

Luke 14:16–24 (Trinity II)  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
June 26, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

In Jesus Christ, Heaven and earth are united. God dwells with man, and the man Christ Jesus sits upon God's throne. There is one city of God, in heaven and on earth. There is one Temple, the body of Jesus Christ. There is one Kingdom of God, and we children of God who dwell on the earth are citizens of that Kingdom above. There is one banquet, an eternal banquet that is happening right now. There is one Lord, one Temple, one Kingdom, one banquet, which unites Heaven and Earth, time and eternity. This morning we consider the eternal blessings of God that break into time, a foretaste of the feast to come at the wedding supper of the Lamb. We learn that whoever desires to feast in eternity must recognize his hunger here. Whoever wants a seat at the banquet in eternity must not reject the invitation extended even now in time. In Jesus Christ, Heaven and Earth are united, time and eternity are one. Eternity has broken into time and the eternal banquet has already begun. Blessed are you who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9)!

One of those who was eating with Jesus said to Him: "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God!" Jesus responds with the parable in our Gospel Lesson this morning. What Jesus is saying is that many are called into God's Kingdom, but few are chosen. Many are invited to the eternal banquet of God's Kingdom, but few actually follow up on the invitation. Blessed are those who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God, but the way is actually quite narrow and many will not pass through it. Many will find some excuse to reject the Kingdom of God in time, with the result that they will not enter God's Kingdom in eternity.

Many will think there is something better to do with their time than feast at God's banquet right now, and so they will miss out on that great banquet in the new heavens and the new earth.

There are manifold excuses for not accepting the invitation to God's Feast, but only one reason behind all of them, and that reason is a previous commitment. In the examples Jesus uses, the people are too concerned with worldly things to feel the need for anything transcendent. When you hear the examples Jesus gives, you can see a progression of importance. The one person recently purchased a field and had to go out and see it. The next person bought five yoke of oxen and had to go examine them. The final man was recently married, with all the business that entails. Property, animals, family—different levels of priority, but the same reason for skipping out on the banquet. All three examples show a preoccupation with things of this life instead of with the life to come. Many don't realize the significance of this eternal feast, so they dedicate their entire lives to what is fleeting and transitory.

So who and what is Jesus talking about with this message? In the first place, Jesus is referring to the events of salvation history occurring at the time. God is the man who organized the banquet of eternal life and invited many. When it came time to enter God's Kingdom, He sent His servants, the prophets, to announce: "Come, for everything is now ready." Finally, God sent His only-begotten Son. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, the door is now open to enter the feast. The long awaited day is here! And then come the excuses. Jesus came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. Jesus came as the Messiah of Israel, yet most of Israel rejected Him. The customs and traditions of the Pharisees were more dear to them than the God who created and redeemed them.

And so the master sent the servant to the streets and lanes of the city, to bring in the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Here Jesus is referring to the lowest in society—the

repentant tax collectors and prostitutes, the sick and disabled, those who had been possessed by demons, the half-breed Samaritans. All the downtrodden in the Gospel are included in this group, and it is these unexpected people who were most receptive of the Gospel. They had nothing on their own and nowhere else to turn than to our Lord Jesus Christ. The poor He has filled with good things and the rich He has sent empty away. Yet there was still room. So the master sends his servant to the highways and hedges to compel the people to come to the feast. God sent His messengers to the Gentiles to receive the promises rejected by Israel. And that has been the history of the church since Pentecost.

In the second place, Jesus is referring to the salvation history of our own lives. God invites everyone to His eternal banquet, which begins even now in time in the Church. God commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:29). Jesus says: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28). In the parallel account to our text, in the Gospel of Matthew, the King tells His servants: “Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.” The invitation is for all people. The message of repentance and faith is to be preached indiscriminately until the end of the world. All people, everywhere, and at all times are called to repent of their sins, believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and so enter the Kingdom of God to feast at our Lord’s eternal banquet, which begins now in the Church.

And then come the excuses. “I just bought some new property.” “I just bought some new animals.” “I just got married.” Today, those excuses might sound different. Some people don’t come to church because they prefer traveling, at least while they have the opportunity. Some neglect the Divine Service because of work or school obligations. Others because they consider the message boring or even offensive. Some won’t come to church because they are given the

false impression that Church is only for good people. Of course, that could not be further from the truth: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (Matt 9:12). Most won’t come to church out of pure apathy. They’d prefer to sleep in, or go out to brunch, or whatever it may be, and the root cause is because they don’t care either way about God’s Word or whether any of this is true. At most they might see Christianity, or any religion, as a crutch to comfort those near death, not the way of life eternal that begins right now.

The excuses are many, but the reason is always the same. So many people, including people in the church, have more regard for the cares of this world than for the things of God. Life in Christ and life in the body of Christ, the Church, take second place to creature comforts, work, family, and everything else. The cares of this life are so trivial in comparison to eternity, and yet they are the very things that prevent people from coming to God’s eternal banquet. Many are invited to the Feast, all are invited, but so few end up coming. There is room at the banquet, but there is no room in the hearts of those who sense no need to come. They feel they have more important, more pressing things to do, and so they end up missing the party, which is itself the punishment.

It is so tempting to despise the preaching of God’s Word, whether externally by neglecting the fellowship of the Church, or internally by only paying lip service to the things of God. By nature we are lazy and lukewarm. Our sinful nature wants to reject God’s invitation and the Devil tempts us to think we have better things to do or more important things to think about. But there is hope. If your conscience accuses you for neglecting the fellowship of God’s house, if your sins weigh heavy upon you and you realize you have been lazy and lukewarm concerning the things of God, there is hope. If you feel remorse for giving more regard to the things of this world rather than to the things of God, whether publicly or in the secret recesses of your heart,

there is hope. If you have been negligent in the faith and in service to others, there is hope. The servant returned to the master and said: “there is still room.” There is still room for those who repent of their sins and desire to live a new life. There is still room for those who realize what they are missing or what they have missed. It’s so easy to neglect the things of God, even if not publically, then privately in our hearts and minds. But there is still room at the Feast for those who realize their need. There is room for you at God’s eternal banquet, which begins here in time in the Church.

Every Sunday we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, which is the eternal marriage feast of the Lamb breaking into time. At this banquet, our Lord feeds us with His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The eternal God enters our world and comes to us in this specific way, giving us a foretaste in time of the eternal feast to come. Here Heaven and earth, time and eternity come together as we celebrate this heavenly banquet on earth. There is room at this banquet for all who are burdened by their sins, for all whose consciences accuse them. It is only in recognizing our unworthiness that we truly become worthy partakers of this meal. When we understand how we have neglected the invitation, the Holy Spirit leads us to repent of our sins and turn to Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom who still welcomes us to His reception. God the Father sends His messengers to you who are spiritually poor, crippled, blind, and lame and invites you to the feast, even as the Father is ready to welcome all people to His banquet. There is room for you at God’s table! Blessed are you who feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb, here in time and there in eternity!

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.