

The Parable of the Banquet

Jesus told the following parable in Luke 14:15-23:

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."

Jesus replied: "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.'"

"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

"Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

"Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

"'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

The King of Malakom

By Kolby King

Long ago in a jungle now lost from the memory of man, a king reigned. He was called the King of Malakom. The king was strong and bold, a lion who had ruled from the beginning of time. He was older than the trees and wiser than the owls. His eyes burned with fire and his heart was full of compassion. He was a good king, kind and generous, fair to all his subjects and his kingdom covered the face of the earth.

One day the king called his servants together. Koholeth was among them. He was a monkey who had grown up in the King's palace. Everybody called him Koli.

"The time has come for my son to be married," the King announced. "Go throughout the kingdom and invite all to attend."

The next day the servants left the king's palace and began their journey. With great joy Koli left as well. He couldn't wait to see the animals' excitement at such a grand announcement.

He first approached a zebra. The zebra was strong and powerful, wild and free. No one could tame him or tell him what to do. Like the wind, he went where he pleased and did what he chose.

"Greetings in the name of the King!" Koli proudly announced. "You are invited to a wedding feast for the King's son."

"The King? You must be mistaken, little friend," the zebra snorted with wind rustling his mane. "I have no King."

With those words he charged away in a care-free gallop.

Koli, although confused, continued his journey.

Next he saw a giraffe, tall and stately. She was beautiful. Koli was amazed by her height and the tallness of her neck. She ate leaves from the top of a large tree.

"Greetings in the name of the King!" Koli called up to her. "You are invited to a wedding feast for the King's son."

But there was no reply.

Koli cleared his throat and began again. "I say, beautiful giraffe, I bring you greetings in the name of..."

"I heard you," the giraffe snapped without even looking down.

"I don't understand," Koli commented.

"I don't talk to animals who are shorter than I," the giraffe snuffed and began eating again.

"But..."

"Leave me, little one," the tall animal demanded with a stomp of her hoof.

Koli was disheartened, but continued his journey.

Next he came to a hippopotamus. The hippo was big, fat, and happy.

“Hello, Mr. Monkey,” he called out from his pool of water.

“Greetings in...”

Then Koli paused. The hippo was *so* fat. Could he fit through the door to the King’s palace? Would he break a chair if he sat on it? What if he ate too much?

“I had better not invite him,” Koli thought and continued on his way.

Then he met a Jaguar. The cat’s legs were strong and sturdy. His shoulders were broad and his jaws were powerful. He was the fastest animal in the jungle.

“Greetings in the name of the King!” Koli announced, not as proud as when he first began this journey, but proud nonetheless. “You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son.”

“A feast?” the Jaguar coolly commented, licking his lips, and looking at the little monkey. “I like to feast.”

“Then come to the King’s palace and...”

“But I have no time for such a journey,” the Jaguar said. “I have work to do. Places to go. Animals to eat—I mean, meet,” he stuttered.

Koli paused for a moment. The Jaguar’s eyes glared at him. “I had better be going,” Koli said, quickly stepping away.

“But wouldn’t you like to be dinner—I mean, to have dinner with me tonight.”

“Not tonight,” he said disappearing into a bush.

Koli next encountered a sloth hanging in a tree. But the sloth looked *so* tired and he moved *so* slowly. It would take him a day just to climb a tree, and he talked at the same pace. A conversation with him would take an hour.

“He’d never make it to the banquet in time,” Koli thought. “And I don’t have time to invite him.”

So he left the sloth without saying a word.

Next the monkey encountered a boar, but again this animal seemed an unlikely candidate for the King’s table.

“Just look at him. He’s covered with mud!” Koli told himself. “He might leave pig-prints all through the palace! And he’s ugly too. Just look at those dirty teeth. Who would want him at the banquet?”

So Koli left the boar.

After a short time, Koli came upon a parrot sitting in a tree. He was beautiful, with bright and colorful plumes. This was a guest the King could take pride in. Surely, this parrot wouldn’t pass up an invitation to the King’s table.

“Greetings in the name of the King!” Koli said.

“Greetings in the name of the King!” the parrot replied.

“You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son,” Koli announced.

“You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son,” the parrot repeated.

Koli was perplexed. “Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“Do you understand what I’m saying?” the parrot said.

“Of course I do,” Koli replied.

“Of course I do,” the parrot responded.

“Good-bye, parrot,” Koli said sadly.

“Good-bye, silly monkey,” the parrot cackled as it flew away.

Next Koli happened upon a skunk. It was black and fluffy, with a huge white stripe down its tail. Koli paused and eyed it for a moment.

“Would a skunk be welcome at the King’s table?” He pondered the question for a moment and concluded that the smell might cause the others to lose their appetites.

So Koli passed by the skunk with a simple, “Hello,” but no mention of the King’s feast.

Koli soon saw an old rhinoceros. His legs were stout and strong. His shoulders were broad and his neck was powerful. The horn on his nose revealed his age and authority.

“Greetings in the name of the King, kind Rhinoceros!” Koli proclaimed. “You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son.”

“King? What King?” the rhino said slowly. His deep voice rumbled as he spoke.

“The King of Malakom,” responded the monkey.

“King of Malakom?” The rhino’s face wrinkled as if he was searching his mind for some distant memory of that name. After a pause he continued, “Look, little friend, the King of Malakom is just a fairy tale.”

Koli was shocked. “But I’ve seen him. I grew up in his palace.”

“I think you’ve been drinking too much sour coconut juice, little monkey.”

