

Sermon Trinity 2 2021

June 13, 2021

Luke 14:15-24

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson which was previously read.

As we've had such an upheaval of our lives in the midst of the pandemic, something that certainly has been uprooted is the standard for wedding receptions. It's become the tradition that people will get engaged, then have a long engagement in order to plan the feast that will accompany the wedding ceremony. In fact, for many, that reception has become the priority. That's a part of what has been realigned in this. In something that, I think is good, many couples found that it was best for them to go ahead and solemnize the marriage rather than delay it for the reception.

That said, such an occasion is certainly worth bringing attention to. Scripture itself acknowledges that. A wedding feast is a huge ordeal and appropriately so as you have this union between man and woman into one flesh. In fact, at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry, it was common for wedding feasts to last for days on end. You see that with the miracle of turning water to wine at the wedding in Cana.

Even today, some cultures will hold weeklong observances for the occasion of a wedding. My wife and I enjoyed a glimpse of that when some friends of ours of Indian descent were married years ago. I know I've mentioned it before, but that was an experience. It was in New York, and we flew in on a Thursday. That night we were fed a delicious array of food, where there was also dancing after to celebrate the occasion. The next day there was meal after meal of food in preparation for the official ceremony. That went into the evening. Then on Saturday, breakfast, lunch, there ceremony itself, then snacks and cocktails, dinner, deserts. It was a feast.

Of course, I'm talking about wedding feasts here, but as we hear of the parable in the Gospel Lesson this morning, it doesn't specify that the feast the man holds is one for a wedding. Nonetheless, it sounds like he's planning quite the occasion. It's planned, it's prepared, and the man wants to host it and he wants people there to enjoy it. It sounds like it's going to be a banquet.

That said, I made this connection to a wedding feast because of the context. I think it's clear that when our Lord is describing this occasion, He's not just telling the story about a man and his party. No. What's He doing? He's describing eternity with our Him. You see, throughout the Scripture, there is all of this imagery with regard to eating. In particular, you see this imagery about eating with God. Look at it, even in the Garden.

What do we know Adam and Eve did with their time? We don't know much, but we know that they ate. That's what the serpent used to deceive them into sin was food. That's what they were cut off from in the Garden, eating from the Tree of Life. In fact, I think the Tree of Life is understood as the place where they go to commune with God, you could say, to eat with Him. And when they're cut off, that's what they're cut off from. Yes, in a sense they're cut off from the face to face presence of God, and that's important. But just like God works through created means, you could say works sacramentally with us, so also He worked with Adam and Eve sacramentally. He cut them off from the sacrament of the Tree of Life—and so also us, so that neither they nor we have that communion with Him in that way.

Having said that, this imagery of a meal with God doesn't stop there. You see it keep going, whether it be the meal Abraham has with Melchizedek, or the meal Moses and the Elders have with God, it's a recurring theme. But you see it especially associated with the end of time. And in Revelation it calls that feast at the end a marriage feast. Hear what John says, **“Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;’”** The book of Isaiah seems to give us a picture of the same in Chapter 25 where it says, **“On this mountain 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.”**

Now we might think this is an odd and sort of physical way to think about eternity, but remember, this is the resurrection of the body that we confess. That's what we're talking about here. And it sounds glorious, doesn't it? And hear how you can find it in the Old Testament Lesson from Proverbs too: **“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.”** There's the beauty of the meal with God—which by the way I'm expecting the fare there to be better than anything I've ever had in this life. I figure if the Lord is the Chef, any chef here will pale in comparison.

But it's not just the joy of a good meal that makes this so great. It's that feasting in insight as the Proverb described. There will be a liberty from the sin that weighs down our minds and our common sense. There will be freedom from the sin which binds us to corrupted understanding and reason. All the questions we don't understand now, we will then. Or if we don't they'll be gone and we won't care, because there will be this trust and this communion with God that is so full in its unity that all of our doubts and cares otherwise will be satisfied.

Now, as I say that, hopefully, it's clear that this communion with God is the big thing about our eternal life. Our fellowship with our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier is the be all end all of eternity. So often we think about the joy of being with our loved ones when we die. And that's OK to look forward to that. But Christians, that's just the proverbial icing on the cake. The main thing is that we will be with our Lord. This God who has loved you with an eternal love will greet you face to face. And Revelation tells us that at that feast He will reach up His loving hand and wipe away our every tear.

