**Priorities**

Based on [Luke 14:15-24](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk14.15-24)

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Second Sunday after Trinity

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Today’s gospel is a parable about God’s Judgment against those who reject the Gospel, and His salvation for those who accept it.

A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. But when the banquet was ready, they made excuses for not attending. The servant came to report this and the master was angry. **So he sent the servant out to invite poor and lame strangers, and to invite those far and wide to come, and fill his house.** They will eat bread in the kingdom of God, but those who had declined the invitation shall never taste His banquet.

The central question of the parable, the thing that makes all the difference is receiving and rejecting the invitation. Simply put, the invitation is the gospel to trust in God the Father, and Jesus Christ whom He sent for your salvation. **This gospel was first given to the Jews in the Old Testament, with its many passages about the messiah or Christ to come, the one who would crush the serpents head, one through whom all nations would be blessed, one greater than moses; David’s son and David’s Lord, the Christ.** But when he did come, his own did not receive him. The Jews as a nation crucified him and made all manner of excuses for doing so. “He stirs up the people”, He doesn’t keep the Sabbath or the traditions of the elders, it is expedient for one man to die, than that the whole nation should perish. **Many such laudable sounding excuses came from the lips of the teachers of Israel.** And even many of the common people of Israel rejected him who said, “I am the bread of life, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life”…they said, “This is a hard teaching who can accept it, and many of his disciples left him that day.”

Those who reject the invitation are those who reject to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the true bread from heaven, and the only way to heaven. They were the Jews as a people—not saying that all the Jews personally rejected him, but corporately as a people before God, Coram Deo, they did. Jesus came, the banquet was prepare, but the Jews made excuses not to attend.

This stands as an earnest warning to all people to the present day and until the end of days not to reject the grace and salvation that Jesus offers. And you would be mistaken to think this means only rank and perverse public sinners; or atheists who openly deny and curse the Name of Jesus. The man is angered at them for declining the invitation give what would seem to be good excuses, and are even very polite in declining.

First excuse, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’

Second excuse, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.

Third excuse, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’

None of these people are excusing themselves because they hate the man or openly despise his banquet. Neither do any of them excuse themselves for trivial reasons. **In fact, two of the excuses were listed in the OT as valid reasons for refraining from military service** (Deut. 20:6-7)**.** Purchasing land to tend, that is good. Buying cattle, good. Marrying is a good thing. But here’s the point: when they had to choose between these things and the great banquet, they chose their own things.

This is the same when it comes to the heavenly treasures Jesus offers us. He invites us to trust in his mercy, he invites all people to be baptized and believe, he gives his doctrine to teach to all nations. **He calls ministers to teach in his church and host a banquet of his body and blood under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of sins.** All of these invitations are participations and preparations for the great banquet in heaven at the marriage feast of the Lamb in his kingdom, where treasure awaits all who believe.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says “**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also**.”

Jesus says here that your heart will always follow what you treasure. There is nothing wrong with earthly treasures per se, house, home, spouse, children, a good job, a good reputation…all these things are praised and protected by the latter part of the 10 Commandments. **There is nothing wrong with earthly treasure per se, but the crucial question is, when earthly treasures and heavenly ones compete for attention in your life, which one will you choose?** Will you choose to pursue things on earth and put heaven on hold; or will you put the world on hold for the sake of the grace and riches of heaven promised you? And it’s not your choices that will save or condemn you; it is your choices that will reveal where your heart is.

Those who chose their own possessions and family over the invitation to the banquet, did not just make a bad choice…they were revealed to love one more than the other. The Jewish nation loved their own traditions more than Christ, and when forced to choose, they chose the broad way of earthly peace over trusting in Christ.

And we make many choices every day that reveal our hearts. It’s not only whether we openly embrace sin and vice that indicates whether our hearts are loving God above all things as the First Commandment requires. Our priorities reveal our hearts. God doesn’t need our hearts revealed, he sees the heart. But we need our hearts revealed to ourselves and to one another. When the officers of the Lutheran Church—Canada publically chose to not talk about repentance and forgiveness when our District mismanaged it’s Church Extension Fund, it’s excuse was that if they were to do so, the investment insurance company might refuse to cover any of the loss. They chose to follow the advice of lawyers over the advice of Christ. A seminarian in the LCC or was asked to chose between God’s command not to preach without a call, and the seminary professors excuse that he can do so because he thinks it’s okay. He chose to obey God rather than men, revealing his heart and priorities.

God invites us to daily repentance, which is a reorientation of our priorities every day. Every day we are tempted to set aside the word of God to make life a little easier and to please friends and neighbors. Don’t do it. Every day we are to bury the old self, with a mind set on the flesh, and we are to embrace the new self, made in Christ and possessing of the Holy Spirit, to seek grace where it may be found, and to live lives in obedience to God.

“But you need to get this or that done; you need to finish this project or set this area of your life in place…once you get your life on earth in order, then you will be free to tend to your eternal life.” These are the devils words and his thoughts. Do not listen to them. Your earthly life will never get in order without keeping your eyes and your hope in heaven and what awaits you there. Listen to Christ who says plainly, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things, food, clothing, shelter...all that is needed to support this body and life and the next…will be added to you.

This does not mean we can reach perfection in keeping Gods Law. We daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment. We make innumerable choices, some are based on the Lord, others are based on worldly hopes and fears. We remain in Christ if we repent and continue to cling to him in faith. Obeying his commands and trusting his promises will never lead us astray, and he will never turn away those who come to him. Christ’s treasure in heaven is paradise, and it is given as forgiveness on earth, here at this altar today.

*“And whosoever cometh, I will not cast him out.”*

*O patient love of Jesus, Which drives away our doubt,*

*Which though we be unworthy Of love so great and free,*

*Invites us very sinners To come, dear Lord, to Thee!* -- LSB 684:4