

SOUP'S ON!!!
Luke 14:15 - 24

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

An architect, working on a new project decides to skip Church one Sunday, he feels it is more important to go out and look over a new structure he is supervising. You see, there will be no one around on Sunday morning, so it will be a perfect time to look at the structure without getting in the way. He can also take notes about where progress isn't going as planned, or where changes need to be made. So, instead of at Church, he is busy at the construction site.

A young man just bought his first car on Wednesday. Since then, he has had to work every day after school, and on Saturday he got called in for a double shift to the job he took to be sure he can pay insurance. Sunday morning come around and he's outside tinkering under the hood of his new ride. After he finishes the tune-up and what nots, he washes, waxes, and vacuums the interior of his new vehicle. Meanwhile, he has forgotten Church Study that morning.

Saturday evening saw a young couple joined in matrimony in one of our churches. The newlyweds stayed at the reception until 2:00am, and then they went out with their wedding party. Sunday morning, they slept in and skipped church – along with the whole wedding party.

Please do not think that these things: work, a new car, and celebrating marriage with friends are bad. However, when worldly things get in the way of Godly things, it is time to take a look at the place of worldly things in our life.

After 40 years in the wilderness, the Israelites were finally ready to go into the promised land. God warned them not to depend on themselves or their own deeds or wealth. Who brought them through the wilderness? Who fed them in the wilderness? Who gave them their wealth? As God did all this, they are warned that if they forget their God, they would perish. (Deut. 8:1-19) This is not about physical death. We all know we will die in this life, but to perish is to be cut off from God for all eternity. To spend eternity apart from God, to go to hell is what it means to perish.

Today we easily get caught up in worldly things and often exclude God from the picture. I went to a public grade school, and I remember that we were not allowed to begin eating our lunch until the whole table was filled, and the table had prayed together. We were also not allowed to leave the table until we had given thanks as a group. Boy, have times changed. How many of us pray before and after **EVERY** meal? I know I forget sometimes. How about starting each morning in prayer, and ending the day in prayer? Do we do this?

A group of us were discussing the idea of encouraging parishioners to attend services every week, and develop a **DAILY** home devotional life. One pastor brought up the point that our parishioners were too busy. They have too many things going on, and we shouldn't attempt to encourage them to weekly attendance at the Divine Service **AND** have a **daily** time for family Bible reading and prayer. They have so many things to do, both spouses may be working and the children have various events in which they are involved. All this takes time, how can they possibly squeeze in time each day to study the Bible together as a family? And maybe, just regular attendance at church is enough, once a month is fine.

Another Pastor asked, "So what you're saying is, that God, study of His Word, prayer together, and sharing that in a family setting should take a back seat to the other things a family does?" Boy, did that change the tone of the discussion.

No, it doesn't mean we're going to hell if we don't have a daily devotional time at home. Sure, things may come up and plans may have to be changed, but are you even **trying** to spend time in God's Word and growing together in

it as a family?

The biggest problem isn't that people don't **have** time for family devotions, it is that they don't **make** time for family devotions. It is amazing what comes first, while God takes second.

There are many worldly things which are not necessarily bad, but when they take priority over God, that is idolatry – having other things before God. It is in these subtle ways that Satan tries to win us over, and away from God. Family time in Scripture and prayer, and the neglect of it is just one of those subtle ways Satan tries to lead us astray. As I've said before, if you were to see some guy all in red with a pitch fork, horns, a pointy tail, and with flames licking up and down his body, you would probably shy away from him. If he asked you to spend eternity in hell with him in his blast furnace, I know you'd all say, "Go to home."

How many of you spend time together in the family room watching TV shows? America's Funniest Home Videos? American Idol? Or the NASCAR race? How about the news or some sporting event? What about skipping one of those so that the family could spend time together in God's Word? Oh, I've even heard that the national and local news are much more important than God's Good News of eternal life given to us in Scripture, "Pastor, I can't skip the news, I won't know what's going on in the world."

How about vacation time? Do you all take a vacation? Do you spend any of your vacation time being fed and nourished in God's Word, or in family devotions? We sure can't use the "too busy" excuse on vacation, but too often, vacation time also becomes a vacation from God.

Where did all you have, come from? You'd like to answer, "I worked hard for what I have, I earned it." Yes, you did, but your talents and abilities come from? Our heavenly Father has given us all that we have, everything is a gift from Him.

You know, we don't like to think about future type things, like heaven and that other place, yea, hell. Are we like those in today's Gospel lesson? Are we so busy we forget about or turn down the invitation to join Jesus at His banquet feast for us - the table He sets before us?

Are we like the Israelites, even as they were guided by God in the wilderness? Do we find ourselves pursuing earthly things and forgetting the heavenly things He's given to us?

Though we are sinners, we find excuses, and worldly things often become more important to us than Godly things. God gave His Son to rescue us from this world, and our sinful fixation upon it. Christ has prepared us to join the feast in heaven. On our own we would never be ready for His return.

In our earthly lives we are preoccupied with earthly things. Our job, our cars, our possessions, television, parties, and sporting events all take up our time and entice us away from God. We are busy with things of the world - you are busy with the things of this world.

Although you are more busy with worldly things, Christ has been busy with you. He has fulfilled the law for you that you might join Him at His eternal banquet feast.

The Holy Spirit has busied himself with you. In your Baptism, you were given the wedding garment of salvation. You were robed with Christ. You were given your invitation to the banquet.

Many are those who have turned down the invitation. God desires all mankind to be in attendance at His eternal banquet feast. Many have received the invitation. But many people will not be in attendance. People spurn the invitation because of the temptations of this world. Their own flesh clamors for the world's enticements.

Imagine a dinner in your honor. Your ticket has been paid for. Christ paid the price of your ticket with His

innocent suffering and death - His own blood shed on the cross. Your seat has been reserved by His resurrection. And your limo ride to the banquet hall is supplied by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who daily helps you to hold fast to these promises. He sanctifies your life, making it pleasing to God. He changes your will, so that you might accept the gracious invitation.

Remember last week's Gospel? Heaven wasn't earned by the rich man, but it was given graciously to Lazarus through faith in Christ. Faith was supplied to him by the Comforter of whom Jesus spoke. As the Holy Spirit came to him, giving him faith, so also He comes to you and supplies you with the faith to believe and to do all things pleasing to God.

When you follow those things that the devil places in this world to tempt you away from God, it is the Holy Spirit which fills you with the strength to turn and walk away from them. It is the Spirit that led you to be here this morning. It is the Spirit that moves you to pick up your Bible and read it. It is the Spirit who moves you to come to your God in prayer.

The table is set before you this morning. The invitation has been given to you. By the Holy Spirit's work, you have come to eat and to drink. Here is a meal that gives you heavenly blessings, removing the sinful fixation on the world. Simple bread and wine are the vehicles by which Christ feeds you His body and blood. Eat and drink of your forgiveness. Eat and drink of your salvation. Eat and drink eternal life. Christ fills you with Himself, strengthening your faith to trust in Him alone.

The banquet feast has been prepared. A place has been set at the table for you, and the way to that table has been supplied by a God who desires your presence with Him for all eternity. Soup's on! Let's eat! Amen.