But that said, there will be those who have gone before us and those who come after us. And that fellowship will be awesome. I remember once hearing a sermon where the pastor was talking about his wife's worry when Jesus says that we will neither be married nor given in marriage at the resurrection. And if I recall, she even worried that there wouldn't be a knowledge of their life together now. And his answer was enlightening. It was something I think I had an inclination about in my brain but hadn't thought to make it concrete and phrase it this way. He said that there we will know everyone better than we do now. In other words, there will be this feast, there will be this food, there will be our God, and there will be this unity unbounded with those who are there. We see that alluded to in the Epistle Lesson from Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Now, I mentioned this in my devotion this week, and you see it in this Gospel Lesson. As the host of the feast gets angry about those who don't come, that's in reference to the Jews who have rejected the Christ. There is throughout these images an understanding that those who were God's people by promise of their heritage in Abraham lose the benefit of their status as they reject Christ and remain in the Old Covenant. There's this tension, then in the Early Church as to how this affects the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the Church. You see it a lot in the letter. And you see it in Acts too. How Jewish were the Gentiles supposed to be? Were they to keep Kosher? Were they to be circumcised? What would that look like. And it looks like some of the Jews even viewed themselves as having a position of honor in the Church because of their heritage. So, there's this division. But Paul makes that point that the walls of division are broken down in Christ.

And that's what we see in this feast. The walls of division are broken down. There is the food, there is the Lord, there is fellowship, and there is unity. There is unity of man and woman, not a battle of the sexes. There is unity transcending race, and skin color, and culture, and language, and all the things that divide us now.

Christians, that feast will be amazing. And so, as we hear this parable, then there's a warning. As we see the anger of the host, we should hear that warning. I mentioned

that this was with regard to the Jews because they had been called in the invitation, but this is for us who have been raised in the Church too, for our children and theirs, for our culture around us. It's said that familiarity breeds contempt, and so often that's true. We are so familiar with Christ that all the other things seem more important and interesting.

And we see that in parable too. Look at the people called. There's the one with the oxen, who has to go examine them. Then there are two excuses that actually come from Old Testament excuses from military service, there is the man who has married his wife—the Old Testament Law giving him a year of marriage before leaving to fight—and the one that I find interesting, the man who bought a field, again the Law giving understanding that it's appropriate for that owner of the field to reap the first harvest of his land rather than fight. Now, why do I find this one so interesting? Because he says he **“must go out and see it.”** In other words, he has something that is more necessary than the banquet.

And how often do we think that? Now, we might rationalize this by saying that we don't find anything more important than God, but let's think about the eternal banquet and how God links us to that now. Where is the connection we have to that eternal banquet now? It's here, right? It's here in the Divine Service. Just like the most important thing about eternity will be that we are the presence of our Lord, so also in this gathering Christ comes in a unique way. Think about the verse we all know. **“Where two or three are gathered, there I am with them.”** Is Christ omnipresent, that is, is Christ everywhere? Of course, we confess that to be true. But somehow, He's here in a unique, in a special way. How so? In the preaching of His Word—**“He who hears you hears me.”** And in the giving of His Holy Supper—**“This is my body... This is my blood.”** Which, a quick note about the Supper, the word used for this feast in the Gospel is the same word Paul uses when he calls it the Lord's Supper in I Corinthians 11. Here is the feast, the foretaste of the eternal feast. Here is our Lord. And yet how often do we find something more “necessary.”

We need to take heed, because we don't want to miss the feast. And it's not our Lord's fault should we miss. No. And that's why I really think this excuse is so interesting. Because, while the man thought it necessary to miss the feast, the master found it necessary that the feast, that his house be filled. That's necessity to God. It's necessity that He show His generosity. It's necessity that He give and have this celebration. And He wants us there. He wants us there in His presence, enjoying that presence, enjoying that feast, enjoying that unity and communion. That's why we must take heed not to miss it. Because nothing could ever make it worth missing. Amen.