

David Wiant - At Matthews Table

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So at Matthew's table, the setting is begins. In Matthew 9. 9. Matthew writes that as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and he saith unto him, follow me.

And he arose and followed him. This is highly unusual because Matthew is a tax collector. He was a Jewish man, but he was a tax collector, and therefore a friend of the Romans, and he's going to pick up and leave those that cushiony job and follow Jesus.

The pastor wrote that Matthew made a dinner for his friends so that they might meet Jesus as well.

Mark wrote, as it came to pass that Jesus sat at meat in his house, Matthew's house. Many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many, and they followed him. Matthew's friends are many, and the disciples are there.

Then Matthew continues to report that when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?

When Jesus heard it, he said to them, they that behold, they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick, and he says, go ye and learn what this means. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. Then he says, for I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

So did they leave? They did not leave. They were right there.

So Jesus had two very different audiences. One that had been following him and were eager to hear him, and one that was there to criticize and ridicule.

So he begins a series of parables, and the first one is the parable of the prodigal Son, which is very familiar to us.

There is a father who has two sons, and one son is wasteful, and the other son is loyal to his dad, the wasteful son.

This is recorded in Luke 15:13. This is Jesus parable to this audience. Now, mixed audience, he says, not many days after the younger son gathered all together, he took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living, and you know what happened is that he ended up being depraved and destitute and full of regret, and he thought, if I can go back and be one of my dad's servants, at least I'll have something to eat and a place to shelter me.

So he went back home, and when his father saw him, he's just rejoicing, My son has come back, and he took a calf, a fatty calf, and they had a huge feast. But when the older son saw this, he says to his father, these many years do I serve Thee neither transgress I at any time thy commandment, and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.

But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou has killed for him the fatted calf.

A little jealousy there.

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The Father's reply to his son is beautiful. He says, it was appropriate that we should make merry. Be glad for this. Thy brother was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found here sitting at the table.

Both of these parabolic sons, those who have been considered wasteful, and those who had deemed themselves to be righteous and entitled.

This is where Jesus then begins this other parable that is so difficult to understand. Even the pastor wrote. There's a lot of room for interpretation and speculation with this parable, and you can see where the pastor has, over his course of his life, refined his view on this. So I'll just read this for the sake of remembrance.

This is from Luke 16:1 8. There was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

This is marvelous, really, because Jesus has just tied the first parable with the second in the word wasted. The young man of the first parable was considered to have wasted his father's goods, and now Jesus is talking about a steward of a rich man who has wasted his goods, and it's the very same word he called him and said unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, so thou mayest no longer be steward.

And the steward said within himself, what shall I do for my Lord? Taketh away from me the stewardship. I cannot dig, and to beg. I am ashamed.

I resolved what to do, that when I put out of this stewardship, they might receive me into their houses.

So he called every one of his Lord's debtors unto him, and said to the first, how much owest thou unto my Lord? And he said, a hundred measures of oil, said unto him, take thy bill, sit down quickly and write 50. Then said he to the other, how much owest thou? And he said, a hundred measures of wheat said unto him, take thy dough and write four score.

And the Lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely, and that's the end of the parable. The rest, as we go on, is commentary on the part of Jesus.

If Jesus was to interpret this parable as he did many parables, he would first start with the definitions of who's who, and so we look at the rich man, and he represents Jehovah. His goods are considered to be the oracles of God, the law of God, the words of God, the steward are the Jewish leaders, those who have been entrusted with the oracles of God, who sat in the seat of Moses, the debtors, or all those who came under the covenant of the law, who were looking to the steward for direction, guidance.

You know that there was a change of dispensation about to take place here. I mean, from the Jewish age to the Gospel age, and Jesus is right in the middle with the two companies from the two ages sitting at one table, Matthew's table.

