

**Second Sunday after Trinity: June 26, 2022**  
**“Reception of the Unchanging Word”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Our text is our Gospel reading from Luke 14. Often this text gets lost in the actions of the parable, and overlooked is the point which the parable is used to teach. Beginning at verse 12 we read, “*[Jesus] said also to the man who had invited him, ‘When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.’*”<sup>1</sup> Then jumping to verse 24 at the end of the parable, Jesus says, “*I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.*”<sup>2</sup>

False gods manifest themselves in many ways. Sometimes they are blatant, but more often they are subtle. The corruption of sin to the human nature is so complete that one often couches false belief in seemingly innocuous or pious phrases. Christianity has been around for so long and so embedded within the fabric of our society, which isn’t necessarily a bad thing; however, Satan is good at what he does. He takes words and phrases, good gifts of God, and twists them to fit his own agenda. For many, these good words of God have been divorced from their meanings, and good Christians launch words that are not heard in the same way by their hearers.

Coming out in the July Newsletter, I touch a bit on the way people approach the Biblical text. This is not just for the Bible, but for all kinds of text. Boiler plate version is this – there are three parts to any text. The author, the text itself, and the receiver. Send a text or an email today and this very simply illustrated. The text is very simple. Markie can send me words that say get bread. I can either take the words for what they are, or I can start asking questions. What kind of bread? Does she need it right now? Is she out of bread? Is this for the future? Do I have time to waste before going to get bread?

That is just the text and the author, so what about the receiver? Is this the first time I have received this text and forgot to do it already? Do I have freedom to interpret this text? Is this real bread or does bread to me mean a symbolic bread of life?

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 14:12–14

<sup>2</sup> Luke 14:24

As I read this text I am reminded of a different cultural time where bread meant money, so to me this text means to bring home money. I received this text while sitting in the study, and I know that the money is direct deposited, so I react lovingly to the text of “Get bread,” with, “It’s in the bank. Love you!”

Was I right to respond this way? This is how I understood it. So was I wrong? You all know the answer to that, and of course I was. The text was pretty simple. Get bread, and even my kids know what that meant. There was not cultural phenomenon to piece through. There was no backstory that was needed. The text said, get bread.

This is how God speaks to us. He gives straightforward texts and we spend too much time trying to figure out a way around it. We bring our own pre-conceived ideas and notions to the text, which are important, but we don’t change the text. We don’t inform the text with our own reading. I can justify myself all I want, but the text still says what it says. No amount of pious grandstanding will change it.

Luke tells us a leader of the Pharisees had invited Jesus one Sabbath to supper at his house. There were others there, other Pharisees presumably and other religious leaders, because the text says that temple lawyers were there, but it wasn’t just the religious leaders around this table. There was also a man who had dropsy.

Dropsy is swelling caused by water pockets collecting in body tissue, and was painful. The thought at the time was it was caused by immorality. It was often viewed as a physical punishment for breaking God’s commandments. This man suffered not just physically, but he would be looked down upon by others simply because of his medical condition. Jesus sees this man and has compassion on him. In His compassion, He asked the Lawyers and Pharisees if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. How did they respond to these words?

They remained silent. The Pharisees weren’t completely heartless. We have painted them as enemy number one and lower than human; but, they had human compassion. They knew that it was not only lawful, but it was in fact good to heal on *any* day. After receiving no rebukes, Jesus healed the man and sent him away.

He then turns to the host, and the guests, and poses another question, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?”

Again, they answered nothing. One can easily hear the awkward silence that follows. The kind of silence you get when you know the right answer, but you've been cornered in your own selfishness and there's nothing you can say to divert the conversation.

There is no amount of personal bias that one can bring to the table and get around the fact that Jesus is not a safe guest to have in your home. He is not going to overlook blatant disregard for your neighbor. He is not going to be polite or Iowa-nice and say nothing in the face of obvious abuse of the fifth or eighth commandments. He is going to call you on it. You are to help and support your neighbor in every physical need, no matter what day it is. You are to defend and put the best construction on everything no matter who is around and no matter how funny you think may be.

Like awkward silences usually go, there is an equally awkward phrase that is launched trying to cut the tension. Here is no exception. After the awkward silence, and after a rebuking parable about presuming to take the seat of honor, placing yourself above others, one of the guests tries to cut the tension in the room by issuing a pious-sounding statement: "***Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!***" That sounds nice, doesn't it? What could be wrong with that?

