

Sermon for Trinity 2 – Luke 14:15-24

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

“A man once gave a great banquet ...” Thus Jesus begins this parable. As in most parables, the most distinguished and prominent central character is God. So the man in this parable is our Lord God Himself, a great and rich benefactor who prepared a meal according to His abundant generosity. This banquet is called great and glorious, not only because of the Host, who is God Himself, but the food is also exceedingly exquisite – the Holy Gospel, yes, Christ our Lord Himself. His death satisfied the payment for our sins. He has thereby redeemed us from all misery, eternal death, wrath of God, sin, and eternal damnation. Christ is this great and glorious meal. As guests, we are made clean in Holy Baptism. He comforts and strengthens us through the sacrament of His Body and Blood so that nothing is lacking. There is complete abundance and everyone is satisfied. No words can fully describe it. No heart can completely grasp it. No soul will ever hunger or thirst again, but will be completely satisfied. Whoever believes in this Jesus Christ, “born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; Who descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;” if you believe in this Jesus, you will live eternally.

With this gift the Rich Man in the story invited many. “Now the time has come! Now it has been prepared! Your Lord Jesus Christ, your Messiah, has already been born, died, and risen again. Therefore do not remain outside! Come to the table, eat, and be cheerful! Receive with joy the treasure promised to you: Christ died for you! According to this promise, He has released you from the curse of damnation and saved you!”

“But they 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 5 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.’” Taking a wife does not mean being occupied with something dishonest; on the contrary, it’s submitting to an honest life. “Land and oxen” (working) are the means to support this estate, which is everyone’s duty. The problem comes in when we set out to prosper in “land and oxen” no matter if it happens with God or against God. In this regard, we all, with no exceptions have lived as if God did not matter. We are no better than the excuse-makers in the parable.

In the world, there is a real temptation that has definite allure. It’s appealing to strive after the fields and oxen and promotions and paychecks and even hobbies, no matter what the cost. They have measurable results. For better or worse, we can find our value and worth in these things. May this not continue among us!

For this was the reward the invited guests wanted to have. They didn’t want the supper. They were concerned about their houses and wealth and bank accounts and toys, but not the Gospel. So they lose all these and receive the verdict that none of them would taste the supper.

And these are harsh words: “... I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.” Have we not gone about our lives thinking this verse was nothing more than old dead words on a page? Were not these harsh, frightening words spoken by God Himself? “... I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.” He has spoken these words in His

anger and great wrath! This is the Lord and God over all, before Whom mountains still shake, before Whom the ground and the earth still tremble, before Whom the seas and all waters still flee!

“... [N]one of those men ... shall taste my banquet.” It’s as if God said, “Since you choose to inspect your field and oxen and take wives, and because you neglect my supper – that is, you want to preserve your wealth but abandon Me and My Gospel – so I will abandon you. Because of this you will lose everything. My supper is surely better than oxen, fields, and houses or wives, even though invited guests despise it now and regard their possessions as much more valuable. But the hour will come when they must leave their oxen, fields, houses, and even their spouses and family, and then they would gladly partake of my supper. In that day; however, it will be said to them, ‘Friend, it is too late. I cannot now wait on you as a guest. Go to your fields, to your oxen, to your houses; these will *certainly* give you a greater supper, because you have proudly and boldly despised My supper. I have prepared it and paid the highest price for it, but you have detested it. Have you cooked something better? Eat it and be happy – but you will not taste My supper. Yet, I will invite new guests. From the streets and lanes of the city, I will bring the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. From the highways and hedges, I will compel them to come in!’”

And this is also where we come in. Crippled by shame from past and present sins. Blinded by the unfortunate reality that is our life. Lord God, what will free us from our misery?!? Yet, do not despair that you are a sinner. Do not fear that this frightful verdict is upon you. Hear the Gospel: Jesus died for your sake and has made perfect satisfaction for all your sins. Believe this! You are safe from the devil, the world, and eternal death. They have no claim on you! You will eat at His magnificent supper and become strong. Sit down at the table of this rich Host and eat. There’s still plenty of empty spaces and plenty to eat. Believe that Jesus Christ has paid for you. There is no other way you can enter besides Him. God’s wrath is ended. Nothing now rains from heaven except grace, mercy, forgiveness, and eternal life. Be comforted, you poor and miserable ones who were lost. So desirous is God of your salvation that He will not take “no” for an answer to His invitation. He wants to give and help more than you could receive or ask. He craves nothing less than you opening your heart wide and accepting His grace. God wants you to persevere in this faithfulness.

And this you have done ... With the pitfalls of seeking only worldly goods in this parable (the fields, oxen, house, wealth, etc.) there is the flipside: You have chosen to forsake these in favor of the Lord’s banquet. You are here today on a Sunday, a perfectly good weekend day for sleeping in or working on something else, yet you have forsaken bed and pillow and lawnmowers (in addition to countless other sacrifices you’ve made that you don’t even think about!) to be in God’s house. You have sacrificed your time and drove miles willingly to come to His banquet. You have set a solid example for the people you see you on the way – even those of your own household that the Lord’s gracious gifts are important to you. This brings great joy to both of your pastors. We are grateful for you. Thank you!

But now, “Come for everything is now ready!” God grant you joy in His banquet. Amen.

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