



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Gabriel's Grand Party

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 23

Title: Gabriel's Grand Party
Author: Harold Schilk
Church: Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Alberta
Text: Matthew 22:1-14
Theme: God calls and invites everyone in the world to share in his goodness.

(The storyteller could wear a paper party hat for a visual attraction or for simple pleasure!)

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how much money we spend to have a normal birthday party.
- I wonder how it would feel to spend that money helping poor children.
- I wonder what our world would be like if everyone had enough.
- I wonder what ways we will find to share God's goodness with others.

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Gathering Activity:

Invite all the children who have had, or will have, a birthday this year to gather for the children's story. As you welcome them, engage them in some conversation about their ages and what they enjoy about birthday parties. If you are wearing a paper party hat, you could take a little poll about who thinks hats add fun to a party. Once a sense of familiarity and comfort has been established in this way, settle into a space of holy expectation with the children. Wonder about the good things about God we will learn from today's story. Explain that the ideas for this story come from Matthew 22, where Jesus told a story about a party.

Story:

Gabriel was almost 11 years old. Her birthday was just a few weeks away. "What would you like for your birthday?" asked her mother. "I dunno," answered Gabriel. "How about some yummy cake and party hats?" prompted her dad. "Not sure," said Gabriel. The cake sounded good but the hats seemed a bit too much.Too much...those words echoed through her thoughts as she headed to sit on her bed.

Suddenly, Gabriel brightened. “Yeah! It is all **too much**. I have now lived a whole ten years and I’ve got *too much*.” Ten years and ten birthdays had meant a whole lot of presents. Gabriel looked around her bedroom. Her closet was full of clothes. Books lined her bookshelves. Toys spilled out of her chest and lay all over the floor. Why get more?

These thoughts continued to stay with Gabriel and unsettled her. She had listened to the news about the three hurricanes that hit Haiti in September and couldn’t forget the pictures of people who had lost everything. It didn’t seem right that she had this much stuff.

And then there was the party! Whom to invite? Should she invite just her close friends? Should she invite everyone who invited her to a party during the last year? Or should she invite her whole class? Or grade division? Or even the whole school? And the same words came back into her head ...**too much ... too much**...Gabriel knew there were many children who didn’t have parents who could throw them a birthday party. Many Haitian children, while they might have a Mom or a Dad, no longer had a place they could call home. They had **too much** too, but...**too much** sadness and not enough joy.

Slowly an idea started forming in Gabriel’s head. She thought about all her parties and the many more that she had attended. “What if.... I was to throw a birthday party where all of my guests would not bring presents for me but would bring presents that I could send to those people who were still suffering from the hurricane? Wow.... Now, that would totally surprise all of my friends. It would be like throwing a party for people who would not be able to come to my party but who really need some presents.”

Gabriel’s parents loved this idea and threw a memorable party that her entire community noticed and remembered. They hung bright decorations, danced to Haitian music and even served Creole Chicken alongside of the other party food. They made cards to send to children in Haiti and gave money to Mennonite Central Committee’s relief program. It was fun and they felt like they were making a real difference with their gifts.

The memories of Gabriel’s party stayed with the children who came to her party. It felt great to know their party had sent a little love and joy to children with *too much* sadness.

Prayer:

Thank you God, for celebrations and chances to share your goodness in all kinds of ways. Thank you for giving us so much. Help us to be cheerful givers. Amen.