Jesus had given this illustration of the change of the age. It's actually two illustrations. This comes from Matthew 9, 16, and 17. He said, no man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment. For that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

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Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles will break, the wine will run out, the bottles will perish. But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

So he's saying there's an incompatibility between the old and the new, and we are on the verge of the new.

This should not have come as a surprise to the Pharisees, because way back when, John the Baptist was baptizing his ministry of baptism on the Jordan. This is in Matthew 3:7, John the Baptist said to the Pharisees and Sadducees that had come to him to be baptized. He said, oh, generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come. A little bit later on that Jesus says these words very clearly. He says, therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. He's talking about the rejection of the chief cornerstone and that the old law representatives had rejected him as the chief cornerstone.

And he said, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, given to a nation, bringing forth fruits thereof. So when Jesus says in the parable that. That the rich man said, give an account. He's implying that the Jewish age is coming to an end. They're going to close the book on the Jewish age.

The ledger is going to be finished. The book is going to be closed, and that's the end of that.

You know, the. Your brethren in New Albany wrote a number of studies on these parables and their summation of what was going on. Here is the vineyard of the Lord. Was ready to enter a new growing season that would produce special fruit. A different way of saying it, but yet that's what was going on.

There's a harvest going on and then the new dispensation was opening up.

Was there a remedy, Was there a remedy for this steward that had lost his stewardship? Was there any way that this steward might be able to be accepted into a new stewardship, this stewardship of Christ Jesus?

And Jesus lovingly, you have to put this into context because he lovingly points out a way that it might be done. In his parable, he's using a fictitious steward that provided leniency to the debtors, and the rich man approved. He said it was wise that leniency, the use of leniency was wise under the circumstances.

Leaders of the Jewish nation, rather than doing as God wanted them to do, as Levites, to bring in their brethren and to knit together as a family under God's law, were using their position to create a division between the haves and the have nots. They were proud of their status and they didn't have any qualms calling others publicans and sinners.

They judged that they were righteous.

Looking at this leniency, I thought it was intriguing because leniency is a form of mercy and clemency is one of the things that United States presidents have always had the right to do.

It's. It doesn't take any legal action at all. What they do is they take their authority, their power and authority, and they make a determination, and that's. It used to be that they would just write it down.

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So here are some examples of US Presidency, US Presidents having power of clemency. Ulysses Brandt was the president after the Civil War.

I think he might be related to Brother Ed in some ways. Right? Brother Ed, I think so. In any case, you can imagine he wrote 1332 documents of clemency in 1869, and I imagine many of them had to do with the conflict of between the states, the Civil War, things that just had to be pardoned and.

And move on. Here's another one. FDR 3687 acts of clemency. He took the presidency in 1933 and for 12 years, and a lot of his acts of clemency were to those who had violated the laws pertaining to alcohol, bootlegging and so forth.

But that's a lot of clemency. Gerald Ford. I'm looking around the room here and I don't see anybody that's young enough that wouldn't remember that Gerald Ford gave Richard Nixon a pardon. If you look at your president, your outgoing president right now, this was very much like it was then, and Gerald Ford determined that it was.

It was better for the nation to just move on, and so he pardoned Richard Nixon. But it surprised a lot of people. It still does. Discussing it with my dad, he's like, well, you think that was a good idea?

Do you? Anyway, but here's the one that really got me is Harry Truman. Harry Truman issued 2044 Acts of Clemency. Harry Truman was the one who took over for fdr. He had no desire to be the president.

And, and FDR died suddenly, and he was the president, like it or don't like it, and his advisors came to him and said, fdr has been working on a plan for an atomic weapon against the Japanese, and it is to come to fruition in 90 days. Harry Truman had 90 days to determine what to do with FDR's plan for an atomic bomb, and he knew it all rested on him.

Well, he did what history says he did, that's for sure. But you can imagine that there were plenty of people who were angry about that, and his Act 1 Act of Clemency of 2044, that really hit me was for a man named Oscar Collazo. Oscar was caught in an assassination attempt on Harry Truman in 1950. That's high treason.

And he was sentenced to death. But Harry stepped in and gave him clemency and said, no life imprisonment, and it's just outstanding to me, leniency, clemency from the authority of the President. You might ask then, in the parable that we're discussing, why would the rich man approve of such attack? To reduce the debt, as this steward did.

This is not normal business. I mean, in bankruptcy, maybe you would settle for less. But this rich man is pleased with the outcome of this, and he says that it was wise, so he approved of it, and I think that the pastor nails this thing. He said, this is from the Songs in the night, October 31, based upon the scripture Malachi 3:7.

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord.

The thought everywhere held out in the Scriptures is that God's mercy endureth forever, I.e. olam, or to a completion.

I think Moses might have written the 136th Psalm, but it consists of 26 verses, and every single verse ends, for the mercy of the Lord endureth forever.

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A small portion of the world of mankind. Getting back to Pastor Russell's comments, a small portion of the world of mankind at the present time has received God's favor to the extent of being justified and made partakers in the divine favor and mercies of this present time. As in his dealings with these the Lord is very gracious, so is he to those who return from the ways of sin, and he is even patient with those who lack the spirit of love and forgiveness, and he comes to them, entreating them to join in his gracious plans and arrangements. This loving kindness bestowed upon the believers of the present time illustrates the Spirit of the Lord. We talk about his wisdom, his love, justice, and his power.

Loving kindness is our God at heart.

We were created after his image. We have emotions and he wants us to have loving kindness and compassion toward others. Here's some other scriptures pertaining to this. Here's one in Hebrews 8:12 where the Lord Almighty is quoted as saying, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught, blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy prerequisite to pleasing God.

Here's one from Hosea 6, verse 6. Jehovah said, For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

This word loving kindness is a Hebrew word 2617 Cassidy it appears 247 times in the Old Testament translated as savor, goodness, kindness, mercy.

So we should be counting loving kindness as one of the goods that the rich man owns. The commodity loving kindness A valuable loving kindness. A valuable commodity is loving kindness to the Lord. It is who he is, and if it is who he is, then his steward should be reflecting this loving kindness.

Interesting though sometimes how people forget that they are a reflection of God's love. It's almost as though pride steps in the way and says, you are the source of light rather than the source of light reflects through me. But as a steward, the source of His Master's light, it has to reflect through him, and the Master is about loving kindness and this is why he approves A couple more scriptures this is from Nehemiah. Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.

And David the King wrote, the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

Jesus was wanting those Jewish leaders, hard hearted as they were. Jesus loved these and he wanted them to use mercy and leniency and loving kindness because he knew that if they would, things would go better for them. As the days unfolded, we had a study recently about some Roman emperor who was all about himself, Caligula, and you know, Jesus, he could have said to his disciples, well, you know, this temple is going to come down. The wrath of the Roman empire is coming.

36 years or so. He didn't say that. But he did tell them in so many words that they were up against some troubled times, and Jesus knew that if these leaders got over this idea that they were special, that they were righteous, and that they were different from their brothers, things would go better. You know, they would have a place to go, they would have a place to hide.

The brothers could assume them into their homes, care for them, shelter them.

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Did they listen?

Well, some did, because some had come to see Jesus as Messiah and they gave up what they were doing, and they decided to deny themselves and take up their cross and to follow him, and by doing this, they were transferred from this old stewardship of the law into Christ.

New life, new wine.

But most of them did not believe him. They didn't take his words to heart, and so therefore, because they didn't take his advice, they didn't believe him. They didn't obey him. It was very difficult for the Jewish leadership in the days that came.

In fact, it was extremely difficult for the Jewish leadership above the population, general population.

Well, the parable did end there, that the steward had done wisely. But in the middle of the eighth verse, Jesus changes to a commentary and he says, the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of Light. The sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of Light. Well, he's got the sons of this age sitting right at this table, and he's got these sons of light watching.

