

TRINITY 2

Text: Gospel-Luke 14:16-24. Epistle-1 John 3:13-24.

“Then the master told his servant, Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.” From a God who sends you His invitation to come to the great banquet, I bring His greetings in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

This morning’s gospel contains a timeless message that remains so relevant in our lives today. Our Lord was invited to dinner on the Sabbath at the home of a Pharisee. The other guests we are told are also Pharisees or prominent leaders in the Jewish community and other guests who scripture says were experts in the law. Jesus in speaking to the guests talks of who should sit at the place of honor and who should be invited to the feasts they host. But one of the guests after hearing what our Lord has to say makes a pronouncement. He says, Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

To this, our Lord replies with the parable contained in this mornings Gospel. “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.” He sent his servant out to tell his friends and colleagues that all had been prepared and the feast was ready. When they received the invitation however, what happened? They all made excuses why they couldn’t come. One had just bought some land and wanted to go see it; one had gotten some new oxen and wanted to take them for a little spin around the field. The other had just gotten married and no doubt the new wife had a few chores for him, or maybe he was still on his honey moon which might be a good reason.

But it didn’t matter. The feast was prepared, the host had made a great effort to spread the table and he called to those he knew and said come join me in my great celebration. But they were too busy, it wasn’t a priority for them, it wasn’t that important. Besides, there would be other feasts and for the moment, their needs were first. The master of the house was their friend, surely he would invite them to the next great feast.

Well, no doubt the master of the house was disappointed. So he told the servant, if my friends and those I know won’t come, then go invite the poor, the lame, those in need and I will feed them and host them at my celebration. When the servant finished that he said, the house still is not full. Then he told his servant to go beyond the City to the country and ask those he found to come in. Jesus ends the parable by saying that not one of those who were invited would get a taste of the banquet.

There is a moment in time that has to be pondered here. Jesus was there among the Jews and He was calling to them but was being rejected by many. These were God’s chosen and they turned from him. But eventually those who were in great need, those He would heal and touch in His ministry would see His miracles and eventually come to believe. But still, the house was not full. So into the country His word would spread, to the Gentiles, who would come to believe and join Him at the table. But to those who whom He had invited and rejected him, He says “these shall not get a taste of the banquet”.

Is it much different today? Are we not invited every day to do the Lord’s work? To come to His church, to take up our cross, to share our faith? Does not the Lord call to us, invite us to share in His feast of everlasting life through our faith in Jesus Christ? Are we committed? Do we make excuses?

How often do we find ourselves in a moment that God has put us in where we have the opportunity to witness, or lend a hand at a church event, or reach out to someone who is ill or depressed in the form of a phone call or a card, or share some of our good fortune in the offering ? How often do we allow that opportunity to pass because of what someone might think, or because we have something in our view that is more important, or better ways to spend our money than sharing it with our church community. Are these not the invitations that the Gospel speaks of today?

How many of us have been in that moment when someone was speaking to you of their troubles and a little voice inside you said share your faith but you hesitated, because you thought that this person might think ill of you or perhaps you felt you did not have the right words to say.

St. John in this morning's Epistle states it clearly. "Marvel not my brethren if the world hate you." God is inviting you to stand up in your faith, not matter if the world thinks it is politically correct or not. And witnessing to your faith is more than just calling our selves Christian. It is showing compassion, forgiveness, love, even to those who would do us harm. St. John continues; "Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him." It's as much about our actions and our feelings in witnessing to our faith.

John further tells us how we are to know what love is; "Jesus Christ laid down His life for us and we are to lay down our lives for our brothers." If we see someone in need, and do not help them, can the spirit of God be in us? If someone is spiritually dead and we do not speak to them of our joy in Christ, can the spirit of God be in us? If our parish struggles to survive when all around us is the need the witness to Christ's love for us, and we do not step forward, can the spirit of God be in us?

John continues; "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth!" Our hearts can be at rest if we accept His invitation to us. For John says, God knows what is in our hearts and we can stand before God and know He will answer our prayers because we have been faithful to Him. This is how we accept His invitation and allow Him to be in us and we in Him through the Holy Spirit.

We are invited every day of our lives to accept the invitation to the great banquet, that is the salvation in Jesus Christ that is offered to us through His grace and by our faith. He has demonstrated His love for us through the sacrifice of our Lord upon the cross. Bleeding, dying, mocked and scorned, He looked to heaven and asked God to forgive us, not just then, but throughout all time.

When our Lord calls to us, listen. When our Lord asks us to stand up for our faith, stand tall-even if the world hate you. When we are given the opportunity to share our faith, speak boldly. When we are given our invitation to the great banquet, respond "Here I am Lord, take me!"

We pray-"Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the blessings you have filled our lives with. You have set our tables with your love, upheld us in our despair, forgiven us in our weakness, and never turned from us, even when we have turned from you. Thank you for your eternal patience with us. May we be filled with your Holy Spirit and always recognize when you set your invitation before us. And may we always respond with joy and gladness, without excuse, that we are ready to do your work, in our savior, Jesus Christ's Holy Name, Amen."