Trinity 2 | St. Luke 14:16-24 | #539-24

& Graduation of Isabella Bayne, Elijah Enstad, Jaden Leskajan, Gray Sinding, Joshua Cer Cung

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As follows 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)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; ***sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth****. Amen.* (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen**.

Dear fellow redeemed, and on this special day,

especially our graduates, Isabella, Elijah, Jaden, Gray, and Joshua,

Normally, I prefer to re-read part of our Gospel text in order to remind us of certain elements of the text.

But not today.

Today, I want you to think back on the parable and consider what stuck out to you.

Considering that Jesus' parables are written to teach us some spiritual reality,

what lesson is it that you were to learn from this parable of the generous Lord and invited guests?

As there were 2 groups of recipients of the invitation in the parable, there are 2 lessons for our learning,

and which lesson you learn, depends on which of the 2 groups you consider yourself to be in.

So… when you heard the parable read, with which group of people did you see yourself?

Were you with the ones who had been invited originally?

Or were you one of the **poor and crippled and blind and lame**?

And if you didn't place yourself with either, then ask yourself now, because there is no "other" group.

It's not a fun choice, isn't it?

Because neither one of these groups really sounds desirable.

The first group seems to have been faring well by earthly standards.

They thought they could afford both land and cattle without first seeing or testing them.

And the last fellow seems to really appreciate spending time with his new wife.

It seems that they were quite satisfied with their blessings and didn't need any gifts from the master.

But it's pretty clear that this is not the group you want to be in because the master gets angry at them.

And Jesus reports at the end that **they shall not taste** His **banquet**.

But who wants to be classified as **poor and crippled and blind and lame** on **streets and highways**?

Of course, this wouldn't be describing your economic/physical state, but your spiritual state.

Who wants to consider themselves spiritually weak and handicapped and beggarly?

Then again, whether you want these labels or not, some of us struggle with them,

seeing them as their only identity, and so struggle with despair.
In reality, these are the two options.
Do you want to be the spiritually self-sufficient ones,
who think they already have all the need—why bother with going to receive the banquet of the Lord?
Or do you want to be the spiritually needy ones,
who are all-too-thankful for this banquet that they had no right to receive?
…
Well, the answer is pretty clear which one the Lord would have you be, isn't it?

And really, does it matter which one you <u>want</u> to be?
Isn't it more important to know which one you really <u>are</u>?

As Jesus spoke this parable, He was speaking to a group of Pharisees who thought they had it together.
They studied Scripture seriously, believing—correctly—that it is the Word of God.
But unfortunately, regardless of their serious study of the Scriptures, they really misunderstood them.
They saw God's Word primarily as a rule book, as a "how to DIY" - "Do It Yourself" help book.
They believed that by following God's Law, they would earn His favor and so be saved.
And, for the most part, they thought that they were doing a pretty decent job.
I doubt that many would have said they were perfect, but they thought they were good <u>enough</u>,
at least <u>better</u> than most people that they passed on the streets.

And that is a problem. And it isn't just their problem, it's our problem, too.
How natural is it think that you are "okay."
That you're a good person, or at least a decent person, or at least not a bad person?
And it's pretty easy to think that, especially if you compare yourself to other, less savory people.

But here's the thing:
God's Law doesn't allow for "good enough" or "decent," or "not bad", or "better than others".
His Law says, **Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy**.
Those Pharisees sitting at the table with Jesus may not have <u>wanted</u> to consider themselves
as the original group who were invited first, but they were.
They were satisfied with their own goodness, as though they did need anything from the Lord.
But the Lord had prepared everything for the banquet already,
there was nothing anyone else had to do, nothing anyone else could do. He had done it all.
And that is the truth of your salvation as well.
When Christ died on the cross…when He shed His holy blood, He completed your salvation for you.
There is nothing you need to do… nothing you can do to help your salvation.
Those who are satisfied with themselves and refuse His invitation,
refuse to be served by the Lord, and therefore refuse His forgiveness and comfort in this life
and the joy of communing with Him at His banquet in eternal life.

So if we do not want to be left out, then we are to consider ourselves among the other group,
the spiritually **poor and crippled and blind and lame**.
It kills our pride to be labeled such, but REALLY that is a good thing… a great thing… the best thing.
Then you are free to accept everything that your Lord has done for you.
Then you are able to hear His excitement in inviting His guests to His **great banquet**.

