

Week Seven – The Feast of the Father – Part One

“He heard music and dancing.”

The Thanksgiving table is set, the turkey roasting, and the side dishes waiting for the finishing touches. The doorbell rings. It's time to welcome the guests!

Your younger son greets you warmly, admires the table, and makes small talk with the family. But soon he pulls you aside and says, “I've had a long day and I'm starving. I think I'll just run to Denny's.” He walks out the door and you wonder why the smell of the turkey wasn't enough to assure him a delicious meal was soon to be served.

Your elder daughter comes through the back door carrying her famous sour cream apple pies. As she glances around the room, you see her demeanor change. She finds an empty spot on the counter for the pies, and whispers in your ear, “You didn't tell me you'd invited Aunt Lucy! After how she treated me, how could you?” Your daughter says she is not feeling well and leaves.

How many of God's feasts have we missed out on? What excuses have we made? Or have we even been aware of all that is available? Jesus, the *Master of the Banquet*, has a place set at the table just for us. Come. *Taste and see the goodness of the Lord*. There's a banquet available today!

Memory Verse:

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

Psalm 13:5

Definitions and Translations from the Greek

Salvation (*sōtēria*) –

- a) deliverance, preservation, safety
- b) deliverance from the molestation of enemies
- c) in an ethical sense, that which brings to a close the soul's safety or salvation
- d) of Messianic salvation
- e) salvation as the present possession of all true Christians as well as the future salvation; the sum of benefits and blessings which the Christians, redeemed from all earthly ills, will enjoy after the visible return of Christ from heaven in the eternal kingdom of God.

Saved (*sōzō*)—

- a) to save, keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction
- b) to save a suffering one (from perishing), i.e. one suffering from disease, to make well, heal, restore to health
- c) to save from the evils which obstruct the reception of the Messianic deliverance

Feast a) A rich or delicious banquet or meal

- b) A ceremony of feasting; joy and thanksgiving on stated days, in commemoration of some great event, or in honor of some distinguished personage
- c) Something delicious and entertaining to the mind or soul; as the dispensation of the gospel is called a *feast of rich food* (Isaiah 25:6).
- d) That which delights and entertains.

He who has a *cheerful heart has a continual feast* (Proverbs 15:15).

**Read pages 105-124 of Chapter Seven of *The Prodigal God*.
Highlight thoughts that stand out to you and ideas you'd like to discuss.**

From your reading:

1. “If we say ‘I believe in Jesus’ but it doesn’t affect the way we live, the answer is not that now we need to add hard work to our faith so much as that we haven’t truly understood or believed in Jesus at all” (PG page 124).

a) If you believe in Jesus, what are three ways it personally makes a difference in how you live?

_____ 1.

_____ 2.

_____ 3.

b) On the line in front of the above numbers, put a “J” beside ways that bring you joy, a “P” for ways that give you peace, and a “B” for any that seem burdensome.

c) If you believe in Jesus, ask God if there is any place in your life where your faith is not making a difference in how you live. Write it down.

d) Ask God to reveal the reason for this (c) as you go through the study on Chapter 7. Ask Him to show you His perspective on any ways you are living that seem burdensome. Come back to this question later and write down what God shows you.

2. **Our salvation is like a feast!** Keller says that if we partake in the fullness of our salvation, our lives will look more and more like Jesus’ life. Comparing salvation to a banquet, we see that:

1. Salvation is _____ . 3. Salvation is _____ .
2. Salvation is _____ . 4. Salvation is _____ .

3. What is one new insight from the section, “Salvation is Experiential” (PG pages 106-109)?

4. In sharing about the idea of **experiencing salvation**, Keller asks,

“Is it really possible to have this kind of experience? Some people find this more difficult than others, because they are of a more rational, controlled temperament. Other people, I believe, are so hungry for mystical experiences that they read every intuition and strong feeling as a ‘word from the Lord.’ In short, most of us are too eager or not eager enough for what Jesus offers” (PG page 109).

a) On a scale of 1-10, where would you put yourself? Why?

1 _____ 10
Not eager enough Too eager

b) What are the pros and cons of each extreme?

5. a) What does Keller mean by “salvation is material” (PG pages 110-113)?

b) From this section, write down one insight about Jesus’ earthly ministry.

6. How does Keller say “we grow spiritually in wisdom, love, joy, and peace” (PG page 114)?

7. “Religion operates on the principle of ‘I obey—therefore I am accepted by God.’ The basic operating principle of the gospel is ‘I am accepted by God through the work of Jesus Christ—therefore I _____.’ As we have seen, _____ is how a person first makes a connection to God. It gives us a _____ with God and a _____” (PG page 114).

8. Keller states that religion, rather than the gospel is the “default mode of the human heart” (PG pages 114-115). How does he say we can change this? Ask God for one way you are to do this today.

9. Just as no one else can digest our food for us or even give us a true sense of how it tastes, no one can understand grace or the gospel for us. Thus “salvation is individual.” From PG pages 113-124, what is one idea of which you would like a deeper understanding? Ask God for it in prayer.

Read the Parable of the Lost Sons, Luke 15:1-3,11-32, on SG page 4 or in your Bible.

Digging into the Scriptures:

10. a) Look at the definition of “feast” (SG page 29). In *The Parable of the Lost Sons* on SG page 4, put stars around the word “feast” and anything involved in the feast the father held.

b) How was this feast:

1) experiential?

2) material?

3) individual?

4) communal?

c) Were any of these ideas about salvation new to you? Write down your thoughts.

11. **Read: Matthew 9:20-22** (the word “healed” is the Greek word *sozo*), **Luke 8:36** (the word “cured” is the Greek word *sozo*), and **Romans 1:16**. From these verses and the definitions of “saved” and “salvation” on SG page 29, elaborate on the meaning of “salvation” in our memory verse.

But I trust in your unfailing love: my heart rejoices in your salvation--

12. **Read Luke 8:38-39 and Luke 18:42-43 (Read the entire accounts if you have time.).**

a) How was *salvation* experienced in these two scriptures?

b) How did the people in these scriptures respond?

c) Which statement (based on PG page 113) do these examples support?

- Christianity is the *opiate of the people*—a sedative causing people to be passive about suffering and injustice.
- Christianity is like *smelling salts*—causing people to be passionate about bringing healing, deliverance, and justice to others.

d) **Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-2**. Ask God to show you ways your salvation has caused you to fight against suffering and oppression. Ask Him to show you any ways He’s asking you to join Him in restoring this world to His created order. Are you willing?

*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have **tasted** that the Lord is good (1 Peter 2:2-3).*

13. Hopefully you have ***tasted that the Lord is good***, and have a better understanding of the feast we have available to us through our salvation. Throughout our lives, we will be *growing up in our salvation* as we feast on the gospel, digest it and make it a part of ourselves (PG page 115). **Set aside at least ten minutes and partake of one of these feasts:**

- Feast on the splendor of God’s creation (You may want to take a walk or a drive.).
- Feast on the beauty of a hymn or praise song. (Ask God to reveal Himself through music.).
- Feast on the richness of God’s word through Psalm 34 (see verse 8!).
- Feast on the peace of ten minutes of silence.

Experience Jesus enjoying the feast with you. He’s the *Master of the Banquet* and He is there with festival joy. Through your “feast,” listen to Jesus tell you how graciously loved and accepted you are. Respond in prayer. Write down your experience.