

Sermon for Trinity 2 – Luke 14:15-24

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

“[Those invited to the great banquet] all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’” You know the invited ones in the parable of the great banquet all had their excuse in hand. You may also know that the characters in this parable signify the reality that many invited guests to the divine service find reasons to be excused. One could rationalize that these excuses are legitimate. “I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it.” Didn’t the Lord God take the first man Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it? “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them.” Didn’t God command man to have dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth? “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” Didn’t God say, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him and helper fit for him” and “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it”?

Home, possessions, wife. These are blessings the Lord gives us to have. He says so in His Word. And yet the devil would use these gifts to endanger men’s souls by pitting them against the divine service. Your own flesh unendingly seeks to put the creation above the Creator. This world convinces you that the most precious gifts you receive here are worthless when compared with its endless pleasures, honor, and wealth.

A heart transplant has little value to a healthy person, but means everything to a person dying of congestive heart failure. A blood transfusion means nothing to someone who is well, but causes great rejoicing to someone in need. Examine your life. Do you set up excuses to defend yourself against the law’s attacks? Are you so delusional to imagine that sin has not wrecked everything in your life and that your only desire is to serve yourself? Are you so arrogant to call yourself a spiritually healthy person?

Or will you acknowledge that you are a sinner? Will you call yourself poor, crippled, blind, and lame? If you wish to be an acceptable guest at the great heavenly banquet, you must acknowledge yourself to be poor, lame, crippled, and blind. You must be meek in spirit. You must realize that you are nothing of yourself. You are dead to do that which is good. You have hands and feet unable to achieve good. By nature you are sinful in thought, word, and deed. May the Lord grant that we recognize our poverty. May the Lord make us to recognize our blindness.

For you, the Lord has prepared the banquet. Wherever the faithful are gathered, there you find the table. The preaching of the Gospel is the dish. The servers are the pastors. Christ is the food. Through the pastor's mouth, the food is laid on the table and served. When the Gospel is preached, the food is served up and offered. The Gospel is embraced and heard by young and old, learned and unlearned, rich and poor. The Lord's Gospel promises are for you. They are your true and only consolation. When you are faced with sin and death, Christ has conquered. When you sin, you are unable to injure Christ our Lord. When you are sorrowful, Christ is your joy. When you are hungry, Christ is your satisfaction. When you are poor, Christ is your riches. When you are distressed, Christ is your comfort. Since neither hunger, nor poverty, nor distress touch Him, these very things will not harm you. Since He's righteous, you're righteous. Since He's holy, you're holy. Since He's alive, you're alive. He is yours and you are His. As Martin Luther's hymn says, "To me He said: 'Stay close to Me, I am your rock and castle. Your ransom I Myself will be; For you I strive wrestle. For I am yours and you are Mine, and where I am you may remain; the foe shall not divide.'" Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Not hunger. Not poverty. Not distress. Not death itself. Christ is yours and you are His.

You are His and you pray His prayer. We pray at the beginning of the Our Father, "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done ..." Did you ever wonder why the Our Father is ordered like it is? These spiritual blessings come first. Only after we have prayed for them do we ask for physical blessings, "Give us this day our daily bread." First we ask for those things spiritual: God's Name, God's Kingdom, and God's will, then daily bread. Of the seven petitions that compose the Our Father, six ask for spiritual blessings, only one asks for the physical. But the fulfillment of this prayer is found in spiritual and physical union of the Lord's Supper, as the man said, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God."

The Son of Man has invited you from the streets and lanes of the city, from the highway and the hedges, from the sins in which you struggle, from the former wicked life that still haunts you. Even though you feel sin, you own righteousness. Even though you feel death, life is yours. Even though you feel sorrow, you own joy. The Lord invites you. He has a place for you to kneel before Him at His altar. He has reserved a place for you. Come and partake of the banquet.

"Lord Jesus Christ, You have prepared this feast for our salvation. It is your Body and Your Blood, and at your invitation As weary souls, with sin oppressed, We come to you for needed rest, for Comfort and for pardon." To the weary souls oppressed by sin, find comfort here in God's house. Amen.

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