“But, Mr. Rhino, I haven’t had any coconut juice.”

“Well,” he said slowly, “maybe someone hit you on the head.”

“But...But...”

“Now, run along, my little friend,” the old rhino said as he slowly turned and walked away. “And quit drinking that sour coconut juice. The jungle doesn’t have a King.”

Koli stood for a while, still confused by the rhino’s surprising statements. Then, with a saddened heart, he sat down beneath a coconut tree. The time for his return had come, but his journey had been unsuccessful. He was very disappointed. What would he tell the King?

With his head hanging low, he turned again toward his homeland, toward the palace of the King.

As Koli approached the palace, he could hear cheers and laughter and smell the feast being prepared. Animals were scurrying everywhere. Cooks were cooking. Bakers were baking. Butlers were, well, doing whatever it is that butlers do. Everyone was busy and everyone was excited. Surely, this would be a feast unlike any other in history.

Cheers greeted the monkey as he entered the palace gate, and although he forced a smile, his heart was troubled.

“Welcome back, Koli,” they would say. “Did you have a pleasant journey?”

“Well, it was interesting,” he would reply and hasten away.

“Koli,” a voice gently roared behind him.

Koli froze and sadly turned to face his King.

“How was your journey?” the King asked.

“Not good, my King. I invited the animals, but...” he paused before continuing, “but none are coming.”

The King seemed unmoved by this disappointing news.

“Did you invite *all* the animals?” he questioned, raising one eyebrow.

“Well, not exactly,” the monkey said in embarrassment. “I was afraid the hippopotamus might break a chair, and the sloth was so slow that I didn’t think he could make it in time. The boar was *really* muddy, and the skunk smelled. I didn’t think they would be welcome here.”

“Koli,” the lion said, placing his huge paw on the monkey’s shoulder. “You might be right. The hippo might break a chair. The sloth might be too slow. The boar might leave mud tracks everywhere. The skunk’s smell might even ruin some appetites, but they are all welcome at my table.

“Just because they look and smell different,” the King continued, “does not make them bad. If they are willing to make the journey, they are welcome in my palace.”

“Do I still have time to invite them,” Koli asked.

“If you leave today, you will have time.”

Without a moment’s hesitation, the little monkey began his second journey into the jungle. This time he passed the zebra playing in a field and the tall giraffe who was still eating from the tops of trees. As fast as he could he went to the pool of water where he had met the hippo.

“Hello, Mr. Monkey,” a voice came from the water.

Koli turned in time to see the hippo’s head raise from its shaded resting place.

“Greetings in the name of the King!” Koli announced, as proud as when he had first began inviting animals. “You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son.”

“How wonderful!” the hippo exclaimed, shaking in the water. “I haven’t been to a wedding feast for years. I’d love to come.”

Then Koli quickly passed the Jaguar who called out from a distance, “Good day, tasty-monkey—I mean, hasty-monkey, would you like to stay for lunch?”

“Not today,” the monkey cried, disappearing once again into the thickets. He soon found the sloth, still hanging from the same branch in the same tree.

“Greetings in the name of the King!” Koli announced, “You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son.”

The sloth quietly snored.

Koli cleared his throat and began again, louder. “Greetings, sleepy sloth.”

The sloth stirred with a start and then looked down at the monkey.

“H-e-l-l-o, l-i-t-t-l-e m-o-n-k-e-y,” he said with slow, slurred speech.

“You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son.”

The sloth yawned. “A w-e-d-d-i-n-g f-e-a-s-t? T-h-a-t m-e-a-n-s i-t’s t-i-m-e f-o-r m-e t-o w-a-k-e u-p.”

“So you’ll come?” Koli said excitedly.

“I’l-l b-e t-h-e-r-e. D-o y-o-u t-h-i-n-k I c-o-u-l-d t-a-k-e a n-a-p w-h-e-n i-t’s o-v-e-r?”

“Sure,” Koli said as he raced away to find the boar.

Soon Koli found a trail of muddy pig-prints. He followed them until he came to the boar who was rubbing his tusk against a fallen log.

“Greetings in the name of the King!” Koli announced, “You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son.”

“Splendid,” the boar proclaimed. “I might even take a bath. Gotta look good for the King, you know!”

Next Koli found the skunk.

“Greetings in the name of the King!” Koli announced, “You are invited to a wedding feast for the King’s son.”

“You want *me* at the wedding feast? Even though I smell!”

“The King specifically sent me to invite you,” Koli said, leaving out that he had purposely not invited him earlier.

“Then I’ll come. I might even put on some perfume.”

The day of the feast came. Many guests arrived. The hippo broke the first chair he sat in but still enjoyed himself. The sloth arrived in time as well and managed to stay awake the entire dinner. The boar took a bath, but still left muddy pig-prints everywhere he went. The skunk put on some perfume, but it only made him smell worse.

Yet the King didn’t care what they looked like or smelled like. They were his guests and he treated each of them with honor. They would always be welcome at his table.

In this story the King of Malakom represents God, the King of kings*, who welcomes all who come to him.

Whether you are tall or short, young or old. Whether you have a long nose and big toes or little feet and lots of meat. No matter what color hair you have. No matter what color your skin may be. Even if you smell bad, you are still welcome at God’s table.

Then after this life, all those who have come to God through Jesus His Son will be welcomed into Heaven.

(*Note: *Malakom* in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament is translated as *kings*. Therefore, King of *Malakom* literally means the King of *kings*. Also, the monkey’s name, *Koholeth*, is translated from the Hebrew word for *preacher*.)