So he's addressing both groups and he knows he's got their attention. He says of the sons of this age, those who, like Matthew, obeying his command, followed me, are more shrewd to their own kind. This is because Jesus knows that what's beginning here is a brotherhood, that these new followers of his, if they were obedient to his word, were going to knit together as a family, a tight knit family. They were going to have each other's back. They weren't going to be about divisions.

And that's why they were more shrewd, because they were able to put together the resources, compile the resources, and have a tight family.

The sons of Light, on the other hand, those who were the keepers of God's law, were lacking in compassion and understanding, and loving kindness toward their own kind, toward their own people.

And they, many of them, just remained unmoved.

A little later on, Jesus says this because he. He hated hypocrisy. This comes from Matthew 23. You know, where he says, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. There's a whole list of them, but here's one where he says, the scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.

Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds. For they say and do not. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with a finger.

Hypocrisy is that they say what they do not do.

They say that they represent Jehovah as sitting in Moses seat, but they don't have any of his loving kindness. They will burden their brethren, but they won't help.

And then he turns to Matthew and his friends and his disciples, and he says, and I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into eternal dwelling.

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It's a different message because it's a different group of people. He's saying, you who follow me, you who have denied yourself, taking up your cross, use the wealth of this world wisely, because when it is spent, when life is over, when you've reached the end of your course, they will receive you into eternal dwellings.

Near the end of the pastor's ministry, he wrote this. This is a reprint. 5749. Those who could receive us into everlasting habitations would only be. The Lord and his angels, goes on to say, our use of the unrighteous mammon, our sacrificing of earthly interests, which might in some cases bring us blessings from men, which surely at last bring us the crowning blessing from the Lord, as is promised.

Our falling will be the reaching the end of our sacrificial course. All of the Lord's people are to die. This is the purport of their consecration. It is a sacrifice even unto death. If they are of this class who make friends with or of, or through the mammon of unrighteousness, if they sacrifice these earthly things, then when they fail, when they die, when they have finished their course, they will be received into everlasting habitations, the place prepared for the faithful class of more than conquerors, the house not made with hands eternal in the heaven.

Then he says, we would not apply the word they Necessarily to those of whom we made friends, God is our friend. If we as his children live a life of self sacrifice and ignore the selfish use of earthly mammon in favor of the service of the Lord. Two completely different messages to the old guard, be lenient, you'll have a place to fall, and he looks at his new disciples, his new followers. He says, a prudent use of these resources can gain you eternal life.

Not much is written on this. The debt, what the debtors owed, and I thought it was.

I don't know, it struck a chord with me. I don't know if you know it's proper. Now you judge. Really, the commentary for most people on what they owed is that wheat was commodity of value. Oil, commodity of value.

It's the same thing as money. For the most part, they were farmers and laborers. But I think that there might be a little bit more that can be brought out. At least I'll bring it out and you can think about this wheat. Okay, so wheat is representative of food, God's word, actually, because we find it in the holy of the tabernacle.

It's a daily bread that sits there.

Jesus said that he was the bread that came down from heaven.

Wheat is a valuable thing to Jehovah, and that's why in the Jewish harvest, he wanted it separate from the chaff and brought in to the barns. He sees its value in the gospel age, and he wants it separated from the tares and brought into his barn.

But then the apostle Paul brings us into a little bit different light. He says in First Corinthians 10:17 that we are to become one loaf.

And the pastor keys off of that, and he says that it may be the bread of restitution to the world of mankind, the bread of restitution for the world of mankind. The food that the world of mankind will need, spiritual food that they will need to come up the highway of holiness.

He calls it, the pastor calls it ultimately the bread of life for the world.

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You remember when Jesus had 4,000 men, that he looked to his disciples and he said, you feed them.

He also said to Peter specifically, feed my sheep, feed my lambs.

So I think that we owe it to the rich man, to our Father, to Jehovah, to be true in this covenant of sacrifice, and our steward, the one that we look to our head, our Lord Jesus, he is absolutely a reflection of the compassion of the Master.

