

In Nomine Iesu

The Second Sunday after Trinity 2021 The Old becomes the New - 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 Jesus Christ, a light to the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel, dear fellow redeemed:

+++

Jesus commanded His church to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” and teach them to observe all things He commanded. Through the proclamation of the Gospel millions upon millions of people were added to the kingdom of God. Jesus’ apostles were truly God’s instruments in establishing the church of the New Testament and the millennium of His grace we are now in.

In today’s Gospel Jesus speaks of the transition from Old Testament to New, from the era of God’s chosen nation Israel to that of all the nations of the earth. In doing this God does not reject the descendants of Abraham, not at all. But many of them rejected Him, in whom alone was salvation. Jesus’ parable is a warning to the people of His day, and a warning for us today.

I

Just prior to our text, Jesus challenged those who had assembled at the home of a prominent Pharisee. He pointed out how they vied for seats of honor at the table and also how the host had invited only those who could pay him back in some way. One of those Pharisees piped up and said: “Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 14:15) Whatever motivated this man to say what he did, he opened the door for Jesus to tell everyone there who is welcome to the feast in God’s kingdom of grace ... and when they are welcome!

Jesus did not let the opportunity pass. So He told a parable about a great banquet to which those who were first invited were not eager to come when told that all things were **now** ready. If they did not heed the invitation, Jesus explained, they would never find themselves at the great feast. But others, those not invited first, would gladly heed the invitation and come when they were called.

Jesus gave three examples of those who made excuses. Take note, none of them who made excuses said that they would not be interested in eating at the master's table. It was just that they were not ready to come when they were called. But the invitation made to them was not "come whenever you are ready, and everything will be ready for you." It was, "Come, for all things are now ready." The banquet God has prepared for sinners through the work of His Son is ready now. Sinners invited to feed upon Him who is the bread of life are called today. They are invited to receive forgiveness and life in His name today ... now.

Many in Jesus' day were satisfied with life. They were uninterested in what He had to offer. The Pharisees especially considered themselves deserving of the eternal feast. But Jesus repeatedly called them to repentance, pointing out their sin so that they could see their lost condition. What was the problem with them? We can't say the Pharisees were not serious about their religion. That is not true. No, their reason for being uninterested in Jesus was rooted in their self-righteous notions of themselves. In their estimation, they were better than most of the people around them. So, they reasoned, God would accept them at the heavenly feast. They would heed His call to come when, in the course of their busy and quite good lives, they could see that the time was right. They would decide when now meant **NOW**.

In the parable we are struck at how short-sighted are the excuses of the first invited to the banquet – one bought a field, another five yoke of oxen, and still another just got married. All of these things are part of life, important yes, but still just part of life, ordinary life here and now. How could they give such excuses in the face of so far-reaching an offer? Think about it. How foolish is it of us – not to say, impolite! - to refuse the gift the God gives in Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for the very sins that condemn us? He came so that we might have life now, before death, our death, takes away the opportunity, and separates us from God forever.

From the time of Abraham, God had chosen Israel as the nation invited to be first to His everlasting banquet, a banquet that although everlasting and heavenly, never the less begins in the here and now. Many in Israel believed. Mary and Joseph are two of best examples. They believed the invitation, and received God's blessings through His Son. At times in Israel's history many rebelled; and God would have to call them back. But as time went on fewer and fewer repented, that is, turned to promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and believed. The time of grace for Israel was passing. When Christ, the Glory of Israel and promised Savior of the world, finally came, the millennium of the Gentiles was dawning.

II

Jesus points this out in today's Gospel: "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." The salvation Jesus would win by His suffering and death would be for all nations, not just Jews. No one would be excluded. Even though Jesus made the meaning of today's Gospel clear in the Great Commission, we should not conclude that God's favor toward the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has ended. After all, the promise made to Abraham was, from the beginning, intended for all people and to be preached to every nation. For the sake of His beloved Son, the Father's great love is the same toward Jew and Gentile alike, as the Scriptures say many times.

But this lesson from the millennium of Israel should not be lost on us who belong to the millennium of the Gentiles. We read in Revelation a description of the era in which we now live. The Apostle John said: “I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit, holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him in the bottomless pit and locked and sealed it over him to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.” (Revelation 20:1-3)

The number “a thousand” in this passage is a figurative number, as it is throughout the Old Testament. The millennium represents God’s now, His perfect time for the Gentile nations to hear the good news of salvation. A thousand is a big number, but in time even big numbers are reached. Seventy, eighty or ninety seem like so many years when one is young, but they come. In light of today’s Gospel the question we must ask ourselves is this: Is the time of God’s gracious calling coming to an end for us also? Do we not see how Satan deceives so many today about Christ, just as he deceived so many in Jesus’ day. Do we not find many in our day who make excuses not to come and receive now what God has prepared?

Dear friends in Christ, think what God offers: forgiveness, life and salvation, free, all for the sake of Jesus, who offered Himself as a sacrifice for us all. He lived the perfect life God requires us to live. He sacrificed His perfect life, dying in the place of all of us sinners. He invites all to believe He is the Savior who has redeemed us completely. This is the invitation. This is the promise.

But Satan deceives many into thinking they don’t need what Jesus offers, that their own goodness is good enough to gain them a place at the eternal feast or that there is plenty of time to deliberate and delay. So, they refuse the banquet table God has prepared for them. But the lesson is clear. History will repeat itself. As Jesus ended the parable, so it applies to all who make excuses today: “For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.” Make no mistake, the invitation is urgent: “Come, for all things are now ready.”

+++

At dinner in the Pharisee’s house Jesus was among those who were sure they were heeding the call of God, just on their own terms. They fully expected to be present at the eternal banquet in heaven. But, dear friends, the heavenly feast is now. When you hear the word of forgiveness spoken in Jesus’ name, the feast is being served. You are in attendance. Stay at the table. Invite others. Times of famine are coming, when the word of God’s grace in Christ will not be heard anymore.

So, come, dear fellow redeemed. Receive what God has prepared for you. Receive the Bread of Life now. Come, for all things are now ready. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria