membership is not essential to salvation, but it is by the wayside to assist individuals on their way. When he entered into the membership of a local congregation, the Porter there named "**Watchful**" introduced him to the other members of the congregation. Watchful represented those elders who watched for the souls of men. The first individual Christian was introduced to in the local church was a young virgin named "**Discretion.**" That is, to show that pure discretion was to be exercised before a person was to be received into the fellowship of a Christian congregation. Not just anyone who came along and applied for membership could be received, but that they should be received upon their profession of faith and understanding of what is involved in becoming a Christian. Many problems can develop within a congregation if this "discretion" is not exercised.

After his entrance into the church, Christian was introduced to three more young virgins, and in that particular setting, we discussed the fellowship in a local church assembly. Those three young virgins were none other than "**Piety,**" representing a Godly experience that a true Christian should have in relating to other people. Secondly, there was "**Prudence**" representing sound judgment that Christianity was more than just experience. There should be soundness in our faith by being able and "**ready to always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.**" (I Peter 3:15). Thirdly, there was "**Charity**" representing Christian love toward God and our fellow men.

Therefore, the basis of Christian fellowship which should be evidenced within a local

church is, (1) a true experience with Christ and with each other, (2) sound judgment regarding the things of God, and (3) a genuine love for God and for our fellow men.

Tonight we want to enter into the next segment of Christian's experience in the House Beautiful, and that is "supper time." This segment could be entitled "**Supper in the House Beautiful.**" Of course, the supper represents the Lord's Supper or communion. Now it is time for those faithful individuals within the framework of the local congregation to observe the communion service. We will now see what Bunyan's conception of a communion service really was.

Now I saw in my dream, that thus they sat talking together until supper was ready.

Of course, we just mentioned, supper is none other than the Lord's Supper.

So when they had made ready, they sat down to meat. Now the table was furnished with fat things, and with wine that was well refined; and all their talk at the table was about the Lord of the hill;

Now it is time for them to partake of communion. What is going to be the basis of their communion? First they sit down to receive nourishing food, and of course, this is not in the realm of the material or the physical. This is not that food that man lives by bread alone, but that which proceeds out of the Word of God, that spiritual manna. That is why the table is described as being furnished with "**fat things and wine that was well refined.**" In other words, it was nothing but the best, the richest that they had to offer. Of course, this represents the person and work of Christ as set forth in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. The broken body representing the richness of the beauty of the Lord Himself, and the wine representing His shed blood. I think this is the most lovely phrase that is used right here, "**and all their talk at the table was about the Lord of the Hill.**" Oh, that we would have more conversations like this. That in our Christian assemblies there would be such sound judgment, godly piety, and Christian charity that our talk might center around the Lord of the Hill. Remember, the Lord of the Hill is none other than the Lord, and the Hill represented the Hill of Difficulty. The House Beautiful is sitting right on top of the Hill of Difficulty. So they talked about the things of God. What a joy it is to be able to fellowship with Christian people and to converse about the "spiritual manna" of the things of God. Our language

should be the "language of Zion" which we will discover later on in the book when Christian goes through Vanity Fair, the particular city of the world that would have nothing to do with him. The people in that city couldn't understand Christian's language because he talked about the Lord of the Hill, and the unregenerate of the world couldn't understand what he was talking about. They couldn't understand why he had such a strange accent. Of course, it was none other than where his heart was. So may God enable each of us to be able to have a language that is characterized by others as being an individual who talks about the Lord of the Hill. What does that talk consist of? Notice:

namely, about what he had done, and wherefore he did what he did, and why he had builded that house:`

Now lets examine these three things that they talked about regarding the Lord of the Hill. First, what the Lord of the Hill had done. That is set forth by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 11:23-26 - ***"For I received of the Lord Jesus that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take eat; this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."***

