

The Second Sunday after Trinity – Pr. Faugstad sermon
St. Luke 14:16-24: “Come, for Everything Is Now Ready.”
June 17/18, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Lord God, heavenly Father, we give thanks to You, that through Your holy Word You have called us to Your great supper, and we beseech You: Enliven our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that we may not hear Your Word without fruit, but that we may prepare ourselves rightly for Your kingdom, and not allow ourselves to be hindered by any worldly [temptations or cares]; through Your beloved Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, p. 158)

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

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)

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

In Christ Jesus, who fills the hungry with good things, but who sends the self-secure away empty, dear fellow redeemed:

“I’d like to throw a party at our house soon, and you are invited! I just need a little bit of help from you to make it happen. I’m going to need about ten people to come early to clean the house and five more to get the yard set up. I’ll need a few of you to decorate, make things look nice. Then I’m going to need a bunch of you to work on the main dish and the rest of you to bring side dishes and desserts. And of course we will need you to help clean up afterward. ‘What will I be doing?’ you ask. Don’t worry, I’ll be at the party on time. It’s going to be great!”

How many people do you suppose will come to my party? I expect there would be a lot of excuses, a lot of conflicts in the schedule. Who wants to go to a party where they have to do all the work? We attend parties such as graduation open houses and wedding receptions to

celebrate and have fun. We look forward to the good food and the good company. It is a privilege to be invited to attend.

In the same way, it was a tremendous honor to be invited to attend the party that Jesus speaks about in today's parable. This was no backyard barbeque, no small gathering of relatives or friends. This was "*a great banquet*" that the guests had been informed about far in advance. "*Many*" were invited. They knew this banquet was coming; it didn't catch them by surprise.

But when the master of the house sent his servant to tell those who were invited, "*Come, for everything is now ready,*" they started making excuses—not just some of them—all of them! Not one of them intended to come. What an insult to the host! You would be crushed if this happened to you. Then you would probably be angry. "All that work, and no one could trouble themselves to come?! Do I really mean so little to them?!"

That's how the master of the house reacted. He became "*very angry*" and told his servant to invite anyone he found in the city, "*the poor and crippled and blind and lame,*" and the strangers way out in the country. The honored guests who were first invited lost their place to the dishonored and the downtrodden. And the master's house was filled, and the great banquet was enjoyed by many.

Jesus spoke this parable to teach how the invitation to salvation came first to the Israelites, the chosen people of God. They should have known this salvation was coming because they had the Old Testament Scriptures which clearly pointed to the promised Messiah. But the devil tempted them to give attention to other things. He got them to focus not on the commands and promises of God, but on making and keeping their own self-righteous laws. These were too busy with their possessions, their work, and their families to listen to the Messiah when He came. They did not follow Jesus their Savior, but rejected Him.

So God turned His merciful help to the Gentiles. These were the dishonorable and downtrodden ones who did not have the Scriptures or live according to God's holy law. They were not worthy to receive an invitation to salvation, but God graciously extended it to them. Jesus made this clear when He said just before His ascension into heaven, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*" (Mat. 28:19). And the apostle Paul wrote by inspiration that God "*desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1Ti. 2:4).

But "*all nations*" have not been converted to the Lord, and "*all people*" have not come to the knowledge of the truth. Why is that? Why does anyone reject the summons to God's great banquet of salvation? It is because so many think they have better things to do with their time. Some people focus on their fields, their possessions in this life, building up more and more, better and nicer things. Some focus on their work, getting more done, making progress, building a legacy. And some focus on their family and friends, enjoying new experiences together, making memories, having fun.

All of those things can seem more important than the saving Word of God. We typically don't go to the Word of God when we want to make money, when we want to move up in our job, when we want to have fun. Part of this is because of our misunderstanding about where all good things come from—they come from God who gives us our daily bread. And part of it

comes from our own sinfulness, our stubborn tendency to overlook the best things in favor of the lesser things.

You wouldn't miss your own child's graduation party, but missing the great banquet of salvation is infinitely more serious. God doesn't have our whole heart, soul, and mind until nothing matters more to us than His holy Word. The "field" can wait, the "five yoke of oxen" can be examined later, spouse and family must be led to the banquet and not away from it. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,"* said Jesus, *"and all these things—all these earthly blessings—will be added to you"* (Mat. 6:33).

"[S]eek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"—tell me why this priority is not possible, and I will sympathize with you. All of us think we have better things to do than to occupy our heart, soul, and mind with *"the kingdom of God and his righteousness."* All of us have excuses, and they can sound pretty good and reasonable: "I am exhausted. I don't have time to read the Bible or pray." "We are on the go constantly! It just isn't possible to have devotions at the dinner table or the bedside." "I don't feel qualified to have devotions with my family. What if I can't answer their questions? What if I tell them something wrong?"

As reasonable as these excuses sound, they are all bad excuses. I'm especially talking to Christian fathers. It is our job to make sure our families are trained in the Word. It is our job to spend ourselves and sacrifice ourselves, even when we don't feel like we have anything left to give. God tells us to do this. Ephesians 6:4 says, *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* It is not first of all the mother's job or the church's job. It is our job as fathers, whom God the Father has placed on this earth to be examples of His love and care for His dear children.

But here's the important point, here's the thing to remember: not one of us has to come up with the plan for the banquet; not one of us has to prepare the food. All of that is done. God the Father is the Master of the House, and His only Son is the Food, and this Food is enjoyed by all who are brought to faith by the Holy Spirit's invitation.

This is not a party (like the one I am planning) where the people who are invited do all the work. This is a party where all the work is done—the table is set, the food is prepared, your spot is reserved, everything is ready. All of this was done by Jesus for you. He won your place at God's table by setting aside His glory to suffer and die for you.

Your excuses for doing what you knew you shouldn't and for not doing what you knew you should—Jesus took them on Himself. He accepted these excuses, not as valid reasons for acting the way you did, but as what they are, violations of God's holy law and stains on His perfect creation of you. He took the blame for all of them.

Jesus offered no excuses to set aside His work of suffering and dying for you. He willingly went in your place, suffering the eternal anger of God, so that you would have *"redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of [your] trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Eph. 1:7). God does not say, "You missed your chance! The door to the banquet hall is shut! Go away!" He says and keeps saying to you, **"Come, for Everything Is Now Ready."**

That is often what I say after the Lord's Supper has been prepared. Christ's Words of Institution have been spoken, we sing the Agnus Dei, "O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us," and you are summoned to the great banquet of salvation. Jesus is here for you. He is here to feed you with His holy body and blood. He is here to cleanse your heart and mind and give you a clear conscience. He is here to strengthen you for the work He has called you to do. So I say to all who have examined themselves—confessing their sin and their trust in Jesus and His Word—**"Come, for Everything Is Now Ready."**

You haven't had to do anything. God has prepared this banquet for you, His guest. Many are invited to this banquet, but they make excuses for why they cannot come. Those who do come when they are summoned are the ones who are done making excuses. These are the ones who recognize that they don't deserve to be at the banquet, and that they have nothing to offer God that could ever compare with what He gives them.

God made no mistake when He invited you to this banquet. No matter how spiritually *"poor and crippled and blind and lame"* you have been, no matter how far down the highway of this sinful world you have gone, there is a place for you in the Lord's kingdom. Listening to His Word, faithfully partaking of His Sacraments, you are tasting the rich food of His banquet.

And the foretaste that you enjoy right now with the Christian friends who sit beside you in the pews and kneel or stand beside you at the Communion rail—this delicious feast you will enjoy in all its fullness in the great banquet hall of your heavenly Father's house.

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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