

Luke 14:15–24  
Trinity II  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
June 9, 2024

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,

Our Gospel Lesson this morning takes place at Sunday dinner, as it were. Jesus was eating at the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees. Jesus used the opportunity to teach the teachers of the Law about the true nature of the Sabbath by healing a man and so showing that the Sabbath is not meant to be a burden, but a space where the LORD takes our burdens upon Himself. The evening continues and Jesus teaches about humility in taking one's proper place at a wedding reception. He then explains the wisdom of inviting those who cannot repay—the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind—all in view of the wedding supper of the Lamb in the Kingdom of God: the resurrection of the just. One of those reclining at table with Jesus and the Pharisees blurted out: “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God!” To this statement Jesus responds with a parable, our Gospel text for today. In this parable, Jesus explains with a story about how it's not just those who *will* eat bread in the Kingdom of God; blessed, rather, are those who eat bread in the Kingdom of God right now. Most people think of Heaven as a distant and far away reality. But Jesus shows how the eternal Kingdom of God begins already right here and right now in the church.

Jesus says: “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.’” The man in this parable is God. God has prepared a great banquet and He has invited everybody. “On this mountain,” says the prophet Isaiah, “the LORD of hosts will make for all

peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.” The LORD is the master of the house. He has prepared a glorious feast for all people. And then He sent out His servants, His messengers, the prophets, to invite the Jewish people to the Kingdom of God. Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. He came first for the Jew. But His own people did not receive Him. They began to make excuses for not coming to the banquet.

At this Sabbath meal, Jesus was speaking directly to the Pharisees. They were teachers of God’s Word. They knew the promises of the coming Messiah. They knew the prophecies of the Old Testament and they saw those prophecies fulfilled before their very eyes in Jesus Christ. Their entire life was supposedly dedicated to the Kingdom of God. They say they want the Kingdom, but they don’t want God in it. They want a Kingdom of their own making, a Kingdom of this world. An earthly kingdom like that of David or Solomon. But Jesus’s Kingdom is not of this world, so the Pharisees reject it. They’d rather keep building the kingdom they’ve been working on, no matter how shaky the foundation is. Why give up everything to follow Jesus when you’ve spent your whole life working on something else?

The problem with the Pharisees here is the problem faced by so many in the outward fellowship of the church today. The problem is losing sight of eternal realities because of temporal distractions. Many people in the church think like this: “I know I’m saved. I know I’m going to Heaven. So now I need to focus on this life. Heaven and eternity seem so far away. I might as well spend the little time I have on this earth doing what I like.” Yes, even in the church many people think like this. It might be time to take a step back and reevaluate how your schedule is organized to see where your priorities lie. What do you do with your time? What’s the most important thing in your life? What do you spend your time focusing on? What do you live for? Many people live for themselves and their own pleasure. Many live simply to make more money

and acquire more things. Others live for their family, for their friends, or for their country. These things are not necessarily bad. But when they become the most important thing in your life, then they've taken the place of God. In fact, then they've become your gods, your idols. If you put the things of this world, no matter how important they are, before the LORD, then you'll lose everything. But if you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these other things will be added to you and you'll see them in the correct light.

Just look at the excuses everyone makes in Jesus's parable. The first said "I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused." Couldn't the field wait? This guy could have waited until the following week to go examine the field. He already bought the property! Why would he need to go see it immediately, especially with this other invitation? It's because this man doesn't consider how pressing it really is. He doesn't recognize the danger of putting the temporal before the spiritual. The field is at the forefront of his mind right now. The banquet is a distant, far-removed idea. He doesn't consider the joys that actually await Him in the Kingdom of God right now, along with the field he just purchased. Instead, he wants to glory in his new property, little knowing that in doing so He's throwing away the greatest opportunity of his life.

The same goes for the next gentleman, who purchased five yoke of oxen. He already purchased them. The oxen belonged to him. He could have waited to examine them. But this man doesn't recognize the danger of neglecting the eternal for the things of this world. And so he ends up missing out on the greatest invitation he could ever receive.

Another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." This excuse sounds the most pious of them all, yet the same thing is being said: "The Kingdom of God isn't as important to me as the good things God has given me." What a wonderful thing to have a spouse,

to have a family. What a beautiful gift of God! And yet, if these good gifts of God take the place of God Himself, if they take the place of God's Kingdom, then we lose not only the Kingdom of God but eventually all these good gifts of God as well.