This is what they talked about. I think it would be well for the modern day church to very carefully re-examine how the communion service was conducted. I think if you would go back in early New Testament times, you would find it observed in a far different fashion than the way it is observed today. I think it would be good if a congregation would break up into small groups and assemble around tables where there is communion with each other. This practice would enable a small group of people to sit down and talk about the "Lord of the Hill" and relate their experiences to each other. They could also discuss things taught in the Bible, and to express their Christian love and charity for each other as they are assembled around the table with the communion cup there at hand. You will find that in the early New Testament era when the church had to go underground, they met in the catacombs and this is where they observed the Lord's Supper. It was a precious time for them. It was a time that was not just spent in going through an external ritual. They understood what it meant to have the Lord's body broken for them and to have His blood shed for them. So they would meet and share these various aspects involving the person of Christ. They would discuss His

humiliation and how He was humbled, stripped naked and nailed to an old rugged cross. It was there that Christ was beaten so that He no longer bore the image of a human being. He suffered there both physically, mentally and spiritually in being forsaken by God the Father. He died there that ignominious death, even the death of the cross. As a result of those conversations, those little emblems of the broken bread and the wine meant far more than just going through the partaking of them in the physical realm. It was a discussion about what the Lord of the Hill had done.

Secondly, their conversations included **"namely about what He had done,"** and why the Lord had to die on the cross, suffering Himself to be humiliated when He was the Lord, the Creator. He was "the boss" as our southern brethren would say when asked to explain the meaning of the Lordship of Christ. That is exactly right, then why would our Lord submit Himself to be subjected to such things as this? It was none other than that He might bear the penalty of sin, that He might take upon Himself our guilt, shame, and humiliation because of our rebellion against God. Also, that He might purchase a stream of grace that might flow from His side, Emmanuel's veins, as the song says, to repentant sinners granting unto them eternal life. This is why Christ died there. His death was not an accident. His death was not just to make an example. His death was a substitutionary vicarious atonement for sin, and by doing so, He purchased our salvation. This is what communion with the Lord is all about. This is the meaning of the Lord's Supper—what the Lord had done, and why He did those things.

Then the third thing they discussed was **"why he had builded that house."** In His wise counsel, why did God ordain that Christian people should assemble together and meet with each other? Why should they not eat like goats that make their way out through a field and go their own way? That is why Christians are not likened unto goats. They are likened unto sheep that gather in flocks because they need each other's assistance and encouragement. They also need a Shepherd as a guide over them to instruct them in the things of the Lord. They discussed the wisdom of Christ in ordaining that His people should assemble themselves together and meet for Christian fellowship on the first day of the week. I think this is most important in our day and age. It is interesting that our Lord left two ordinances with the church. One of them is baptism which is the initial profession of our faith performed one time when we enter our Christian relationship. But there is a continuing ordinance which is called the Lord's Supper or Communion. I believe that one of the things

which is lacking in our modern day Christianity is a lack of understanding regarding the real purpose of this ordinance. It is in this ordinance, that if we properly partake of it, that we have our vigor and zeal renewed for the things of God. And if it is not taken care of properly, then this zeal and vigor will eventually wane. I want to read to you an excellent explanatory note from Thomas Scott in his footnote in the Book *Pilgrim's Progress*, and listen carefully as he explains what can be the result if the Lord's supper or communion is administered properly.

The administration of the Lord's supper is here emblematically described. In it the person, humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ, with the motive and event of them, are kept in perpetual remembrance. By seriously contemplating these interesting subjects, with the emblems of his body wounded, and his blood shed, before our eyes; and by professing our cordial acceptance of his purchased salvation, and surrender of ourselves to his service, we find every holy affection revived and invigorated, and our souls melted into deep repentance, inspired with calm confidence, animated to thankful, zealous, self-denying obedience, and softened into tender affection for our fellow Christians, with compassionate forgiving love of our most inveterate enemies. The believer will readily apply the allegorical representation of 'the Lord of the hill' to the love of Christ for lost sinners, which no words can adequately describe, for it 'passeth knowledge.'

Beloved, what has God left with the church to restore its vim and zeal when it becomes lacking? When an individual or a church becomes less zealous for the things of Christ, what has God ordained as the means to restore this? It is none other than the ordinance of holy communion. It is here that we are to be revived and have our duty set before us as we contemplate and come afresh to really think seriously upon what our Lord has done. As the fountain flows from Emmanuel's veins, it is there that we have our strength renewed. It is not in the preacher preaching a particular sermon that we are going to be renewed. It is not in having a particular evangelistic meeting, that we are going to have our zeal invigorated and incited again, but it is in God's ordained method in the ordinance of holy communion. So if we are not seeing this taking place in our observance of this communion, then we had better re-examine afresh and see if we are partaking of this ordinance in the fashion it is set forth in the Bible.

