



Good morning. It's a great day in the Kingdom!

"The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?' He replied, 'The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables:

"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand." In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'" But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.'" (Matthew 13:10-17)

There is only one thing that could make these days better - a church picnic!
If there is one balm for the soul that would do us any good in these Covid times, it would be to indulge together in an old fashioned gathering with a modern flavor. What is to stop us from gathering with our own chairs, blankets and umbrellas on the church lawn, with proper face coverings and distancing? The Church Picnic is an act of faith. It is living faith in its deepest, most fully realized expression. Joseph Lincoln wrote about this phenomenon in 1902:

*"OH! the horns are all atootin' as we rattle through the town,
And we fellers are a-hootin' and a-jumpin' up and down,
And the girls are all a-gigglin' and a-tryin' ter be smart,
With their braided pigtails wigglin' at the joltin' of the cart;*

*There 's the teachers all a-beamin', rigged up in their Sunday clothes,
And the parson's specs a-gleamin' like two moons acrost his nose,
And the sup'rintendent lookin' mighty dignerfied and cool,
And a-bossin' of the picnic of the church's Sunday school.*

*Everybody 's got their basket brimmin' full of things ter eat,
And I've got one-if yer ask it-that is purty hard ter beat,-
'Cept that Sis put in some pound-cake that she made herself alone,
And I bet yer never found cake that was quite so much like stone.
There 'll be quarts of sass'parilla; yes, and "lemmo" in a tub;
There 'll be ice-cream - it 's vernilla - and all kinds of fancy grub;
And they 're sure ter spread the table on the ground beside the spring,
So 's the ants and hoppergrasses can just waltz on everything.*

*Then the girls they 'll be a-yippin', 'cause a bug is in the cream
And a "daddy-long-legs" skippin' round the butter makes 'em scream;
And a fuzzy caterpillar - jest the littlest kind they make-
Sets 'em holl'rin', "Kill her! kill her!" like as if it was a snake.
Then, when dinnertime is over and we boys have et enough,
Why, the big girls they 'll pick clover, or make wreaths of leaves and stuff;
And the big chaps they 'll set 'round 'em, lookin' soft as ever wuz,
Talkin' gush and actin' silly, same as that kind always does.*

*Then, we'll ride home when it 's dark'nin' and the leaves are wet with dew,
And the lightnin'-bugs are sparklin' and the moon is shinin', too;
We'll sing "Jingle bells" and " Sailin'," "Seein' Nelly home," and more;
And that one that 's slow and wailin', "home ag'in from somethin' shore."
Then a feller 's awful sleepy and he kinder wants ter rest,
But the stuff he's et feels creepy and like bricks piled on his chest
And, perhaps, he dreams his stummick has been stepped on by a mule;
But it ain't: it 's jest the picnic of the church's Sunday-school!"*

What a reminiscence! What an invitation to grace! What more could we need this summer to dispel the gloom and fear and prejudice of these days? Technology has changed – we would ride in cars, not in a cart. Lifestyles have changed- we can cook there, no longer restricted to our kitchens. Social activities have changed – the boys and the girls are more likely to play games together; but the things most true about humanity have not changed. The boys and girls will still catch each other's eye. The children will tease each other with bugs, eat until their tummies ache, take delight in singing, and look forward to sweets. We will relax and enjoy each others company, tell stories and laugh, and glory in the beauty of fellowship and nature. In the evening, the descendants of Joe Lincoln's lightning bugs will light our way to our evening rest. What a splendid reminder that God is still in His holy temple, and He still means for us to live in abundance! *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10)

As Jesus said, some people fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." But blessed are our eyes because they see the wonderful food, smiles of friends, and the beauty of

nature; and blessed are our ears because we hear the laughter of children, the songs of the our past, and the evening call of the birds, bullfrogs, katydids, and crickets. "For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

By participating in abundant life such as the time honored Church picnic, we demonstrate that we have the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, and according to Jesus, "whoever has, will be given more, and he will have an abundance." Yes, that is what we need right now - more picnic, children, food, laughter, songs, games and natural splendor. Oh, and more "Pastor Don's Corona Cure!"

Ah, that's the life! That's the truth! That's the way!

East Freetown Congregational-Christian Church | P.O.#825, East Freetown, MA 02717

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