

Sermon for Trinity 2- Luke 14:15-24

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Our Lord today tells us the parable of the great banquet. A man prepared a great feast and invited many. Some of those invited found excuses not to attend his banquet. So the invitation goes to someone else. It went to the people in the streets, the less desirable guests: the poor, blind, and maimed. We're reminded of tax collectors and prostitutes who came instead of the pious Israelites. Still, his servants say, there is more room. So the invitation went out along the paths and highways. He tells them to compel people to come. We're reminded of the apostles, who went out to all nations to give God's invitation.

When we hear this parable, it's easy to forget about the Man planning the banquet. There's so much to think about after learning the reaction of the guests to the invitation. We can't help but notice that people today react in the very same way as the guests did back then.

This parable is descriptive and realistic. Preparing a banquet of this size takes a long time. To be on the safe side, a preliminary invitation was sent out. Today we call this a "save-the-date." Back in that day, when everything was prepared, the servants went out announcing to all the guests: "Come, everything is ready!" It's the same way God treated Israel. He spoke of what was to come.

God has been extending His invitation to humanity ever since the beginning: first, God invited Adam and Eve to the banquet when He said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. He shall crush your head, and you shall pierce His heel." Then God invited Abraham when He said to him, "I will be your God, and in your seed will all the nations be blessed." After that, God continuously sent prophets to the people to extend the invitation. Next, John the Baptist, proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Finally, Jesus said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." "Come, everything is ready!"

But at this point in the parable, some of the invited banquet guests begin to make excuses. They apologized, but they couldn't come. Not just at that time, anyway. One of them had bought a house and property. Another bought an ox (or we might say a car today). Another was recently married. "We have to work; we don't have time for church." "We have to take care of the house, we have to make a living, we have to make money to support ourselves; we have no time to go to church and hear the sermon."

Our Lord says those excuses are unacceptable. What else is really being said here other than, "I would rather stay here on earth and spend my time in happiness and recreation for however long it lasts. If I got as much out of hearing the preaching of the gospel as I do out of working and playing, I would go. But since I don't, I won't bother with it ... I'll just take the risk." Is this not the definition of blaspheming God? Is this not the very meaning of despising Christ? Is this not the exact picture of trampling God's

Word underfoot? Could anyone sin worse? Could anyone anger God more? Sin makes us poor.

When God's creation becomes excuses to skip church, this is the greatest misuse of God's creation. This is despising God. Fields, houses, oxen, cars, work, hobbies, and spouses are all good creations of God. God ordains that every person work and attend to his life's callings, provided that, in the process he exercises faith toward God, love toward neighbor, and a life that brings him to this eternal supper. Use God's gifts for this purpose! Don't be so devoted to the created gifts that you forget about God who gave them!

The invited guests reacted to the invitation exactly like people do today: we have so many excuses. We don't have time for God. Just not now anyway. And it's all part of the scheme, right? There will always be tomorrow to be a faithful Christian. There will always be tomorrow to repent and believe. In the meantime, our heart is "free" to cling to the idols we deem fit. Sin cripples us. Or we're skeptical about the banquet. Is this gracious gift real or just a fairy tale? Will it pay off in the end? Sin makes us blind. The root of our scheming and skepticism is our lack of faith.

And this is the difference between heaven and hell, life and death, God's grace and God's wrath, salvation and damnation. We must turn and repent. We must leave the hedges and brambles; we must flee the life of sin. We must leave our simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight. God wants and must have guests at His meal, and even if He has to raise them up from stones, He will have His heaven filled.

Now the invitation comes to us. And He keeps inviting and keeps inviting and keeps inviting, because our Lord is always inviting us. He will not quit. He will not give up on us. Let's not forget about the great banquet, a festival, the likes of which we have never seen. Here we find new meaning in life. Here we experience splendor and riches in company we could never have by ourselves. And let's not forget about the Man who planned the banquet: our Lord Himself. God the Father gives His beloved Son, Christ, who says, "I am the bread of life." Through His Son He gives us righteousness. Through His Son He gives us grace. Through His Son He gives us the forgiveness of sins. Through His Son He gives us eternal life. His is a fantastic feast from an unbelievably generous Host who cannot keep all His joy, all His riches, all His grace, and all His holiness to Himself. As a treasure in a field or a precious pearl, how can we say no to His gracious invitation and gifts?

We partake of our King's banquet at His invitation. We share the splendor of His mercy and are part of His never failing glory that surrounds Him. Gone are our scheming, skepticism, and lack of faith. Christ frees us from the sins that impoverish us, the sins that cripple us, and the sins that blind us. We have found the one true meaning in life, the one thing worth possessing and experiencing: being with Christ at His banquet. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