So we talk about the Lord of the hill, discussing what He has done. Then we share these things with each other and discuss why He has established the church. Then we read:

and, by what they said, I perceived that he had been a great warrior, and had fought with, and slain him that had the power of death; but not without great danger to himself, which made me love him the more.

Do you find yourself waning in your love for Christ and His service? Then how is that love going to be restored? It will not be through swallowing some little pill that you get all invigorated again. No, the only way that we have our first love restored to us, is to go back afresh and see how that first love was given to us. Do you remember when you were first converted? What a richness it was to experience the love of Christ that passeth knowledge! If you find that love waning, how are you going to have it restored? Notice what Bunyan said. He began to think of what a great battle Christ had fought with and overcame the devil, ***who had the power of death, but not without great danger to himself***, for he himself had died. Bunyan said, "when I thought of that, it ***made me love Him the more.***" Yes, that will do it when we seriously meditate on what Christ has done on our behalf. That will cause a "holy humbling" breaking afresh that old heart that grows so cold and calloused. It causes that heart to be broken as we look afresh upon the side of Him from where flowed the rivers of living water. It is not within us to restore our love, it is only as we see His love for us. I think this is something that can be most helpful to us when we find ourselves becoming a little lax and cannot stir up old Adam to love Christ more. Do you want to know how to love Christ more? It is not by repeating 100 times, "I will love Him more." "I will love Him more." The only way you will find more love for Christ is to meditate more on His love for you. When you meditate upon that and see that He has loved us with an everlasting love, and has drawn us unto Himself, it is that which will cause our love to be revitalized afresh into the path of zeal we should have in the things of God. So may these words that had such an effect on Bunyan or the Pilgrim, when he said, "When I saw these things and I realized afresh what my Savior had done and why He had done them for me, it only made me love Him the more."

"When I saw these things and I realized afresh what my Savior had done, ... for me, it only made me love Him the more."

For, as they said, and as I believed, said Christian, he did it with the loss of much blood. But that which put the glory of grace into all he did, was, that he did it out of pure love to his country.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). Bunyan or the Christian said, "Here is what topped it all off, even when he saw the blood that was shed there, but here was the glory of it all when he understood that Christ did it out of pure love for sinners. That **"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** (Romans 5:8). It was not that Christ looked down and saw something lovable in us, and said, "that really makes me love that person or that sinner." No, it was because it pleased God to purpose to save poor lost sinners such as you and I that He sent His Son to die for them. Christian says, "this was the glory of the grace of it all, that it was unmerited love. It was not something that I did to cause Christ to love me, but it was out of Christ's grace and mercy that He set His love upon me as a poor lost sinner and came and gave Himself on my behalf."

Christ did it out of pure love for sinners, . . . because it pleased God to purpose to save poor lost sinners such as you and I that He sent His Son to die for them.

And, besides there were some of them of the household that said, they had been and spoke with him since he did die on the cross; and they have attested that they had it from his own lips, that he is such a lover of poor pilgrims, that the like is not to be found from the east to the west.

I believe this quote is a reference to the chapter in I Corinthians where it speaks of 500 brethren who saw the Lord after His resurrection, and that they recorded it in the Bible, that our Lord was such a lover of poor sinners, that there could never be any comparison with any other love. It even goes beyond the deepest love that a husband and wife share, because it is as far to be found as the east is from the west, and those two can never meet. **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."** (Luke 19:10). Do you and I see ourselves as poor helpless sinners tonight? We are unable to move toward God and to impress Him with any of our righteous acts, for all **our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.** (Isaiah 64:6). If we see ourselves as this, then we are one of those for whom Jesus came and died. He has put His sheep upon His shoulders and will lead them safely back to the fold, there where they shall *be saved to sin no more*, as the song we just sung set forth. Salvation is for poor lost sinners, individuals who recognize that they are lost. Individuals who come to a startling awareness that they are out in the wilderness of life,

thinking they had all the meaning of it, but suddenly they see the bridge behind them has been burned, and they see no future where they are going. They are lost in the maze of life. When a person comes to that realization, they are not far from the kingdom of heaven, for Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.