Then you can hear Him say to you through His servants, '**Come, for everything is now ready**.'
Then you can see His eagerness that you come to fill His banquet hall as He says,
'**Go out quickly… and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.**'
And when yet there is room, He commands still more:
'**Go … and <u>compel</u> people to come in, that My house may be filled**.'

This is not the sound of a half-hearted, stingy, Host, but one that loves to give freely of His bounty.
If you can confess honestly, as we were prompted to at the beginning of the service,
that you have strayed from His ways like lost sheep —
then you can honestly also say you are one of those **in the streets and lanes of the city**,
or **out in the highways and hedges**…
If you truly confess that you have **followed the devices and desires of your heart**
and offended God's Law in many ways, by thought, word and deed,
then you can also relate to being **crippled**, **blind**, and **lame** as the *sinful desires of your heart*
have not only handicapped you, but corrupted you so completely
that He even needs to **compel** you to come and receive His forgiveness and grace.
It is just as we confess in from the 3rd Article, that *I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength*
believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit calls my be the gospel…

And do not take this thought lightly—that the Lord needs to compel you to receive His gifts,
to give you faith to believe in Jesus' death and resurrection, and keep you faithful till your end,
for the devil and your own flesh would cripple you, and blind you from seeing His love and mercy.
And it is with heavy heart, that I share with you some heavy news, of just such a nature.
After decades of struggling with mental illness, severe depression, anxiety, and other mental illness,
and recently, dealing with insomnia which also weakens ones' mental stability and resiliency,
yesterday afternoon, Ginie Romnes was pronounced dead after a self-inflicted wound.

Obviously, this is very traumatic for her family,
and while there are, no doubt many questions that instantly come to mind,
realize that what is needed right now is care and concern and prayers for her husband James
and her children Emily and Bryan as they now struggle, wrestle, and mourn.

If the devil had his way, he would never let us hear one word of comfort, one word of forgiveness,
one word of Jesus' death and resurrection for you.
He would have you live in crippling anxiety all the time,
in constant laming depression and blinding despair of any hope.
He would keep us poor sinners, from hearing the Lord's Gospel, that Your sins are forgiven in Christ
and have you completely forget your status as His baptized child - washed and holy.
But remember that the devil is a deceiver.
Jesus Himself has said about the devil: **He is a liar and a murderer from the beginning,**
and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.
When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.John 8:44

And so the Lord gives us a test today.
He gives us an opportunity to succeed and to exercise the gift of faith He has given and
that only He can strengthen in us.

Where will we find our comfort in this and all situations?

…

But it is not as if, dear fellow redeemed, that you are unprepared for such a test.
Already this year, we were shocked when we heard of Mr. Trapp's death,
when just the week before he had been in class teaching, albeit sick and weakened.
At his funeral we meditated on the 23rd Psalm, a favorite of his, trusting Jesus as our Good Shepherd,
to restore and to lead us in His righteousness.
So graduates, and for you taking notes: This is the answer to each and every such test from God,
that we fear, love, and trust in Him above all things, and refuse the lies of the devil and our flesh.

This year our graduates commendably selected as their class verse, the 3rd verse of Psalm 23.
He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Psalm 23:3
How appropriate that you chose the verse that recognizes the need for our souls to be restored by Him.
Especially in times of spiritual distress, our old sinful nature shows us the reality of our situation,
that, while we live on this side of heaven, we are ever spiritually **poor**, **crippled**, **blind**, and **lame**.
The burdens you carry, both of your own sins and the sins of others, stain & weigh down your heart.
You need the Lord's forgiveness and salvation… you need Jesus' blood to cleanse you
and your conscience from all sin and to restore spiritual life to you day after day.
It is good simply to acknowledge this fact and so always to be open to the Lord's invitation,
always expecting his servants to lead you to Christ and to the Lord's gracious banquet,
always eagerly longing for and listening to His proclamation — Your sins are forgiven in Jesus.
This is the legacy that Mr. Trapp has left to us, the test that he passed by God's grace alone.

But consider, too, the outcome of the poor, crippled, blind, and lame, in Jesus' parable.
They are truly blessed, banqueting with their Lord who has prepared and provided all things for them.
He graciously and eagerly calls you to Himself with all seriousness and joy.

Graduates, You have heard these things taught throughout you time here - in religion class & in chapel.
The Lord continue to be with you so that you continue to grow in the grace and knowledge
of your Lord, Jesus Christ.

And God grant all us beggars to be restored, led, and fed here in this life
and feasting with the Lord in eternity.

In Jesus' name. **Amen**.

Soli Deo Gloria