

Sermon for Trinity 2 – Luke 14:15-24

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

It was a remarkable celebration—a festive gathering on a Sabbath day at which Jesus first taught today’s Gospel. There were many invited guests and Jesus happened to be one of them. One of those other guests reclining at table with Him and wanting to strike up a conversation, said, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God!” Fittingly, Jesus’ answer was a parable about a great banquet.

A man gave a great banquet and invited many. His servant was sent to gather the guests when the feast was ready. But instead of guests, the man received only excuses: “I’ve made a big investment ... I’ve work and a livelihood to maintain ... I have my family whom I need to attend to.” These are valid excuses, no? Work and family are real commitments which demand our effort, energy, and time. There’s a time for everything, and they’d get to banqueting when they had time.

So who are the characters in the parable? What is really being said here? First and foremost, this is no ordinary master, no ordinary man, but the God man, Jesus Christ. The invitation He sends was written in His Own blood. It was sent out first in Genesis chapter 3, when God spoke to Satan about His Christ: “... He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel.” It was sent through Abraham as a promised Offspring who would redeem all nations. It was sent through God’s prophet Isaiah and the other prophets who declared a Savior to take on the sins of the world and die in our stead. It was sent through John the Baptizer: “Repent from your sin, and behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” The invitation was sent by the Christ’s Apostles and by our Lord Himself. And since this is no ordinary man and since this is no ordinary invitation, this is no ordinary banquet. It’s the very feast of the Kingdom of God. There simply is nothing which takes a higher priority in life than that.

But men are the masters of excuses. In fact, we are practically professionals at justifying our wrongs. There’s no sin that a man or woman cannot excuse away. Everyone justifies his own actions to his own twisted satisfaction. The adulterer blames her spouse for her affair and excuses herself. The murderer says the gun just went off or the knife just went in. The unforgiving grudge-holder blames the insufficient groveling of the offending party. The gossip excuses destroying reputations by pleading that what he says is merely the truth.

Perhaps you have been fooled by a trick of anatomy. Because you have two hands you assume that you can hold on to two things at once. You think you can hold on to your excuses *and* Jesus. You think you can say both, “I’m basically a good person” *and* “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.” You think you can plead, “I just can't find it in my heart to forgive this person” *and* yet also plead, “Lord, forgive me of *my* sins.”

Back to the parable, the more the invited guests clung to their excuses, they began to lose hold of the Kingdom of God, until finally they asked to be excused from it altogether. And they got their wish.

And who is invited in their stead? The lame, the blind, the poor, those who must be compelled to come. Which is really those who have nothing else to hold on to. Those who have no excuse. Those who have nothing better to do than come to the Feast of the Kingdom of God. And here's the trick: you are poor, and blind, and lame, and in need of compulsion. For you were born in sin, you have no riches of holiness to offer to God, you are crippled in spirit. In truth, all men are. In truth, we are blind and lame in spiritual matters and know neither ourselves nor God's will and counsel. We are corrupt; our will is perverse. Wickedness, complete corruption, and inclination only to evil are found in our hearts. We have a bad conscience and are afraid of God, but He wanted to give us peace and joy. So what had to happen?

Jesus became blind and lame. For no eyes are as blind as those closed in death and no body as lame as the corpse laid in the grave. And in this is God's love for you: that He Himself would take your infirmities into Himself so that you might have life and healing. And all these things are prepared for you because all this is given you in Christ. He is the Lamb who was slain and prepared for you. He has taken all, yes all, your sins on Himself and removed them, and atoned for them all. And since the grave could not hold Jesus down, neither can it now hold you down. As Jesus rose triumphantly from the grave, so shall you be compelled to be raised and live forever in body and soul with your Lord. In Holy Baptism, your life was made one with His. Christ invited you individually, one by one, each by name, when He baptized you into Himself. Though you received it as a little child, is your Baptism no longer valid for you, an adult sinner? Would you in doubt think that God's promise to you has been broken, since it was such a long time ago? For God it wasn't a long time ago! With Him, it's as if you were baptized today!

The promises and gifts of the Triune God were no more powerful or nearer to you the day you were baptized as an infant than they are today. Consider yourself as if you were baptized today, that's the truth! Like a child, heed and believe your heavenly Father's invitation. He still reminds you today in sermon, absolution, and Sacrament of the Altar. We are indeed invited! So when then is this Great Supper, or as it is also called "Marriage Feast of the Lamb" to be held? It has already begun, and even now God's House is being filled because it is still called "today," though it is a Feast that has no end.

The Feast has no end, but its beginning is now. God has built His House, slaughtered His Son, mixed the wine, and set His Table. He has brought you forth into this large place. The Lord is your Rock. The Lord is your Fortress. The Lord is your Deliverer, who has delivered you because He delights in you. He never fails to help and has brought you up in His steadfast love. The Lord has heard your cry and delivered your soul from lying lips and a deceitful tongue. "Come, for everything is now ready." Amen.

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

This sermon was inspired in part by a sermon by the Rev. H.R. Curtis, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Worden, IL and Zion Lutheran Church, Carpenter, IL. and by a sermon by the Rev. U.V. Koren published in U.V. Koren's Works, Vol. 1, Lutheran Synod Book Company, 2013, p. 277-93