Jesus tell us. Pious-sounding statements meant to cover up sin or defend bad behavior doesn't work with Jesus. Jesus isn't impressed with platitudes or nice, empty statements, or Lutheran clichés. This is the context for the parable before us this morning. He is pushing the Pharisees in their false theology and practice. He will not tolerate such wickedness and nonsense. Jesus will not stop preaching the Law until sinners repent and turn from evil. He will not give up until rebellious men turn from sin and are converted to faith. He will not look the other way to make a false peace or agree to disagree.

So to drive home His point of inviting those to the banquet who cannot repay, which is His banquet, He begins our parable this morning, "***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 those who were invited made excuses and refused to come. The master got angry and sent the servant out to invite any and all he could find, the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

This parable is built around three important points: the inviter, the invitation, and the invitees. The inviter is God. The invitation is the Gospel that Jesus has redeemed the world from sin and has opened up the gate of heaven to all who believe.

The invitees are the people in this world from the beginning of creation until today, everyone who has ever lived.

The inviter is good. He is generous. He is sincere. He is loving. He wants all people to come and enjoy His hospitality and share in His riches.

The invitation is urgent. “Come, for everything is NOW ready.” The banquet is about to begin and it’s ready to be enjoyed, now. The invitation is external—it’s audible and visible. It has been broadcast by servants—the prophets and apostles who have been sent for this purpose. It isn’t secret or hidden. It is public and communal. Christ sends the invitation out into the whole world.

In the first place, God sent out the prophets, who have been teaching since the world began. Then He sends out the Apostles into all the world after the day of Pentecost, and now He sends out the message in the Church’s preaching.

These are not the only servants of God. He also sends out His children to invite others, to give witness to the hope that is in them. You have been called for this purpose as Christian sons and daughters, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, grandparents, friends, employers, workers, students, and colleagues. Every Christian is called to give “a reason for the hope that is in [them]; yet do[ing] it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience.”<sup>3</sup>

This is the Biblical view of evangelism, and in this point, this is an evangelism parable. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the spoken Word of God. The Holy Spirit works using people as messengers to extend the invitation through audible words. This is not just the duty of a few called pastors. It is the duty of all children of God within their vocation.

The invitation does not mean that the invitees are worthy in themselves of the invitation. The invitation at the end went out to all people regardless of worthiness, telling us that the invitation has always gone out to the unworthy. The invitation itself is by grace alone without any merit on the part of the receiver. The fact that the invitation was extended AND the content of the invitation are Gospel, the free gift of God for us—the Good News that God has reconciled man to himself through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 3:15-16

That's the only message that God has preached since the Fall, since Genesis 3:15. All of Scripture is pointing to this one, monumental, salvific event. The Divine Author has written these words of Holy Scripture so that we may believe and that by believing we may have life in the Name of Jesus; the only Name under heaven by which we are saved.

The reader brings their own biases and questions to the text, but the text stands as it is. The Gospel is true for all people in all places and at all times. The text doesn't change, people do. As poor, miserable sinners who are by nature sinful and unclean, hearts, minds, and bodies of the flesh are set on the things of the flesh; finding hope only in the things of this world. What does this mean? The glorious invitation may be rejected. It is offered for free, by grace, but sinful man can reject the invitation.

That's what is behind Jesus' statement, "but they all alike began to make excuses." The first had just bought a field and must go out and see it. Another had bought five yoke of oxen and was going to examine them. And another just got married and therefore cannot come. The excuses are feeble, that's the point. All excuses for rejecting the invitation are feeble. Just like all excuses for not helping your neighbor or for not putting the best construction on everything are feeble. You have heard many modern excuses in this regard: the church is full of hypocrites; the pastor or a another member have offended me, so I'll stop going altogether...I'll show them; my parents never took me, so I don't want to go either; I can't believe in a God that allows bad things to happen; I don't need to go to a church building, I can worship God in my own way; I don't want to help that person, because they won't say thank you, or appreciate it, or turn their life around; Did you hear what so and so did, I can't believe they are not more like me."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the invitation may be rejected by those who receive it. Cain fell from the faith when his heart stopped trusting in God. King Saul fell from the faith when He stopped trusting God to provide for him and relied rather on his own strength. Judas fell from the faith when he refused to believe that Jesus could forgive his sin. The Bible gives account of those among the Children of God, who then left the faith for their own selfish, sinful devises and desires.