One time an individual asked me, "Pastor Gables, do you believe that anybody who is lost can be saved?" I said, "Yes, I certainly do. And not only do I believe that anyone who WANTS to be saved, CAN and

The ones who will not be saved are those who see no danger and do not see themselves as lost.

WILL be saved. That "wants to" or desire has been put there by God, and they have been made to see themselves as lost sinners, and every lost sinner shall be saved. Think on that for just a moment. Every lost sinner shall be saved. The ones who will not be saved are those who see no danger and do not see themselves as lost. You may say, "Well Pastor, I saw an individual in a church service one time and he got edgy. I saw him move around under conviction by God, and I believe he really saw that he was lost. My friend, if he had seen but a glimpse of the horrors of hell of what is going to be ahead for lost sinners, he would not have rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ. When a person sees himself as a lost sinner, he will flee to the cross of Jesus Christ. It is those who do not see themselves as helpless and undone. They may get a little convicted by the Holy Spirit in His work before salvation, but if they are not really made to see that they are lost, they will not see the beauty that is in Jesus Christ.

This is what these people talked about here at the Lord's Supper. They talked about the love that Christ had for lost sinners. Remember, Jesus said, "***I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.***" (Luke 5:32). You may ask, "Pastor, isn't everybody a lost sinner?" Yes, everybody is a lost sinner, but not everybody sees themselves as lost sinners. Many see themselves as righteous. Until a person is made to see himself as to who he is, he will never reach out of himself to lay hold on the love of Christ who came and exhibited that love on behalf of poor pilgrims or lost sinners.

They, moreover, gave an instance of what they affirmed, and that was, he had stripped himself of his glory, that he might do this for the poor;

Oh my, He was made poor that we might be made rich. Beloved, did you ever once stop and

contemplate on the position that Jesus Christ held before He became incarnate in the flesh? It is difficult for our minds to contemplate this because we have never seen it. But if you could somehow think upon the crude illustration of a pure young woman being thrown into a den of rapists and having her own purity violated. In all of His matchless glory and purity, our Lord came down into a world of sinners. It was there that He ate and drank and mingled with them, and yet He was without sin. But He was exposed and humiliated with all types of sin around about Him. Our Bible says, It was for our sake that He left heaven, laid aside His glory, and **"humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."** (Philippians 2:8). We can somewhat visualize how we don't like to have our character assassinated, attacked and brought down, being made humbled before others, and lies told about us. Here is the perfect spotless Lamb of God, God's only begotten Son, who has all the glory so that the angels, who have never sinned, have to cover themselves and cry "holy, holy, holy, only You are holy." The creation and all the angels are but dung in comparison to His holiness, and it is for this world of sinners that our Lord stripped Himself of that glory so that He might come and die for the poor in order that the poor might be made rich. I call this God's poverty program. We had a president a few years ago who thought he would set up a poverty program to eliminate poverty. I don't know where these guys come from with all these ideas about eliminating poverty here in the world. I believe in charity and doing that which is good for the poor, but Jesus Himself said **"You have the poor always with you."** (Matthew 26:11). Do you want to see a program that will work? God's program works, because He has the riches behind it to produce what He sets out to do. Our Lord came and stripped Himself of His riches, took our place, died in our stead, was buried and rose again, enabling us to eventually share in all of what He enjoys with the Father. This is where we shall be saved to sin no more. So this is the beauty of the gospel, that the Lord stripped Himself of His glory, and this He did for poor sinners.

and that they heard him say and affirm, that he would not dwell in the mountain of Zion alone.

Our Lord came and died on the cross in order that He might not live alone. That is, that He will have a holy bride. He will have a redeemed people and they shall live and share with Him all the beauty of who He is and what He has done. There they shall be able to live a life such as we are living now.

