

The Parable of the Long Spoons



A man having a near death experience, contemplates his life of sin and anxiously awaits his fate in the next world.

An escort meets him at the boundary of hereafter and with a welcoming smile says, “You’re not ready yet friend; you still have another chance. But you’ll return soon, so let me show you what goes on here on the other side.”

Together they enter a great hall where a long candle-lit banquet table is laden with bowls of steaming, fragrant soups, succulent roasts, perfectly cooked vegetables, aromatic loaves of bread, the finest of wines, fruits of every kind, and a dazzling array of cakes and pies. Diners fill every chair, but shockingly, amid luxurious bounty, the scene is one of pain and anguish. Skeletal forms are twisted and moaning in starvation, with barely the strength to strike at each other with their spoons.

Looking closer, the man sees that all spoons have long handles—longer than the diners’ arms; too long for the diners to feed themselves. “So this is Hell,” gasps our Friend. “Anger and misery amid abundance. “But, come, let me show you something else.” Says the Escort.

The two enter another great hall. And in that hall there is another long, candle-lit banquet table, covered with a similar incredible spread of delicious foods, drinks and sweets. Here the sounds of laughter, chatter and song fill the hall while healthy and happy diners are enjoying the company and the bounty before them.

They, too, have long spoons, but they are feeding each other. “And this, my friend “is heaven.”

Whenever a couple comes to me frustrate because they are tired of trying to get their needs met in their marriage, I tell this story. When was the last time you tried to be the answer to your partner’s needs? Searching for validation to their own plight, I remind them of this story and suggest that if both of them are trying to satisfy each other’s hunger, then they wouldn’t worry so much about their own needs because they would each be well fed.