

ST PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, WATERFORD, WI
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY – JUNE 13, 2021
LUKE 14:15-24/1 JOHN 3:113-18/PROVERBS 9:1-10
COME, FOR ALL THINGS ARE NOW READY!

In the Name of Jesus, Amen. Dear hearers of the Word made flesh;

On His way to Jerusalem Jesus tells of a banquet. One of those who reclined at table with Him had just heard him speak of who to invite if you give a feast. Jesus said to omit inviting your friends and the rich who could repay you. Rather, He instructed to invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. Jesus ended by saying, *and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.* It is then that our Gospel today begins – when the man who sat at table with Him said, *“Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”*

The Jews anticipated that the Messiah's age would begin with a banquet after a military victory. Jesus describes an inclusive, gracious banquet, the likes of which was already prophesied clearly in the Old Testament. Centuries before Jesus spoke of the banquet in our Gospel, His prophet Isaiah had described a banquet on God's holy mountain (Isaiah 25:6-9) – a banquet of rich food and well-aged wine – a banquet for **“all peoples.”** God would swallow up death forever – *the veil that is spread over “all nations.”* God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that they turn from their ways and live (Ezek. 33:11). God our Savior desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

However, in the centuries from Isaiah to Jesus, the Jews, had largely rejected Isaiah's prophecy of God's end-time inclusive banquet (The Book of Enoch/The Messianic Rule/The Targum). They taught that no Gentiles would be present – nor anyone lame or blind or crippled. Their view of the end-time banquet disagreed with Jesus' teaching about God's gracious invitation. In today's Gospel, Jesus rebukes their errant view and clearly proclaims God's will for His end-time feast.

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. These are not real excuses. They are insults full of disdain for the banquet of salvation. In the deepest meaning of "hate," in the Bible, these are hateful and evil alibis. Agape love in Scripture is not primarily an emotion, but doing for someone else, acting for another. So also, hate is not primarily an emotion but rather, not doing for another, turning against, ignoring, someone or something.

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. These pretexts are transparent and obviously hateful. Who buys land without looking at it. Who purchases working animals (today like buying a used combine or huge tractor) without first making sure of their condition and value. These are not real excuses! These are dismissive falsehoods – clearly showing hateful disdain for the banquet invitation.

Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' This bogus excuse is even more loaded with contempt and disregard. He does not claim that his upcoming wedding plans conflict with the banquet. No, his claim is simply that the domestic duties of married life is a reason to decline. Along with the false excuses about the purchase of land and oxen, this one holds no merit. All these refusals show remarkable disregard (hatred) for the banquet God offers. In effect, each excuse says, "I'm too important – my plans come first – I'm not hungry for the bread you offer – even the Bread of Life. 'Come, for all things are now ready!'" "Sorry – not interested – please leave me alone – can't you see how busy I am with life's stuff." That is the gist of those replies.

Dear Christians, responding to God's invitation is a matter of life and death. *'Come, for all things are now ready!'* There is no middle

ground. There are no drive-up, self-serve, windows for eternal life. There is no comfortable at home refuge (married or single), for eternal life. There is no other banquet of salvation than eating bread in the kingdom of Yahweh. *Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* As St. John records in Revelation, *“Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb”* (Rev. 19:9). The flip side of this blessedness is the curse of death and hell that comes with our sin outside of God’s kingdom. As St. Matthew tells of the marriage supper of God’s Son, those who reject the invitation experience weeping and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness (Matt. 22:13). The Lord does not force anyone to receive His gracious invitation. It can be rejected with eternal consequences. He does teach us to pray each day, *Thy Kingdom 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.’ The master’s anger against the sin of unbelief is real! Here His anger does not lead to immediate retribution against those refusing Him. That will come later – *For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.* But His anger does lead to the immediate bestowal of His invitation to others!

The very ones the Pharisees considered unclean – those reduced to begging in poverty or blindness or crippling disease are sought out and invited. Those despised by the world are nonetheless loved by God. *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.’*

The Lord loves a banquet. He has graciously prepared it for all peoples. He will fill His house. Jesus came first to Old Testament Israel – but not only for Old Testament Israel. There is abounding grace and

forgiving love in His words – ‘*Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*’ So, He has found you on the highways and in the hedges of life. The Lord loves a banquet. The Lord loves a full house. He intends for you to be there feasting with Him forever.

Dwell on that thought! Your salvation is no minor thought to God. Dwell on God’s gracious holy will for you to be with Him beyond the limits of time. Dwell on what it means when the Master says *compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*

Dr. Luther rightly taught that this compelling is not outward by physical power – but inward, in the heart. It is nothing forceful but everything faithful in keeping with the Gospel. It includes accusing sin in the conscience and the total despairing of self. It includes the fearful recognition that the sin of excuse making lives in our hearts as well. We are prone to be too busy and too comfortable with all of life’s stuff. We are tempted to give only half-hearted interest to God’s holy things and omit daily prayer for His kingdom, for ourselves and others. We are tempted to think if not to say – ‘just leave me alone a little more – not too much of God’s Word for me.’”

