

Trinity 2
 June 21, 2009
 Proverbs 9:1-10; I John 3:13-18; Luke 14:15-24

Pastor T. Clint Stark
 St. John's LC-MS
 Topeka, KS

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The parable in our Gospel lesson was told by Jesus on the Sabbath Day while dining at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees. Imagine the tension. Jesus was in hostile territory and the lawyers and Pharisees present were watching him very closely. Just prior to Jesus telling the parable of the Great Banquet that you just heard - Jesus attacked their self-righteousness by asking them if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not - they had no response - and Jesus then proceeded to heal a man who had dropsy. After Jesus corrected their legalism by healing the man on the Sabbath, He then noticed how they had chosen their honor seating at the meal. Through a parable He went on to condemn their sense of entitlement and their proud, not poor, spirits. Jesus concluded this parable with these words, **“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

It is at this point during the meal that Jesus began to tell the parable of the Great Banquet. After hearing what Jesus was saying, one of those who reclined at table with him said to him, **“Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”** Jesus responded to him by saying basically this: “You are right, ‘Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.’ Yet, you Pharisees, Lawyers, and Jews reject the true kingdom of God, which is here. You reject the true bread of God’s kingdom, which is Me - The Bread of Life. You know nothing of God’s eternal kingdom, but only look for a temporal kingdom of this world.”

Hear again Christ’s words to this self-righteous group that rejected Him and John the Baptist’s preparatory message of, “Repent the kingdom of God is here.” **“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.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.”**

It would be silly to reject an awesome free banquet of fine food and wine? Yet, this parable is not about a banquet that contains perishable food and drink that only satisfy temporal needs for a short time. This parable is about eternal things - the Kingdom of God. It is about imperishable Bread that will satisfy now and forever. You see there are two kingdoms. There is a temporal kingdom and an eternal one. The Pharisees cared

more about glory in the here and now than they did about the true eternal Kingdom of God. And isn't this true of all people who reject God's kingdom?

Remember that God the Father is the one giving this Great Banquet. The food is Christ. The servants or waiters at the banquet are pastors. Whenever pastors preach the Gospel of Christ the imperishable Bread of Life is being served. The Jews rejected Christ – the Food, even though Jesus longed to gather them as a mother hen gathers her chicks. So, the invitation goes out beyond the Jews to the Gentiles also. Yet, doesn't the world respond much like the stiff necked Jews and reject the Holy Spirit in preaching? The preaching of Christ crucified is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. Yes, the world rejects Christ and is more concerned with temporal things. You know this to be obviously true. Turn on the news and the stories are concerned with temporal things like the economy, the environment, and politics. You will never see a news alert that is concerned with the Gospel of Christ being proclaimed faithfully.

It isn't that temporal things don't matter, they do, and that is why we pray for daily bread in the Lord's Prayer. It isn't wrong to tend to temporal things like your field, home, ox, car, wife, and family. What is wrong is if these things are more important to you than eternal things. There is a reason that the petition in the Lord's Prayer for daily bread comes after the petitions that God's name be kept Holy in our doctrine and lives and that His eternal kingdom comes to us and to all people. It would be wrong to pray first and foremost for daily bread. God knows you need daily bread, but seek first the Kingdom of God. You cannot serve God and money. My kingdom is not of this world. Love God with your whole heart, mind, and strength. Store for yourselves treasures in heaven.

Yes, it is easy to point out that the world despises preaching and God's Word and spits on the Great Banquet of God. It is easy to say that others have much to repent of. However, this parable isn't just a warning to everyone else except you. If you have ears then hear. Which would you be more concerned with - your home being taken away from you – or - the sermons that you hear from this pulpit? Would you be more distraught over not being able to find a group of Christians that gathers around the preaching of the pure Gospel of Christ and the right administration or the Sacraments or anything else temporal? There is a reason that Jesus warns time and again against the love of temporal things. They can lead you away from the Great Banquet. There are many who have believed for awhile, but were choked out by the temporal weeds of this life. Many have forfeited their soul for some temporal happiness. There are many who have rejected an eternity in God's kingdom for a one night stand, a divorce, temporal wealth, and the like. What does a man profit if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Yet, many forfeit their soul for much less like neglecting the hearing of the preaching of Christ for Sunday football or other forms of entertainment.

So, what is the answer? Should you get out a pen and make a priority list with God first, family second, and everything else third? Many do preach this way. Many think that they can try real hard to put God first and thus earn a spot at the table. But those who preach this way substitute a different food and deprive you of the sweet tasting food of Christ in the true Banquet. By making a list and checking it twice – no one can get to heaven. No matter how many *promise keeper covenants* you sign, they don't lead you to the heavenly feast, but only to the table prepared for self-righteous Pharisees. You cannot get into the banquet by doing something. You can only fall down and say, "Lord

have mercy on me a sinner!” and confess that no matter how hard you try you can never love God with your whole heart. “How to” preaching or “you and Jesus working together to live your best or purpose driven life now” is not the message that God sends His servants to proclaim. This food, that is all *do*’s and *don*’ts and no gospel, will either lead you to be self righteous or choke you in despair. If you find your self feeling good about your thoughts, words, and deeds - then take your seat of dishonor with the Pharisees and know that you will be humbled on the Last Day. Yet, if you are choked with sin and despair and know that no matter how hard you try to keep God’s commands you fail miserably, then taste the sweet Food that God has prepared for you.

You see God the Father has a right to roast all of us for our sins. Yet, He willed to roast His Son in our place. Christ was cooked for our sins until there was no wrath left. Yet, though Christ was made to be sin in our place and received all of the punishment for our sins and the sins of the world– He Himself lived a sinless life in our place. It is His sinless flesh that is given to you.

Hear how gracious God the Father is. You see God the Father had a right to roast all of us for our sins. Yet, He willed to roast His Son in our place. Christ was cooked for our sins until there was no wrath left. All of the times that we are more concerned with earthly things and despise heavenly things. All of the times that we dismiss His Great Banquet. All of the times that we make excuses and justify ourselves. All our sins – the sin of adultery, the sin of greed, the sin of idolatry – Christ was roasted for your sins and the sins of the entire world. That means there is no hell left for you to pay for your sins. Jesus, the promised Savior, took your place. All of your sins are forgiven for His sake. And there is more Good News for you to feast on today. Though Christ was made to be sin in your place and received all of the punishment for your sins – He Himself lived a sinless life in your place. He always put the Father first, He never loved money, His list of priorities was always perfect, His words, thoughts, and deeds always served His neighbor and glorified God.

Jesus is the only food that satisfies eternally. The Bread of Life lived, died, and rose for you. He has defeated sin, death, and the devil. He is imperishable Bread. **Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” 52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” 53 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”¹**

¹ John 6 - ESV

How amazing! How comforting. Baptized Christian, since you are in Christ and He in you, you have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. Feast on Christ, Who has done everything for your salvation. You, who are heavy laden, lame, cripple, blind, and poor in spirit – rest and feast on the Gospel that I serve to your ears right now – Christ has paid for your sins and kept the Law for you.

And know that this Food – the Christ – The Gospel – is for you. God the Father wants a full banquet. God the Father does not delight in a sinner perishing, but desires the entire world to repent and enjoy the sweet food in His Kingdom. This is why He sends His Pastors to the highways and hedges to serve Christ in the preaching of the Gospel. So, enjoy the Great Banquet where the Divine serves you now in time so that you will be raised on the Last Day to enjoy the heavenly banquet forever. Amen.