

The Second Sunday after Trinity  
St. Luke 14:16-24: "The Lord Has Great Riches in Store for You."  
June 12/13, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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Dear Father in heaven, You have invited us to Your great Supper, and we pray that You take not Your invitation from us, but give us hearts that accept it. Since You also today have gathered us and permit us to hear Your invitation, then help us, that by means of this Word we may behold Your love and by it be freed from whatever tempts and hinders us, that we may be drawn to You and come to You and abide with You always, even to the end. Amen. (*U. V. Koren's Works*, Vol. 1, p. 277)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is taken from the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

But [Jesus] said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' / "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 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.' / "So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' / "And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' / "And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'" (ESV)

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, who mercifully invites us to partake of His great riches of salvation and life both now and forever, dear fellow redeemed:

I think it's probably more fun to watch game shows than to take part in them. When you are simply a viewer, you don't feel the pressure the contestants do. You can sit on your couch and second guess the decisions they make. You can question their mental abilities. You can think how you would have played it safe when they took chances, or how you would have taken chances when they played it safe. It's easy to be an expert about these things when you have nothing on the line.

But suppose you were taking part in a game show, and you could see the prize behind door number one but not behind door number two. In one contest, the prize behind door number one is a new truck. In another, the prize is a new house. In another, the prize is a new plot of tillable land. And in each case, the contestants are assured that the prize behind door number two is

even more valuable. Do you turn your back on door number one for a chance to open door number two?

We could understand if the contestants went with the prizes they could see. The prizes behind door number one are good prizes! But what if the host told the contestants that while the prizes behind door number one will last for a while and be useful for a while, the prizes behind door number two have eternal benefits? Would you go for the prize you can see and know what to do with, or for the prize you cannot see or comprehend?

Or let's put it this way: The prizes behind door number one are things for our earthly life only. The prizes behind door number two are things for our spiritual life, both now and forever. Which is the better prize? Many choose the earthly things like the men did in Jesus' parable. One man excused himself from the great banquet because he wanted to go check out a new field. Another man excused himself because he had to try out his new oxen. Another excused himself because he had a new wife.

Possessions—work—family—all of them are blessings from God. But none of these physical blessings should take priority over God's spiritual blessings. Is a new truck better than the forgiveness of sins? Is family better than the faith that saves? Is temporarily owning land better than the eternal inheritance stored up for us in heaven?

Of course these earthly blessings are not better, but we can see them. And the things we can see have a powerful effect on us. We imagine the invitees to the great banquet wondering to themselves if it would really be all that "great." "What if the banquet is boring? What if the food isn't that good? What if I don't like the company? Better to stick with what I know I like." They figured they had more to lose in attending the banquet than they did in staying home.

But the great banquet that Jesus talks about is no common event with common goods. It is a feast of the richest of foods, foods that never make you feel uneasy or unfilled, foods that you never grow tired of eating. The great banquet is the feast of salvation which God invites sinners to partake of. He invites them to exchange their dirty rags with the wedding garments of righteousness, to be His honored guests at the head table, and to enjoy all the rich gifts He has to offer.

The Lord expects nothing of His guests except that they take His invitation seriously. Jesus' parable shows clearly that the Lord does not choose the brightest and best and wealthiest and most impressive for His kingdom. He chooses "*the poor and crippled and blind and lame,*" anyone who can be found no matter their condition, no matter their station in life. He desires to fill His house, and He welcomes every sort.

The guests that attend the banquet may come from different areas and speak different languages. They may have very different backgrounds and customs. But they all have one thing in common: they are all sinners. The great banquet is for sinners. If you are not a sinner, you can ignore this invitation. If you are not a sinner, you can go your merry way. But if you are a sinner, you cannot ignore the Lord's invitation. You cannot let anything keep you from attending the feast.

If your favorite singer personally sent you front row tickets to his concert and money for travel, you would do whatever you had to do to get there. If your favorite football team gave you tickets on the fifty yard line, you would be at that game. How much more important, then, to listen to God when He warmly invites you to the banquet of salvation!

The table has been set and the meal has been prepared for you. Each one of you is God's honored guest. Each one of you has been chosen for salvation by His grace. Your salvation was secured when Jesus fulfilled the holy Law for you and died on the cross for your sins. Then He rose on the third day destroying the claim that death had on you.

This victory over sin and death is served up every time you listen to God's Word and partake of His Sacraments. Jesus is the Food of this feast. You receive His righteousness, forgiveness, and life whenever you hear the promise of the Gospel and trust that God intends it for you. You taste His grace when you eat His body and drink His blood in His Holy Supper. Jesus is the Food, and you need to fill up!

But it isn't enough just to come to church. If you are coming just to keep up appearances, if you are coming just to show people how good you are, then you might as well stay home. If all you can think about is how boring this banquet is, or how bland the food, or how little you like the company around you, then you can sit alone at home in your pajamas and rule over your own little kingdom with an easy chair as your throne and a smart phone or remote control as your scepter.

But if you know what you are to the depths of your heart—a sinner—, if you recognize how little you deserve the Lord's invitation to salvation, if you can see that you have nothing good—nothing worth having—apart from your merciful Savior, then you are in the right place. You are in the place where Jesus promises to meet you. He is the one who died for you. He is the one who rose again from the dead for you. He is the one who is seated at the right hand of God the Father, ruling over all things for your good.

He is here to forgive your sins, to take them away as far as the east is from the west. He is here to strengthen your faith, so that you are not tempted away by the treasures of the world. He is here to comfort you in your trials and to give you courage to confess His saving name. Jesus is here, and He invites you to have everything that is His.

Why is the Lord so good to you? That's what the "*poor and crippled and blind and lame*" wondered, the ones living in the back alleys and the back woods. Why should they be invited to a great banquet? The first guests who were invited thought they were better than the master and his banquet. They thought they were above him. The guests who actually attended knew they didn't deserve such attention and riches. They could not imagine that a seat at the table was reserved for them. They had to be compelled to come.

You also must be compelled to come to the Lord's banquet. You wouldn't attend on your own. You know you don't deserve it. You know all your sins which should disqualify you from being in His holy company. But the Holy Spirit comes through God's Word of promise and works faith in your heart to believe that His promises are intended for you.

The Holy Spirit comes announcing your invitation to the banquet. When you hesitate about it or doubt it, He repeats the promise and keeps repeating it: "The Master expects you. Your seat is reserved. The food is prepared. *Everything is now ready.* Come!" "But no," you say, "it can't be. There must be some mistake." So He peels open your fingers, and He presses into your hand the invitation to the banquet with your name on it. "At your Baptism, your name was officially registered on the guest list," He says. "You are supposed to be at the great banquet. You belong there now, and your place is secure there forever."

Without the Holy Spirit's work through the Word, we would ignore God's invitation. We would stick with door number one, the treasures of this world that pass away. We would never see the great riches behind door number two, the treasures of heaven which God gives to all who trust in Him.

To receive and retain these great riches, you have to be willing to walk away from some things that appear to be good. You may have to walk away from opportunities that would lead to more success and more glory on earth. But those things are not as grand as they seem. They are only temporary.

The riches that the Lord has stored up for you are far more and far better. He gives them to you now in abundance through His Word and Sacraments, and through them, He prepares you for the celebration to come when you join Him in great feasting and rejoicing in His glorious kingdom.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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