



**The Great Feast**



**A Good Shepherd  
Parable**

**The Great Feast**

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## **THE GREAT FEAST ... MATERIALS**

- parable box containing:

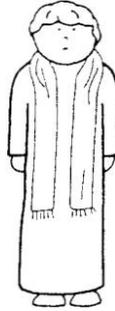
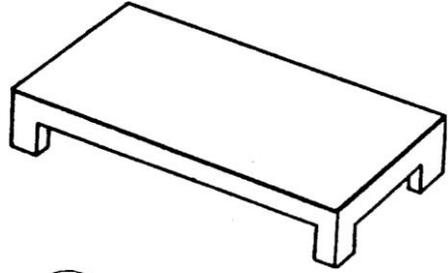
- red felt rectangular underlay
- 2 black felt "streets"
- 2 brown felt "roads"
- 4 laminated tables
- laminated city scene
- laminated roadside scene
- laminated master figure
- laminated servant figure
- 3 laminated invited guest figures
- 8 laminated poor people figures from the city streets and highway



Master



Servant



Invited Guests



Poor People

**THE GREAT FEAST .... LUKE 14:15-24** (introduction from Matthew account [Matthew 22:1-10] to understand this as a kingdom parable)

**ACTIONS**

After speaking, walk to the shelf and pick up the parable box. Carry it back to the circle and sit down.

After speaking, allow 10-15 seconds of silence while you center the children by tracing the outline of the box with one or both hands.

Rest your hands lightly on the box, touching it reverently.

Slowly shake your head and smile.

Nod your head confidently.

Raise your eyebrows and shake your head.

Lift the lid just slightly.

Remove the lid and take out the red underlay. Unfold and smooth it as you speak. Allow time for wonderment.

Lay the city streets in the upper right hand corner with the city scene between them. Place two poor people on each street. (Allow responses to the city and streets and affirm all efforts.)

**WORDS**

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will always know where to find it if you choose to make this your story today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside me. Will you please make silence with me so I can find all the words to my story?

This is a parable box. I wonder if there is really a parable inside this box?

You see parables are very precious.

This box looks a bit like a gift.

Parables are like gifts. We can't go buy one, or even rent one, like we do a movie. Parables already belong to us.

And like gifts, we don't always know what's inside by looking at the box.

We have to take the lid off. If we take the lid off our box, maybe we will discover a parable.

This is a very bright piece of cloth. I wonder why it's so red? Is red a happy color or a sad color? I think it might be happy.

These pieces are very dark and not as big as the red. If we add this piece, we can see better what this is. I wonder if you have any ideas?

Lay the roads in the upper left hand corner with the roadside scene between them.  
Place two poor people on each road.  
(Allow responses to the roadside scene.)

Lean forward and speak slowly and softly.

Shake your head slowly.

Tilt your head to one side and look puzzled.

Place four tables in the lower left corner of the underlay with the servant near them.

Place the master and invited guests in the center of the underlay.

Move master near tables.

Move servant figure near invited guests.

Shake your head as you move one guest off the underlay and back into the box.

Again, shake your head and move the second guest back into the box.

A third time, shake your head and move the third guest back into the box.

Move the servant back to the master. Shrug your shoulders and shake your head.

Here are some more pieces though they aren't quite as dark as the others. Then if I add some of these, it looks like a place I've seen. ■ wonder if you've seen a place like this?

Once there was a man who said amazing things and did wonderful things. And people began to follow him.

Sometimes the man would talk about the kingdom of heaven. And the people wondered. They had never been to the kingdom of heaven and they didn't know what it was like.

So they would ask him, "What is the kingdom of heaven like?"

And the man said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a great feast a man once gave. "

He invited many people to come and join him.

Then he sent his servant to go to them and tell them the feast was all prepared and he was ready for them.

The first guest said, "Please excuse me. ■ just bought a field and ■ have to go take care of it."

Then the second guest said, "Please have me excused. I just bought some cows and I must go take care of them. "

And the third guest said, "I would like to be excused. I've just been married and I must go to be with my wife."

The servant went back to his master and told him that no one would be coming to the feast.

Clench one fist and draw your eyebrows together.

Push one hand away from yourself as though sending the servant away.

Move the servant figure to the upper right. Move him and the people from the city streets back to the tables. (Two people at each table.)

Move the servant back to the master.

Again wave the servant away with one hand.

Move the servant figure to the upper left. Move him and the people from the roads back to the tables. (Two people at each table.) Move the servant back to the master.

Shake your head firmly as you speak. Place your hand over the tables and new guests.

The master got very angry.

Then he said to his servant; "Go into the streets of the city and bring to my feast those people who are lame and poor and blind. "

The servant did as he was told.

