

In Nomine Iesu

The Second Sunday after Holy Trinity 2022

The feast that satisfies all our needs – Luke 14:16-24

“Then He said to him, ‘A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, “Come, for all things are now ready.” But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.” And another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.” Still another said, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.” And the servant said, “Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.” Then the master said to the servant, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.””

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Church’s only Savior and Lord. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

In the parable we hear Jesus compare the kingdom of God to a great banquet prepared by God for His people. Those He originally invited did not want to come. So He invited others. He insisted that His house be filled with guests. Today let us consider the guests, the invitation, and the nature of the Supper to which God has invited us.

I

The value of this banquet is greater than that of anything else that requires our time and attention in life. But many things are important in life. Work is important and necessary. Family is even more important. These demand our time and, in the case of family, our love also. However, there is no substitute for what God offers us in His kingdom.

The kingdom of God in the parable is God’s **kingdom of grace** on earth, in which He calls, gathers, guides, and safeguards us on our way to heaven, the **kingdom of glory**. These two kingdoms, of grace and of glory, are simply another way of saying the church militant and the church triumphant. Together they are the one holy Christian Church, the part which remains here, awaiting heaven, and the part which is already triumphant in heaven. All are gathered at this great Supper, we who partake of it here in faith, and they who see and hear the Host and Provider with their own eyes and ears.

The supper in Jesus’ parable is described in today’s Old Testament lesson also. “And on this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well-refined.” God does not offer us leftovers. He doesn’t give us a little money and send us to where the food is at best mediocre. No, He invites us into His own home and there, together with the whole family of God, feeds us with the best of everything, including the very finest of wines to go with it. The meal is prepared masterfully. No expense is spared.

The Old Testament lesson goes on: “He will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; and the reproach of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.” This is not just any kind of food. It is food that gives eternal life. You see, God does not

feed His people merely with expensive food. No, with this banquet He takes away their sins. He destroys death and sorrow. This banquet is nothing other than the wedding feast of the Lamb. Here there is no death, no sorrow, no guilt or shame, no regret. But while this banquet is a picture of heaven, it is a feast that begins right here on earth where we live. In other words, the gateway to heaven is on earth. The food that we eat that gives us eternal life is not given out in heaven. It is given here. It is given at the supper that we eat in the midst of our cares and concerns about family, work, school, and difficult people. In the eating and the drinking of the Supper we call the Lord's God prepares us for the feast that is to come and at the same time to live our lives as His children here, and so take care of our family, work, school, and everything else we do in this life.

Accepting the invitation to the supper is accepting God's invitation to come to the place where His people gather in Jesus' name to receive what He gives. Jesus has committed Himself to His people - as a shepherd to his sheep, promising to guide and guard, to feed and lead them into the green pastures of heaven. To His church He promised, "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) To His church He gives out the bread of life, the bread that gives life eternal.

The banquet is here. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:32-35) Jesus alone can give life. He is the bread of life. Those who come to Him are not left hungry. He satisfies their deepest need.

II

What is your deepest need? When job or family keep you from coming to church on a Sunday morning, what remains your deepest and most pressing need? I'm not asking you what you want. I'm asking you what you need. Do you think that when the time comes for you to leave this world you will regret that you spent too much time in God's house listening to the gospel? Will you wish you hadn't gone to the Lord's Supper so often? Will you regret hearing that you were forgiven too many times?

What is truly valuable? Again, I'm not asking you what you want, but what you need. Consider the guests invited to the banquet Jesus described in today's Gospel. We won't be able to appreciate the value of the feast He offers until we take a closer look at who's invited. When the despisers of the supper gave excuses they revealed their values. In response the master of the house said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind." These are the kinds of people who are invited to the supper.

Are you poor? Are you maimed? Are you lame? Are you blind? Or are you rich, having everything you need? Perhaps you've got job, family, home, status, and all the comfort you want. But can you stand before God - because you will stand before Him some day! - and tell Him that you have loved as He commands you to love and have lived as He requires you to live? Or will you see the faces of all those you have hurt, and must admit in sorrow that you have failed God and failed your neighbors, that is, your spouse, your children, your parents, your employer, your co-workers, your employees.?

You see, dear friends, the invitation goes out to those who have failed. They have lost jobs because of their own fault or by no fault of their own. They have angered and hurt others because of their sinful pride. They have made and broken promises to those who

are near and dear to them. They started out in life with high hopes, only to see all their hopes slipping away from them. They began with great and noble intentions, only to end up living life in service to their appetites and weaknesses. They tried to be everything they they could be, everything they should be, and still they feel an emptiness within, a hunger for something that truly satisfies. They hunger for God's forgiveness.

If you are such a one, one of the poor and maimed, lame and blind, this is the place for you. This is where Jesus invites you to come. Here He gives you food for your soul that will make you truly healthy, will give you lasting health and vigor, and will open your eyes to see the truth by which you will be forever blessed. You belong here in Christ's church, because **He invited you**. He invited you to enter into His kingdom of grace here on earth, for it is here that you will find the way to the **kingdom of glory** in heaven.

Getting a better job, more time with the family, and a still more comfortable home will not take away your sins. More success and security in life will not give you assurance that God loves you and smiles on you, that He is with you in this life, and leading you onward to life everlasting. You need the great supper to which He invites you.

The forgiveness of sins that you hear pronounced in this place is the very forgiveness God intends for all His children. It is not just the pious sentiment of the pastor or the hoping against hope of the one who desires forgiveness. No, Jesus Christ bought this forgiveness with His own life and death. He loved when we hated. He obeyed when we refused. When we ran after the concerns of this life with no concern for eternal life He gave His life to the task of living as we should, taking our sins upon Himself, and so making us truly God's people. This is who forgives us, who proclaims us righteous, and who feeds us with His own body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar.

We come here to this place to be with Jesus, to dine with Jesus, who satisfies our true needs. He feeds us so that our hunger is taken away. He gives us to drink so that we are not thirsty. He welcomes us to His Father's banquet. And everyone whom He invites may come. All are truly welcome. They belong, because He included them. Those who come to hear His Gospel, eat and drink of His sacrament receive what He gives them, the eternal life He alone can give. This is why in confirmation, we promise that we will be faithful in the use of the means of grace, faithful in abiding at the table of our Lord. In this we are not promising **to do God a favor**. No, we are promising to return to this banquet and **receive God's favor**, given us in Christ our Lord, to abide in the peace of sins forgiven, the joy of having as our own God's pure, life-giving love. In this banquet we gain also the confidence that God will surely provide us with everything we need in life, our jobs, our businesses, our homes, every other need of life.

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Come to the banquet that God's faithful Son has prepared for us, and He Himself serves us. Come, because here the poor and maimed find wealth and health, the blind and lame sight and strength. This is our refuge in the midst of the world's swirling madness. Here God our King gently rules our hearts and minds with forgiveness, love, and mercy. This humble house dedicated to the dispensing of word and sacrament is the kingdom of God on earth and therefore also the gate to heaven, the **kingdom of glory**. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria