

The Second Sunday after Trinity | St. Luke 14:16-24
June 14, 2015 | Parkland Evangelical Lutheran Church

In Nomine Iesu

+ + +

O God, who in Your blessed Son prepared for us a rich feast and invite us day by day to partake of Your bounties: Grant that neither the distractions of business nor the allurements of pleasure may cause us to turn a deaf ear to Your call, nor to neglect Your so great salvation, which You have given us in the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Parish Prayers*, p. 109)

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

The sermon text for this morning 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. (Jn. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who leads His bride the Church into the banquet hall of heaven, dear fellow redeemed:

A man began to show interest in another man's wife. She did not realize his intentions and considered him just a good friend. They shared jokes and gave each other compliments. But her husband saw this as more than "harmless flirting," and noticed the other man getting bolder in his advances, even asking his wife out to dinner! How should the husband respond? Ignore it and hope it would go away? Forbid her from talking with the other man? Confront the man and tell him to back off? This husband was jealous.

Was his jealousy justified? Maybe he should trust his wife no matter what. But what if she had gotten herself into a dangerous situation without realizing it? Should a husband let someone step in and try to tempt away his wife? It is true that there is a sinful jealousy, like the man who doesn't allow his wife to talk with other men, or the wife who constantly accuses her husband of infidelity without any shred of evidence. But there is a good kind of jealousy too, the kind

that causes one to fight for something – jealousy for a healthy marriage; jealousy for pure doctrine; jealousy for the truth.

This is not the way we often think of jealousy, but it is employed in this way in the Bible. God Himself is described in many places as jealous, and we know that He does not and cannot sin. It is true that our God is a jealous God. And this is good news for you and me, because **The LORD Is Jealous for You and All Sinners.**

I

One spouse or another may not be sure if their jealousy is sinful and baseless or righteous and well-placed. Maybe nothing is going on; maybe something is. But the LORD is never wrong. He always sees things the way that they are. He knows hearts. He knows where a person's affections lie. Because He is holy, it is right for Him to demand our allegiance. It would not make any sense for the perfect Creator to follow the lead of sinful creatures. Of course it must be the other way around. As our Creator, He deserves our fear, love, and trust above all things. This is His very first Commandment: "You shall have no other gods."

The First Commandment is at the heart of the parable in today's Gospel lesson. Jesus describes a great banquet to which many were invited. No one was caught by surprise when the banquet was ready. They had all received their invitations in advance, just as we might receive an invitation to a wedding weeks or even months before it takes place. But those who were invited showed how little they thought of the banquet. One stayed away for the sake of possessions, another for work, another for family. All these things qualify as the gods that the First Commandment warns about.

Regarding possessions Jesus says, "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*" (Mt. 6:19-20). Regarding work He told Martha: "*[Y]ou are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is [needful]*" (Lk. 10:41-42), that is, the Word of God. And regarding family, "*Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*" (Mt. 10:37).

This is why the master of the house—who represents God the Father—"became angry" when His invitation was rejected. The LORD deserves all honor and glory. He is jealous for it. Passage after passage in the Old Testament teaches this:

- After explaining the First Commandment, the LORD said, "*I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing [mercy] to thousands of those who love me and keep My commandments*" (Ex. 20:5-6; Deut. 5:9-10).
- Moses told the Israelites that the very name of the LORD is "Jealous" (Ex. 34:14), and at another time described the LORD as "*a consuming fire, a jealous God*" (Deut. 4:24).
- Isaiah quotes the LORD as saying, "*I am the LORD; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to carved idols*" (Is. 42:8; also Deut. 6:15, 32:21, Jos. 24:19, Nah. 1:2).

But the jealousy of the LORD is more than the demand to worship Him alone. It is also His dedication and love and devotion toward His people.

- The LORD said through the prophet Ezekiel, *"I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for My holy name"* (39:25).
- The prophet Joel writes that *"the LORD became jealous for His land and had pity on His people"* (2:18).
- And God spoke through Zechariah, *"I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion.... I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath"* (1:14, 8:2).

The LORD was jealous for His people. This meant that He was thoroughly committed to them. He was patient with them. He, the all-powerful God, fought for them. But that was not the end of His jealousy; He was even ready to die for them. Now you and I might be willing to sacrifice ourselves and take a bullet for a loved one or another worthy person. But would we die for a terrible criminal, a liar and a scoundrel? *"[P]erhaps for a good person one would dare even to die,"* writes St. Paul, *"but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:7-8).

II

God sent His only Son to die for those who did not return His affections. You and I were the ones flirting with the enticements of the world. We were the ones who snuck out to be with other lovers, who tried to hide our activities from the one who truly loved us. The LORD would be right to walk away from us, to divorce Himself from us. He would be right never to speak to us again. But instead, *"Christ died for us."* Christ is the banquet. He is the Bread of Life, through whom we have salvation. If we do not sit down by faith at this banquet, we will not be saved.

God desires that all join Him at this feast. First, He invited the Jews who diligently studied His Word, those who would have been viewed as the *"holy people"* of Israel. But these are the ones in the parable who had excuses. They thought they could skip the banquet of Christ's salvation and still be saved by their own efforts. So the master sent his servant to *"bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame,"* to bring in the tax collectors, the prostitutes, and sinners—Jews who had grossly departed from the law of God. Still there was room.

Then *"Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in,"* said the master, *"that my house may be filled."* There was even room for the Gentiles, the pagan peoples, the ungodly nations. None were excluded; the whole world would hear the salvation accomplished by Jesus. But this is nothing for us Christians who come from a predominately Gentile background to hold over the heads of the Jews. We should not be glad that so many of them have rejected Jesus. We should not be happy for their misfortunes. St. Paul told the Romans that part of the reason salvation came to the Gentiles was *"to make Israel jealous"* (11:11), to make them desire again to have that special relationship of God with His people, the Christ with His bride.

And there is a proper jealousy that we, too, should have with regard to God. We should be jealous not to let our relationship weaken as far as we are concerned. We should faithfully hear the LORD's Word and partake of His Sacraments. We should repent of our unfaithfulness in chasing after the things of this world. There is an account in the book of Numbers about Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, who zealously destroyed one who brought evil to Israel. The LORD said, *"Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the*

people of Israel, in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in My jealousy” (25:11).

Like Phinehas we are also confronted by a sinful culture in which the name of God is blasphemed, and every god is worshipped except the true God. We should pray for those around us that they are not consumed by the anger and wrath of God. And we should also faithfully confess His Word, so that even those who would harm us, will hear of the hope that we have. Following the LORD in faith means walking away from some of the things we love, including some things that seem good to us.

But what we receive in Christ is far better than anything we may leave behind. Our Savior did “fear, love, and trust in God above all things,” obeying Him all the way to death on the cross. We are admitted to the LORD’s banquet dressed not in our own righteousness, but in the righteousness of Jesus. By faith in Him, there will be a place for you at the heavenly table.

You do not have to wonder if the invitation has been extended to you to join the LORD at this banquet. You have heard the Gospel like so many sinners around the world throughout history, and by the Holy Spirit’s powerful work, you have been brought to faith in Jesus. The LORD did not have to do this for you, but **He Is Jealous for You and All Sinners**. He will fight for your soul, because He loves you too much not to. And even if your commitment toward Him is not always pure, His dedication to you is. Thanks be to God for His jealous attention! *Amen*.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto everlasting life. Amen.

+ + +