The servant came and reported all these excuses to the master. Then the master of the house became angry. God is angered by your excuses. When God calls people to His feast, when He invites you to church every week and when He calls you to study His Word diligently, when He prepares a place at the Table for you and you call at the last minute with some lame excuse, God doesn't say: "That's ok, I understand." We might act that way with human invitations, and a gracious host will know that many circumstances can't be changed. Sometimes things come up and a person has to refuse an invitation. But an invitation to the things of God isn't just an invitation to some dinner party or even to a relative's wedding. The LORD is granting you new life. He became man and died and rose for you to offer you forgiveness of sins, eternal life that begins right here in time, salvation from your enemies and from eternal death. When that invitation is refused, God actually becomes angry. He doesn't have time for fooling around like that.

Instead He here calls you to take His invitation seriously. The wedding feast of God's Kingdom has already begun here in the Body of Christ, the Church. Don't neglect gathering together with the saints. Don't neglect the things of God for some stupid reason. Whatever you think is more important than the feast of God's Word and Sacraments, whatever temporal thing you're willing to neglect the Word of God for, that thing has become your idol. It might be rest, or family time, or traveling. Those will be the big temptations this Summer. When you go on vacation, remember it's not a vacation from church or from the Word of God. Find our nearest sister church. You'd be surprised at the beautiful connections you can make! And if we don't

have a sister church there, then go to a historical church in the city center. Even if you can't commune, you can still appreciate the history of Christianity in that place, or watch our service online, or gather for a family devotion. Some other reasons people might neglect church are more severe: indifference, or frustration with other people, or a complete absorption with the busyness of this world. But whatever temporal things are getting in the way of the eternal things God offers you at church, you need to start looking at those things from the right perspective. God wants the best for you and He gives you all good things. So don't give up the most important thing, your own salvation, because you're distracted by everything else. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all those other things will be added to you.

The people you would expect to receive the LORD's invitation with joy often reject the invitation. They take God's grace for granted, and so they fall from grace. This is the constant danger faced by those in the church. We begin to loathe this food the LORD is giving us and we long for something else, for the fleshpots of Egypt, for the things of this world. The master then sent out his servant to the streets and lanes of the city to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, the outcasts of society, the ones you would least expect to be invited to a royal banquet. When the good news of Jesus Christ is rejected by those you would expect to receive it, the church then goes to the outcasts. The Church of God ends up consisting of people you wouldn't suspect: sinners who have turned from their wicked ways to the life that God offers. The Pharisees reject the LORD, so the LORD goes to the prostitutes, tax collectors, adulterers, thieves, and the unclean Gentiles. They at least recognize their need for a savior, so they receive the invitation with joy. The Church is both the most open society in the world and the most exclusive society in the world. Anybody at all who repents of their sins and turns to their LORD and Savior Jesus Christ is welcome, but it's only in Jesus. There is no other way.

But there was still room at the banquet. Not all the seats had been filled. So the master tells the servant to go to the highways and hedges to compel people to come to the feast. This is the work of the church since the day of Pentecost. The church of God goes out into all the world compelling people into God's Kingdom. Not by force. Not by violence. To "compel" here is in the sense of urgently inviting, insisting out of a sense of duty, the way you would warn a dear friend or brother about an imminent danger or about an imminent blessing. Though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds (2 Cor 10:4). The Church compels not with the sword, but with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The Church urges others to the feast not in anger, but in the desire of our LORD that all people would turn from their wicked ways and live.

The Church goes into all the world inviting and urging others to come to the feast of God's Word, to the banquet of eternal life that begins already now in time. Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. Yes, indeed! But blessed even more so are those who come to the feast right now. The Kingdom of God is already among you. The feast of God's Word is preparing you for the eternal wedding supper of the Lamb. The LORD comes to you already today in His Word and in His Sacrament. He brings to you the buffet of His Word, where you're given everything you need. He invites you to the wedding table to receive His body and blood as a foretaste of the feast to come. The LORD calls to you today and everyday to come to the feast. Don't wait until eternity. The celebration has already begun right here and right now in the church! In the name of Jesus, Amen.

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