They received and heard the text, but they listened instead to their own interpretive strategy. They rejected God's Word for their own words, and sadly, rejection of the invitation brings damnation.

This is often forgotten; Jesus' parable of the Sower finds  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the seed is rejected. John records Jesus' words, ***"If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day."***<sup>4</sup> St. Paul writes, ***"those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus...will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might."***<sup>5</sup> Rejection of the invitation is eternally serious, and our text ends today, ***"For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."***

Yet the invitation goes forth. The Lord's servants go out relentlessly to spread the Good News of the kingdom, until all the number of God's children are seated at His banquet. And if all people, regardless of worthiness are invited, then rest assured, dear Christian, that you too are invited. The Gospel message is for you. Jesus has overcome the world by His death and resurrection. He has connected you to that death through Baptism. You are washed, made clean, born anew, given banquet clothes.

He brings you to the table of His heavenly banquet, the one to which you will receive a foretaste this morning at this altar. The Sacrament of the Altar is the foretaste of the feast to come. It's where the invitees gather. The text hasn't changed and will not change. You cannot repay Jesus for this banquet. He has brought the bread. By faith you who were once poor in spirit, crippled in love, lame in good works, and blind to life are here fed with the food that forgives sins. Here you feast on the Bread of Life. The Word changes those who receive, not the other way around. Thus in joy we may sing,

"From eternity, O God, In Thy Son Thou didst elect me;  
Therefore, Father, on life's road Graciously to heav'n direct me;  
Send to me Thy Holy Spirit That His gifts I may inherit.  
Help me speak what's right and good And keep silence on occasion;  
Help me pray, Lord, as I should, Help me bear my tribulation;  
Help me die and let my spirit Everlasting life inherit."<sup>6</sup> Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> John 12:47-48

<sup>5</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

<sup>6</sup> From Eternity, O God TLH 411: 1, 7

**Prayer of the Church**  
**Second Sunday after Trinity**  
**26 June 2022**

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

O Lord, by Your Word and Spirit, give us a fear and knowledge of You. Set us on the way of wisdom and insight, that we may love You for Your Law's reproof and grow wiser still in the wisdom of Your Gospel and its righteousness. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, You have brought us who once were far off near to You by the blood of Christ. Bless the mission of Your Church in our land and throughout the world, that through the proclamation of the Gospel many may be built together with us into a dwelling place for You. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, help all parents to set their children's feet firmly on wisdom's path by raising them up in the fear and knowledge of You. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, bless our leaders and all who govern the nations in Your stead. Keep their lips from speaking deceit, turn them from evil, cause them to do good, and help them seek peace and pursue it. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving Father, we give thanks that in Holy Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation, bless those who celebrate baptismal anniversaries this week, especially, *Emma and Jan*, grant that by Your Word and Spirit they may faithfully keep the covenant into which they have been called, boldly confess their Savior, and finally share with all Your saints the joys of eternal life; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the joy and blessings that You have granted *Hutch & Julie and Randy & Diane* during the years of their marriage. Assist them always by Your grace that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may ever honor and keep their marriage vows, grow in love towards You and for each other, and come at last to the eternal joys that You have promised; Lord in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we lift before You the many afflictions of our brothers and sisters [*especially Marvin, Ruth, Pam, Zoey, John, David, Merrill, Greg, Pastor Small (St. Silas, North Liberty), and those we name in our hearts*]. For the sake of Your righteous Son, hear their cries for help and deliver them out of all their troubles. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, since You have made us fellow citizens with all the saints through the blood of Christ, help us not look upon anyone in our midst as a stranger or alien, but embrace them instead as fellow members of Your household. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, Your wisdom has mixed the wine and set this table before us in the feast of Your Son's body and blood. Grant us faithfully to eat this heavenly bread and drink this wine, that we may leave our sinful ways and live, walking in the way of insight. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, heavenly Father, we gratefully remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Rejoicing in His victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from His ascension before You, where He ever stands for us as our own High Priest. Gather us together from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**