



The Great Banquet

Luke 14:15-24

"Wait for me!" Lewis called out to Ranger Reggie from the door of his cabin. Ranger Reggie paused in the middle of the dirt road that ran through the camp and waited for Lewis to catch up.

"So where are we hiking today?" Lewis asked as they walked toward the campfire pit.

Ranger Reggie held up the huge camera hanging from a strap around his neck. "We are going hunting for pictures of the Creature Feature animal for today's show."

"Alright! We're going hunting!" Billy cheered as Ranger Reggie and Lewis joined Billy and Natalie at the fire pit. "Where's my bow and arrow! I'm gonna' catch us some dinner!"

"No, no! Not that kind of hunting! I said we're going hunting for pictures of the Creature Feature animal!" Ranger Reggie corrected.

"What's the creature?" Billy asked.

"Today's creature is the turkey," Ranger Reggie answered. "Safari Sam has gone to pick up a turkey for the show from a nearby farm but I thought we could get some pictures of wild turkeys, too."

"Fun!" Natalie grinned.

Ranger Reggie looked around and then checked the time with his watch. "Where is Amanda?" he asked Natalie.

Natalie just shook her head. "I tried to get her to come! She said she was too busy working on her camp craft to go hiking."

"Too bad," Ranger Reggie said. "I have marshmallows, chocolate, and graham crackers in my backpack. We're going to roast s'more cookies on our campfire after we take pictures of the turkeys."

Natalie took her phone from her backpack. "Maybe Amanda will come for the s'mores. I'll invite her," she said as she typed a text message into her phone to Amanda.

Moments later, the phone beeped with Amanda's reply. "No time for s'mores," Natalie read aloud to the others.

"Wow, how do you not have time for s'mores? That's my favorite thing to eat at camp!" Billy wondered.

"You know, this reminds me of our parable. I'll read it to you as we walk," Ranger Reggie said. He took his Bible from his backpack and gave it to Lewis as he waved for the campers to follow him. "Lewis, open the Bible and start reading at Luke 14:16."

Billy, Natalie, and Lewis followed Ranger Reggie as Lewis opened the Bible and began reading the story out loud:

"A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'"

Ranger Reggie interrupted, "Now, don't you think everyone in town would want to come to a great banquet like that?"

"Yeah! I know I would!" Billy replied as the other campers nodded in agreement.

"You'd think that," Ranger Reggie responded, "but they all made excuses as to why they couldn't come."

"So, what did the master do? Did he cancel the banquet?" Lewis asked.

"Certainly not!" Ranger Reggie exclaimed. "He told his servants to go out into the streets and alleys and bring in the poor, the disabled, the blind, and the lame!"

"The lame?" Lewis questioned.

"They are people who can't walk," Natalie explained.

"Then did they start the banquet?" Billy asked as he pictured a table full of delicious food.

"Nope," Ranger Reggie answered. "There was still room for more people so the master told them to go out into the roads and the country lanes and make the people come so his house would be full!"

"Wow! That must have been the greatest banquet ever! I wonder if they roasted s'more cookies back then. Too bad those first guys turned down the invitation," Billy replied.

Ranger Reggie nodded in agreement. "They missed out on a great blessing." He paused and then asked the campers, "Do you know what the banquet represents?"

"A really big s'mores party?" Lewis guessed.

"Nope!" Ranger Reggie answered with a laugh. "The banquet represents heaven!"

"Oh, yes, and Father God is like the master!" Natalie exclaimed.

"That's right," Ranger Reggie replied. "He sent Jesus as the servant to invite everyone to come join the feast with God in heaven! It's the best invitation ever!"

Ranger Reggie continued to read from the Bible:

"When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, 'Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.'"

"Gee, that would be a blessing," Sam agreed. "We don't want to miss that! How can we get an invitation?"

"We already have one," Ranger Reggie answered. "Jesus invites everyone to follow Him. All we have to do is say yes."

Natalie let out a heavy sigh, "I wish Amanda could hear about that invitation."

Ranger Reggie turned to Natalie and whispered, "Maybe you could tell her about it while you help her finish her craft."

"What a great idea! Thanks Ranger Reggie!" Natalie gave him a big hug and then headed back to check on Amanda. "Save some s'mores for Amanda and me!"