

The Second Sunday after Trinity

St. Luke 14.15-24

June 21, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we heard about a rich man who threw great feasts. Those parties were for himself, and his friends and family. Meanwhile, Lazarus lay nearby in the gutter, starving, suffering, lonely. He received no help from the rich man. No food. No consolation. In death, however, he was given a place of honor, next to Abraham at the heavenly banquet. The rich man had showed him no kindness, but God welcomed Lazarus to His feast. His sick body became strong; his empty stomach was filled; his sorrow turned to joy, his loneliness replaced with the company of the saints and angels.

That heavenly feast is the subject of the parable Jesus tells today. Everyone is invited; God is a better Rich Man, the world's true King. He throws a banquet to end all banquets.

The best parties in our experience are exclusive; only the wealthy, the famous, the connected are invited. But the guest list for this party tells us something about the Host: He is incredibly generous. The host, of course, is God, whose liberality knows no bounds. The creation was established in God's generosity: He gave man a body, a world of beauty to dwell in, filled with gifts. Even when man spurned the feast God had prepared, seizing instead the diabolical junk food that would destroy him, still God kept on inviting man to His feast.

In the parable, people are invited in three groups: the prominent Jews; the poor, maimed, lame, and blind Jews; and finally, the Gentiles (those out in the highways and hedges). It is tempting to condemn the people for whom this parable was originally intended – those Jews who were not accepting Jesus. But isn't it true that we Gentiles – isn't it true that we also often despised the gifts to which the Lord invites us?

We are tempted simply to go through the motions, say the right words, worship in a perfunctory way. These are pretty mundane times, but we could probably imagine a crazy, chaotic time when there is much to worry us and distract us. We have pieces of ground, and we like to keep the arsonists out of the neighborhood. We don't have oxen - but the oxen are trucks and computers, which is to say they are jobs. Good thing we don't live in a time when the economy might distract us from God's Word! I have married a wife, that is, we have spouses and families that need for our attention, babies to baptize, schools to open back up, budgets to make and revise. And as the Wendy's burns and the statues topple, it's tempting to think that Twitter, Tucker, or Tapper will teach us how to think about it.

False. No pundit, no social media influencer has the answers. The Sacred Scriptures have already given us that. Jerusalem once burned. So did Rome. The whole thing ends in fire. But then, the voice of the Creator: **"Behold, I am making all things new!"** All that is happening is a distraction. It has temporal significance. The Feast has eternal significance. The Baptism of Kathryn Barbara is more important than the Bolton book or a SCOTUS decision.

Don't forget who you are: a beggar invited by grace to the Rich Man's home. We are starving men invited to a feast. The feast is nothing other than the Lord Jesus Himself. His living body gives life to your dying body. His cleansing blood offers the world forgiveness for our world of sin.

Why do you pursue your lusts and cravings? Are they beneficial? Why do you spend your money on what does not last? Your desires for revenge, your dreams of fame and glory - what can they achieve, other than to make a person selfish and bitter?

Today your King calls you to the feast. It's a call to leave aside your fixation on this world's feasts, and fix your eyes on Jesus. Only what you receive here, in this Sacrament, endures into God's kingdom.

Little children, now is the last hour. You are being called to the dinner. The end of all things is at hand. Do not turn aside, but run with repentance to the altar and beg forgiveness. Be eager in your prayers for the coming of the Lord. Be ready for His coming by daily repentance. And serve the poor, maimed, lame, and blind – all those in need around you – with whatever gifts you have. For we are called to love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Last Sunday, we heard about a rich man who would not invite a beggar to his feast. Today's gospel shows us that we are poor, yet have God for a generous, philanthropic Rich Man. He has invited you to His Supper, to His home, to His forgiveness, to His love. Quit making excuses. Quit trying to serve two masters. Quit chasing this world's riches. Quit condemning others and trying to be lord and master. Leave all this, and come, for all things are now ready, and even your excuses are forgiven in the Body and Blood of Jesus.

In the Name of Jesus.

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

Rev. Christopher S. Esget
Pastor, Immanuel Evangelical-Lutheran Church
Alexandria, Virginia