He isn't demanding, he doesn't demand, but he's encouraging us to give all that we have to give.

It wouldn't be right to say, well, you know, the parable says that we only have to give about half. No, but we have to give everything that we do have.

We can't be promising to give something that we cannot deliver.

That would be disingenuous. But what we promised, we need to give oil. While oil is representative of Holy Spirit and it also is found in the holy of the tabernacle, it provides the fuel for the light that lights this room. We like to call it the school of Christ. You know, it's where we study the words.

It's where we get from God enlightenment on his plan. It's where we offer up prayers that go into the most Holy, into the very presence of Jehovah from the other parables of the wise and foolish virgins. Jesus was admonishing to have sufficiency of oil.

He says, you can buy it, go out and buy it. But that is exactly what needs to be taking place at all times so that we don't run out to heaven. How do you buy it? You get Holy Spirit from the study of the Word, through prayer, through fellowship, and the Lord supplies it.

He's gracious and supplies it.

You might say that we need to have this oil of Holy Spirit in order to shine in a dark world.

Well, here are the words of Jesus. Not exactly about oil, but I think pretty much about the same idea. He says, neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

The apostle Paul says in Philippians 2, 14, 16 that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.

Seems like we owe the rich man some oil. It seems as though it would be prudent for us to develop the Spirit of God, Spirit of wisdom, Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of knowledge, the Spirit of judgment, the Spirit of counsel, Spirit of might, the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of promise, the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of glory, just to name a few.

Jesus continues with his commentary. This is from Luke 16:10-13. He says, he who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust you with the true riches and if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own. No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one that despise the other.

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You cannot serve God and wealth.

The very next verse. The Pharisees scoffed at him and derided him.

So he said one more parable. He said, the parable of the rich man, Lazarus and Abraham. Also difficult parable, maybe not to understand as a parable, but people try to take it literally, and we know that it's not literal. But nevertheless, there is a rich man and Lazarus is a poor man, and the rich man lives in luxury, and he's well set.

The poor man is not. They come to the end of their life. The poor man is found in the bosom of Abraham, and the rich man is not, and there's this huge gulf between them. The rich man says, abraham, send Lazarus over here.

I'm tormented here, and no, we can't do that.

Well, maybe you can send him to my brothers, because my brothers need to know this.

Quoting from the parable. Here, here's the words. Besides all this, between us and you, there is a great chasm fixed so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us. He said, I beg you, Father, that you send him to my Father's house, for I have five brothers, in order that he may warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment.

Abraham said, they have Moses, they have the prophets. Let them hear them.

But he said, no, Father Abraham, if somebody goes to them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said, if they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if somebody rises from the dead.

This was a very pointed statement by Jesus, because he had been doing these wonderful miracles. He even raised the dead, and they just refused to hear the testimony, and so that golf could not be fixed, and those three parables.

Jesus had an audience of both classes and wanted to expound very carefully and lovingly, you have a way to escape this situation. If you will use the loving kindness and lenience of God into the new class. Consecrate yourself, use those resources wisely, and the Lord your God will accept you into eternal habitations. But if you refuse to listen to these words, Jesus said, at least believe because of the works that I do. But even then their stubborn hearts would not let them believe.

It's as though they felt that they were going to lose something of value, some place, some stature, some wealth, and so they refused to budge.

I thought today's mana text was very appropriate, and so I wanted to close with it. It'd be second Peter 1:5 through 10. Apostle Peter says, besides this giving, all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance, patience.

And to patience, godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

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Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you shall never fall. We're on the edge of a new dispensation again, and the Lord has a very special ministry for those who overcome. So we owe. We owe.

But we don't have a steward who is demanding. We have a loving, compassionate steward. So when we take personal assessment, let's be the wheat and let's gain the oil, and let's use these resources to the glory of God, to the best of our ability. Amen.