

St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)

Trinity 2 – June 9, 2024

Luke 14:15-24 – Come to the Feast

Rev Peter Wagner

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her beasts; she's mixed her wine and set her table. To him who lacks sense she says, "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."

Come, for everything is now ready. Come, for Wisdom Incarnate has built his house. His cornerstone is laid, his pillars are hewn. The King has slaughtered himself like a beast, his wine is mixed, his table is set.

In Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by his blood. He is the Lamb who was slain, slaughtered for the feast. He himself is our peace. By his blood, you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Jesus invites you here, to this temple. The banquet he offers here cost him everything. But for you it is free. So come, because your God sacrificed his whole life to prepare this meal. He became man and died on the cross to freely offers it to you. Only a fool would refuse, only a fool would cling to his simple ways, ignoring the summons. "Come, for everything is now ready."

"Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God." Did the dinner guest who spoke these words as he reclined at table with Jesus and have any idea how right he was? Blessed is everyone who recognizes Jesus. Blessed are all who sit down with him to eat his supper and hear his words. Do not miss it. Hear him and eat and drink with him, here in his temple.

But Jesus answered with a parable, a parable with a stern message. "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many," he said, "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.'"

They all alike began to make excuses. The message is clear. Stop making excuses. Let nothing keep you from church, from the feast your Master has prepared. Let the invitation of Jesus be your highest priority, your priceless treasure. In all of earth and heaven there is only one thing needful: Jesus himself, offered to you in his word and sacrament.

"I have bought a field, I have bought five yoke of oxen, I have married a wife." They might as well have said, "Church is too early, I need to sleep in." Or, "Our kids have a track meet." Or "It's so hard to get everyone out the door in time." Or "I don't get much out of it." Or "I can worship God and read the Bible on my own anywhere, anytime."

Perhaps you can worship God anywhere, anytime. But only in church can you hear the word of Jesus preached and receive his sacraments. Only here can you join the blessed communion of all the saints, to be mutually encouraged by your brothers and sisters.

So just come. It's for your own good. Be in church, every Sunday. On this side of glory, every Lord's Day, what we celebrate here is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

Some excuses may be better than others. It doesn't matter. Maybe the invited guest who just married a wife had a better excuse than the man who just bought a field. But even the new husband had no need of choosing between his wife and the banquet. He could have brought her along! They could have come together. And so it should be with you, especially you husbands and fathers. Men, go to church. And bring your family, bring them all to the banquet.

Really, the root of every excuse is pride. Pride keeps people away from church. It wants to make excuses and cover up for our sins and failures. When we haven't come to church in a while, we feel ashamed to return. Don't be ashamed. Remember the prodigal son, and how joyously his father received him home.

As for those who do come to church regularly, pride is perhaps even more dangerous. We think God will be pleased with us for how well we're doing. Then we wickedly say to ourselves, "God, I thank you that I am not

like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.” Let Paul’s warning in 1 Corinthians 10:12 sink in: “Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.”

May pride never hinder us from the kingdom of God! Turn from all pride, and repent. Whatever your sins: whether making excuses for not coming to the banquet or pridefully comparing yourself to others – repent. Just come to the banquet, and receive the forgiveness Jesus offers here.

Forgiveness. This is why you need to go to church. To be forgiven by Jesus. The third commandment – “Remember the Sabbath Day” – it’s a gift from God! God gives you the Sabbath to help you pause your busy life, so he can give you forgiveness in Jesus. So come and gladly hear preaching and God’s word. The command is not burdensome, it’s for our own good. The Sabbath is made for man, to give you forgiveness, life, and salvation. Let the invitation of Jesus be your highest joy.

The gifts of God in church are worthy of all your time and commitment. Receive them eagerly. Don’t just go through the motions. Actively participate. Follow along and sing and listen carefully. Prepare your heart beforehand. Look over the readings on Saturday night. Pray for God’s blessing, that you hear his word and take it to heart. Examine yourself and confess your sins and be absolved. Receive the bread and wine of Christ’s body and blood with faith.

Coming to church also includes attending Bible study. Bible study isn’t some extra icing on the cake, an extra hour you could offer God if nothing else is going on. No, Scripture always mentions preaching and teaching in the same breath. So teaching and learning the Bible is as much a part of coming to church as hearing the sermon or receiving the Lord’s Supper. Don’t starve yourself. Let Jesus shower you with his blessings. Take every chance to receive his gifts. Come because Jesus is here, to feed and strengthen you.

To sum it up, do not despise the invitation. For when the invited guests made excuses in the parable, the master of the house became angry. He 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.”

Do not harden your hearts or anger the Holy Spirit. For Christ always sends out his Holy Spirit to gather the lost. Jesus invites the whole world into his church. He tirelessly seeks them out. And the Holy Spirit sends his servants into every corner of the earth, to proclaim the gospel, to bring in the crippled and the blind and the lame. Anyone who is simple, anyone who will heed the call. He even compels them to come in and forces them, that his house may be filled.

The invitation is for you, and for all. Come, for the feast is now ready. Do not hesitate.

Come eagerly, and invite others too. Make every effort to invite family, friends, and neighbors, for the world is perishing without the things of God. Come so this house may be filled to overflowing. Because your God has sacrificed everything to prepare this meal. The Son gave his own body on the cross for us. He poured out his blood for the forgiveness of sins, to take away the sins of the world, to fill up the communion chalice with his precious drink.

So approach the altar. Be filled by your gracious host with rich overflowing heavenly food. Jesus is here, with all his blessings. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.