However, God’s Wisdom loves us out of our sinful calamity. *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just (righteous) man, and he will increase in learning.* God instructs you as Pastor Conradt preaches Christ each week in this house of worship. God instructs you as you use His Word at home in daily prayer. As God instructs you He warns about the rescue you need from your excuse-making heart and from the haughty eyes of self-pride. He warns you that failure to love your brother and sister in Christ – whom you see here – is hateful. The hateful murderer whom John identifies in not a criminal in the world’s eyes. This man-killer is an apostate – one who has turned away from Jesus’s words of life. Caught in error’s maze, this murderer would lead others away from the life-giving voice of Christ and from communion with those who abide in Christ.

St. John exhorts deeds of love, not just words – deeds done in Jesus. Indeed, your gathering together in weekly worship to receive Christ's love and to encourage one another is one of those loving deeds and foundational to the others. St. John's first epistle makes a sharp distinction between those who remain gathered about the Word of God and those who go out from it (1 John 2:19). This love is continually received from the presence of God's Son and His word and it abides in the company of those who believe the Son of God has come in the flesh.

When the risen Christ gathers you here each week, His love is at work, even when He reproves you. When He does reprove, you do not hate him, but rather despair of yourself. This is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. *Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.* The Holy Spirit convicts that it is always right to pray the prayer that collects our thoughts today - for perpetual fear and love of His holy name.

He answers and nurtures you in His steadfast fear and love with His undeserved grace our Introit proclaims. *He brought me out into a broad place, he rescued me, because he delighted in me, I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and deliverer.* That love for God comes because God does not stop with reproof of sin. He continues with instruction in righteousness – proclaiming how He saves a humble people – how He gave Christ into the flesh to be our strength, (strength that we lack), our rock (our one solid place in this crumbling world) our fortress (our one safe place when dark times overtake us), our deliverer (from sin and death and Satan and ourselves). Christ Jesus is the rescuer who delights in you, who brought you out into a broad place, the place of God's favor and forgiveness and delight.

To bring you to this beautiful place of finished redemption your rescuer walked the narrow path of perfect wisdom and perfect obedience to the holy one – as your substitute. *This God – his way is perfect.* He actively fulfilled the Law for you. To bring you to this broad

place of full forgiveness of all your sin, He then went into the narrow place of death by crucifixion and the narrower place of burial in a garden tomb. To bring you to this beautiful, broad place of reconciliation and peace with God, the Word made flesh went into the narrowest, most confining place - under God's wrath – under the damning bonds of eternal punishment in your stead. He passively took the punishment for all sin. Beloved of God, It is finished! *This God – His way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true. It is finished! For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing to your name.* The dividing wall between God and us sinners is broken down in the flesh of Him who is incarnate Wisdom. That is the depth and breadth of love in His gracious invitation, *“Come, for all things are now ready.”*

Continue to dwell on what it means when the Master says **compel** *them to come in, that my house may be filled.* This compelling to come to the feast includes speaking the peace won by the blood of Christ's cross and the gracious invitation to sit down at the table of this rich Lord and eat. Yes, He knows the highway you are daily tempted to travel is the my-way of self-love. Yes, He knows the hedges of coveting and worry and fear and struggle and guilt that pull at you. That's why on this day He also invites, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* (Matt. 11:28). *“Come, for all things are now ready.”* His loving invitation is a word of embrace to those who feel they do not belong. It is a sweet word of invitation to those who see themselves as totally unworthy. It is a delightful and drawing word for you who think – “I don't measure up to His invitation – after all I've done and failed to do, He can't really mean me.”

Yes, He really means you, sinner that you are. He desires you to rejoice in the certainty of His invitation to you and your place with Him. *“Come, for all things are now ready.”* He desires that you never doubt the love behind His invitation. *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.* That's the price our ransom cost Him. That's the depth of God's desire for all to repent and live. God so loves the

world in this way – in the sacrificial, redeeming, reconciling death of the Son of God.

The opponents of Christ were grievously wrong in seeking to limit His gracious invitation to just themselves and their kind. Risen from the narrow chamber of death, Jesus sent His apostles to teach all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There are abundant mission opportunities here through St. Peter's in Waterford, and among all nations that our Lord would have you know of and pray for and support. *Thy Kingdom Come*. That a dark and lost world hates your love for Christ is not to surprise you (1 John 3:13), and as questions arise in your own vocational circles, He would have you give a defense to everyone for the hope that is in you in Christ Jesus, with meekness and fear and having a good conscience (1 Peter 3:15,16).

That good conscience comes only from Him – always from Him! His holy absolution spoken by your called minister of Christ turns you back to His baptism of you again and again and again! Beloved of God, He did not put His name on you at the font in order to exclude you. Your washing of rebirth, your baptism into the forgiveness of sins, your being clothed with Christ, is as fresh today as the day you first received it. Not just plain water, but water included in God's command and combined with God's Word. Through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit has called you by the Gospel, enlightened you with His gifts, sanctified and kept you in the true faith.

His sent ones have come to your highway and your hedge – for decades Pastor Bischoff and now Pastor Conradt. It is no accident that you are in His house at His invitation today and each Lord's Day. The LORD is happiest when you, His people, are gathered at table with Him. Your place at His table is secure! It is His compelling gift to you! *Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed*. Indeed, in the Holy Mystery He serves you at His Table, the bread is His body and

the wine is His cleansing, forgiving blood. *“Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”* Yes, *Come, for all things are now ready.*

In the name of Jesus, Amen.