

The Second Sunday after Trinity, A^xD 2010

Luke 14:15-24

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

1 Stupid Esau. He came in from working in the field and was famished. Jacob meanwhile had been making a stew, the smell of which wafted to Esau well before he even entered the tent. "Quick! Give me food before I die!" "Sure, Esau," charms the weasel-ly Jacob, "I'll trade you some of my delicious red stew in exchange for your birthright, all the inheritance and privileges rightfully yours by being the firstborn son." "Fine, whatever. Take my birthright; just give me some stew, for I am dying. What good is a birthright to me if I die from hunger?" Stupid Esau. How could anyone be so foolish? Who would trade a birthright for mere stew?

2 Sorry excuses. A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. "Come, everything is now ready." But those invited declined. One had just purchased a field, and the only time for inspecting his acquisition was during the banquet. Another had just bought five yoke of oxen and needed to examine them. A third had just married and was too wrapped up in the honeymooning to be bothered with the banquet. Flimsy excuses, at best. And an insult to the man throwing the banquet, to be sure. There is a time for everything. There is a time for working in the field and for inspecting oxen. There is a time for a marital retreat. And there is a time for the banquet. Come, for everything is now ready. Sorry excuses. Who would trade a rich banquet for such excuses?

3 The excuses of those who miss the banquet that is today are equally flimsy and equally insulting to the Master of the Banquet. Yes, I should be in church, and I will be, once things settle down a little bit. I have all these things that can only get done between 9:30 and 10:30 on Sunday morning, all these projects. I work six days a week, I deserve one day to sleep in. It's the people, pastor, I can't stand to see such hypocrites who call themselves Christians and who live differently. I can worship God anywhere, anytime. I would come to church, but the pastor's a jerk, the service is boring, the people are unfriendly, the drive is too far, the hour too early, the excuses too plentiful. Sorry excuses. They all amount to trading your divine birthright, the inheritance of eternal life given to you in Holy Baptism, for mere stew.

4 Not "blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God," but "blessed is everyone who does eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Jesus has come. The Kingdom of God comes now, today. The Bread of life is here for you today. How can you expect to enjoy the banquet at the Lord's Return if you do not enjoy the foretaste of that feast today? The banquet hall will be filled. Not one of God's elect will be missing. Those who are saved have only God to thank; those who are lost have only themselves to blame. The foretaste of the banquet is today and every Lord's Day.

5 So why aren't there more here? Why didn't those invited come to the banquet? Weren't the servants winsome enough? Why couldn't they win the hearts of those invited? Why aren't these pews full? Why are there people in town who have no church home? Why are others languishing apart from God's pure Gospel and Sacraments? Why are there people on our membership lists who haven't received Jesus Body and Blood with us in years? The fault was not with the banquet master's servants. They proclaimed as they were commanded. The problem was not with the banquet or with the master of the banquet. The feast was free and abundant. The master was gracious. It is not the winsomeness of preachers or the style of the service that draws more people to the Gospel. The love of God is such that it suffers itself to be rejected. And yet, the banquet hall will be filled. All of God's elect will be saved. All you have to do is be where He does His electing, through His Word and Sacraments, His means of grace.

6 But who has been unlike those with foolish excuses? Who hasn't sat here wishing for the service to be over, thinking about lunch or the things that need to be accomplished this afternoon or this week, or even scheming to sin while the gifts of God are immediately before you. Nevermind those with their foolish excuses which they hope will deflect blame from themselves for rejecting God's gifts. Even among those who come to receive God's gifts, there is not one who is innocent of the foolishness of Esau or of the self-centeredness of those who miss the banquet. Your mind wanders while the Word is read and preached. Your thoughts are sinful even in this most holy hour when God meets you at His altar and in His Word.

7 Your flesh is weak. You cannot control your thoughts as you ought. You cannot bridle your actions like you should. Your best efforts at righteousness are a far cry from what your Lord expects of you. Your flesh is crippled, unable to do the works required. Your mind is lame, unable to keep from wandering for even one Lord's Prayer. Your eyes are blind, unable to see the things of God purely without being distracted by an enemy, a rambunctious child, or a bit of skin. Your spirit is poor. The Master sends the servants out into the streets to call the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. "Come, for everything is now ready. The Master wants you at His royal banquet. Yes, you. Come." "Now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

8 Your sin, your innate tendency to reject the Lord's gifts, made you "far off," alienated from God. But the Lord didn't leave you far off. God came to you, came to dwell with His creation. From the Virgin's womb to Calvary's Cross, the blood of Jesus flowed for you. His life was lived to reconcile you to God, and His death was the payment for your sinfulness. His blood has paid for your sin. For His sake, you have been invited to the banquet. For His sake, you have been compelled to come in. For His sake, you have been brought in.

9 Come, for everything is now ready. The feast is here, even now. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world gives Himself to you for the feast. Your poor spirit, crippled flesh, blind eyes, and lame mind here are made holy and whole. The Host is also the Feast. His Body, which was crucified for you, is placed into your mouth. His Blood, which was shed to cover your sins, is poured into your mouth. The feast is free and frequent. It is the source of your life, both now and eternally. The Church lives from the altar. The price has been paid, the meal prepared, the table set. Come, for everything is now ready.

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

Soli Deo Gloria

Pastor Jeff Hemmer