Then he said to his master, "They are here, but there is still more room. "

The master said, "Then go to the highways and find people to come in. I want this house to be filled for my feast."

And so the feast was filled with all the people the servant could find.

Then the master said, "None of those who were invited will get to eat any of the food from my feast."

#### **\WONDERING QUESTIONS:**

I wonder if the people who were invited came back later and tried to come in?

I wonder what the poor people thought when they had so much food to eat?

I wonder if the master was happy with the people who came to the feast?

I wonder if it was a fun party?

Place all the materials except the red underlay back in the box.

Beginning at either side, fold the underlay to the other side.

Repeat the side to side fold.

Carefully place the top edge against the bottom edge and place it in the box.

After speaking, stand and carry the parable box back to its shelf. Return to the circle.

Go around the circle having each child choose their work. Dismiss the children only when all have chosen their work.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this your story today or another day.

This is a large piece to fold. But it has straight edges so that helps. If we take this edge and put it by this edge, then we've made another straight edge.

Let's do that one more time.

Now, if we put this top part by the bottom part it should be ready. There .. it fits.

Watch carefully where I return this so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your story today or another day.

Let's choose our work now. Maybe there is something special in this story that you would like to paint or draw. Perhaps you would like to do the craft today. Let's decide.

## **THE GREAT FEAST .... TEACHER HELPS**

The two accounts of this parable are quite different. I've chosen to use the beginning from the Matthew account and then move to the Luke account for the story. I feel the emphasis on the kingdom of God (in the Matthew account) is one the children are becoming familiar with and I'd like to continue that comfort. In addition, I believe this is clearly a parable of the coming kingdom, so I don't believe I'm distorting the text.

In Luke this story comes before the ride into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday). In the Matthew account it comes after. The Matthew story also includes the guest who does not have appropriate clothing. Both Jeremias\* and Dodd\*\* agree that these are probably two different parables that were told by Jesus at different times, but both based on an older folk tale. According to Jeremias (p. 178) a rich man named Bar Ma'jan and a poor scholar died at the same time. It seems that the rich man had not lived a pious life, but at the time of his death had finished preparing a feast and invited the city councilors, but they didn't come. So instead, Bar Ma'jan told his servants to bring the poor in to eat the food so that none of it would be wasted. As a reward the rich man was given a splendid funeral to which everyone came, causing even

the work in the city to stop. The situation of the poor man would then be explained in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

In Jesus' day it was considered a good deed to invite the poor into your home to eat. But it wasn't appropriate to let them take the place of invited guests of upper class distinction. The emphasis in this parable is that those guests who chose not to attend the banquet didn't have the option of arriving later, at a time more convenient for them. To the established leaders in the Jewish community this story would have been particularly shocking. Remember that anyone who was blind, crippled or ill in any way, was thought to be so because either that person or that person's parents had sinned. Their shock would have been that Jesus could even suggest that the kingdom of God would be for sinners rather than themselves, whom they considered the righteous! !

It's important to guard against scaring children with parables such as this. Let the emphasis be that the invitation to this wonderful meal is open to everyone. You don't have to be rich, or grown-up. You don't have to be smart or good looking. The invitation comes to each of us. All we need do is accept it.

The wondering questions center on the people's feelings at the feast. Notice the emphasis on the concrete need for food. I've included the last question to help the children understand that this was indeed a happy, fun time. To them the word feast does not indicate a party. The text, of course, uses the word "banquet". I opted not to use that because I felt there were very few young children who could relate. I also liked the use of "feast" because that is what we call our special time of sharing the bread and juice in our classroom. In summation, I guess I'd be happy to have the children understand the kingdom of God as a marvelous happy party to which everyone had been invited.

\* (The Parables of Jesus, Joachim Jeremias, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1972.)

\*\* (The Parables of the Kingdom, C.H. Dodd, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1961.)

#### SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

The man in our story today first invited all of his friends to a banquet. When they did not come he invited people he didn't even know to share with him. Which people would you first choose to come to a celebration at your house? How would you feel if they all turned you down?

Imagine that you have gone down to a homeless shelter and invited all those people to a party at your house. What will they think when they arrive at your home? In your imagination look around and ask yourself, Is this what the kingdom of God is to look like?

We are busy people. You have homework, lessons, sports and friends to occupy your time. In this story Jesus seems to remind us that time for our faith is important, too. Do you think you are too busy? What about your parents? Does your family make church a priority or do you just fit it in when you have time? Do you make prayer and caring for others important every day or do you only do those things on special holidays?

In this parable Jesus talks about the kingdom of God like it's a big party. If heaven is going to be a big party, what will it be like? (Think if each of your senses.)