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Beloved, I am thankful that there is more to this life than just our existence here day by day. I am grateful for the grace of God and the providence that He leaves, but I am grateful that there is a life coming when we will live without sin and never have any sin enter into that state. That is what our Lord has done. He determined he will not dwell in the mountain of Zion alone. But He is going to have a holy redeemed people who are going to live there with Him. They are going to share in all that He has, as He has been made heir of all things.

They said, moreover, that he had made many pilgrims princes, though by nature they were beggars born, and their original had been the dunghill.

That is, this great prince had made many poor people princes, even though those people were born beggars by nature. They had nothing to commend themselves to another. Have you ever had to beg? I doubt if there are any of you who have ever had to beg. I have been blessed with a family, and I have never had to beg for food. If you have, then perhaps you can understand more of what it means to be a beggar. A beggar is someone who is utterly dependent upon someone else. A beggar has no rights and has nothing to merit his case. All a beggar can do is hold out his hand and say, "Please may you show mercy upon me." So Bunyan is saying here that this Great Prince came down for those people who were beggars who had nothing to commend themselves to God. God came down and met them, raised them up and made them princes, even though their original state had been that of a dunghill. This is but the words of Paul in which he said that all the things he formerly had that he had counted as great wealth, he said, "***I count them but dung that I may win Christ.***" (Philippians 3:8). Then we read,

Thus they discoursed together till late at night; and after they had committed themselves to their Lord for protection, they betook themselves to rest.

It is something how quickly the time passes when a group of Christian people get together, and they have a godly experience with sound judgments in the things of God, and they have a genuine love for each other and for God. They discoursed until late at night. In my ministry, how many homes have I visited in which we hardly get there until the clock rolls around to midnight? What a joy it is to sit and talk about the things of Zion as the time just vanishes. It always troubles me to come across individuals who don't have much to say about the things of Zion. It doesn't deeply trouble me if you don't understand the Bible and

all of its teachings, unless you have been in the Lord for many years. Every believer should be able to have something to talk about Christ, because that is our life. We should not be lacking in the language of Zion and being able to discourse together even until late at night. Then Bunyan says that they committed themselves to the Lord for protection. Do you remember the child's prayer? *"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."* This is simply the committing of our own lives into the hands of our Protector. Notice, they have fellowship together, they have now observed the Lord's supper together, they have talked about the things of Christ and all of what He has done for them, now then they commit themselves unto their Lord for protection, and then they took themselves to rest, they went to sleep.

So may God enable the modern day church to be able to have supper in the House Beautiful in this fashion. I would recommend for churches at various times to sit down as a group and observe the supper in this fashion, much the way we observe each other's supper. When we visit with each other in a natural meeting, we sit there and fellowship together about the things of the natural life, about what is going on in the world with our jobs and families. There is nothing wrong with these things. They are good and proper. Oh, that we might be able to come together as the church of Jesus Christ and sit around a communion table and have different individuals begin to relate to each other like this: *"This is what the Lord means to me. The Lord of the Hill brought me through the Hill of Difficulty and has restored my soul when I began to meditate on what He did on my behalf, then it just made me love Him more."* May God be pleased to impress upon different groups to experiment and partake of the Supper in this particular type and fashion. Shall we look to Him in prayer.

Our heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the ordinance of Holy Communion, and we pray that we would never partake of it in a light and jovial fashion in which the Church at Corinth found themselves guilty of. In which that they just met together and reduced it from a spiritual relationship with Thee unto a natural hungering after the things of this life. That the food they partook of was just to fill their own stomachs rather than the heavenly manna which they are to live by each day. We would pray that each day as we partake of holy communion in our own congregation, that we might be made to think afresh upon the things which it represents, and that we might have a renewed zeal and a renewed love that would flame up as we meditate and reflect upon the love that Your Son had on our behalf in dying in such a fashion for us. And we would ask that our lives might be restored unto the joy of

our salvation so that we may be able to teach sinners their ways, and that others might be impressed to lay down the sins of this life and set out upon the journey to that Celestial City looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Bless this lesson tonight to the hearts of the hearers, for we ask it in Jesus' lovely name, Amen.