

The Second Sunday after Trinity
30 June, Anno Domini 2019
St. Luke 14:15-24
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God." That's true. Everyone who eats bread in God's kingdom certainly is blessed. But what is God's kingdom? Where is it? What is this bread and who will eat it? And the most important question for each of us, "Will I eat bread in God's kingdom?"

Let Jesus' parable today be a reminder that God isn't a unitarian universalist. Not everyone is going to be in the kingdom of heaven and the reason they won't is because they refused God's gracious invitation. God certainly loves everyone. "For God so loved THE WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should have eternal life." But everyone certainly doesn't love God - they don't desire His kingdom. They have other priorities, other things that were more important or urgent in their minds. They desire a different kingdom with a different king.

So what is God's kingdom? We hear about it a lot and every day we pray that it would come. What exactly are we praying for? We can actually speak of God's two kingdoms. His first kingdom is typically called His kingdom of power. In this kingdom He sustains the heavens and the earth, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. In this kingdom, the rain falls, the sun rises, and daily bread is given to righteous and unrighteous alike. In this kingdom we can speak about God being everywhere. All people are equally a part of this kingdom, whether they want to be or not. They can't escape it or change it. Whether or not they believe that the Triune God is God, they are His subjects because they are part of creation. Indeed, the creation itself points us to this truth. The rich complexity and order of the universe testifies to a Creator with a will and purposeful design, rather than the chaotic forces of chance and mutation stretched across billions of years, a proposition which is not only contrary to Scripture but also all sound reason and science. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies above proclaims His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

Our invitation into this kingdom was our conception and birth. We all eat bread in this kingdom. And we are certainly blessed because we don't even deserve the bread that perishes. We deserve to be hungry. We deserve to live lives of sorrow

and misery and hardship and toil. We don't even deserve to exist in this kingdom because of our rebellion against the God who created us and sustains us. We try to order our existence according to our own desires, chasing after nothing more than immediate pleasure. And every day, everywhere we look, we see the pain, chaos, and heartache that our foolishness (or as we affectionately like to call it, our wisdom) brings. Families ripped apart. Children confused and alone. Researchers and scientists creating and destroying life because they can. Churches empty and broke. Politicians clamoring to see who can gain more power and spend others' money faster. And yet, for all our rebellion and all our trying, Almighty God still rules in the kingdom of power and shapes and moves all things according to His good and gracious will. He sits in the heavens and laughs as men vainly try to live as though He doesn't exist. And yet, though we resist, He continues to preserve and sustain creation according to His mercy for our sake.

But nothing about the kingdom of power saves us from eternal death and judgment. In fact, it only condemns us. To know that there is a God, only brings terror because we don't know how that God is disposed toward us. Is He like the God worshiped by the Muslims? Is he like the gods of the Greeks and Romans? Does He care anything about us or are we just toys to amuse Him? And even if He is loving, how can I know that He actually loves me? After all, I know things about me. I know the things I've thought and done when no one was looking. I know how selfish and unloving I've been. God knows all that and more. The only thing we learn about God from the kingdom of power is that he is God and we aren't.

And that is why there is the second kingdom, the kingdom of grace. It is the kingdom where God rules in mercy and forgiveness. In this kingdom God reveals His true nature as the God who not only created me but loves me and doesn't want to see this poor, miserable sinner suffering eternal judgment in hell. In this kingdom sinners get what they don't deserve, rebels are freely pardoned, and the guilt is laid on the innocent. This is the kingdom that Jesus is teaching about in today's Gospel. Like the kingdom of power, the kingdom of grace is available to all people. The Blood of Jesus was poured out for the sins of all people - those who are near and those who are far off. But, unlike the kingdom of power, not all people ARE in the kingdom of grace. It is a kingdom to which there is an invitation, but as Jesus taught us, the invitation can be refused - and many do. Look around. How many have been invited and didn't come? How many of yours friends and neighbors have you shared the good news of salvation with and they dismissed the Lord Jesus and His forgiveness? How many have you invited to join you here in the Lord's house to hear the Gospel and they have made excuse after

excuse why they couldn't come? How often have we done the same? How often have our hearts refused to be comforted by the promise of God's love and deliverance? How often have we tried to find peace within ourselves, in our doing more, trying harder, and getting better rather than resting in the Son of God who paid our full redemption price with His life? Even we who have tasted the rich feast Wisdom has laid before us in Holy Scripture, find our hearts burdened and weighed down by the cares and concerns of this world, sorely tempted to turn down the invitation of God's promises.

To you The Lord sends out His messengers to invite you to this kingdom again today. Today is the day of salvation. He invites you to lay aside YOUR works, which cannot save you, and to find comfort in His works, which are all meant to save you, works which are complete and perfect in every way. He invites you to set aside the things of this fading, corrupting, decaying sinful world and to feast on the rich food He has prepared for you. The invitation into the kingdom of God is the preaching, the proclamation, that God saves sinners. It is the unbelievable message that God has used His divine power to save the very people who rejected His rule and power. In the kingdom of grace, Jesus is condemned and you are set free, God dies and you live. In the kingdom of grace God does all the work and you receive all the benefits. In this kingdom you don't sweat and toil for your bread. Instead, Jesus sweats great drops of His Blood and suffers through the agony of divine judgment and hell's fury to work off the price of your sin.

Where is this kingdom where God loves and forgives sins? Where is this kingdom where God offers life and salvation to fools like me? Well, you won't find it on a map and you certainly won't find it in your heart. The kingdom of God is in Jesus. If we desire the true wisdom and understanding, if we long to know that our sins won't be held against us, if we desire refuge from Satan's relentless accusations and assaults then look to Jesus, the Son of God who became like you, shared in your sufferings and temptations, and conquered sin, death, and the devil by dying and rising again. In Jesus alone will you find the peace your soul longs for. In your darkest hour, in the deepest throws of hopelessness and sadness, the crucified Jesus stands as a beacon, assuring you that there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can separate you from His love. Jesus is the true Bread sent from heaven. He satisfies hungry and hurting souls. All who have tasted and seen the goodness of God in Jesus will lose their taste for the empty, poisonous things of this world. And while this kingdom is a kingdom of faith that cannot be seen, God has set up signs so that you know where it can be found. Wherever Jesus Christ and Him crucified for you is preached, there is the kingdom of grace, there is Jesus. Wherever Baptism is proclaimed and administered as the washing of regeneration and renewal, there is

Jesus, extending His kingdom and drawing sinners to Himself. Wherever the Holy Supper is distributed as the true Body and Blood of Jesus, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins, there is Jesus, feeding and strengthening His people. There and there alone will you find the kingdom of grace - where The Lord who rules over heaven and earth, saves you.

And though the Lord gladly issues the invitation, it will not last forever. Those who refused the man's invitation got exactly what they wanted and enjoyed none of the man's feast. As the Holy Spirit spoke in Psalm 95 "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart" for none who harden their hearts against this invitation will enter the rest of God either in this life or the next. All who refuse the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, all who trust in themselves, all who lust after earthly pleasure, will suffer the just punishment for their sins for all eternity. Heed the invitation while it is still today before the invitation is removed. Repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The invitation is sincere. God truly desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And today you are invited to rest in the Lord Jesus Christ in faith and eat bread in His kingdom.

And how can you be sure that you are in this kingdom? Certainly don't look inside yourself. Don't look at how good you haven't been. Don't look at how full your bank account is or isn't. Look to Jesus. He is the one who brings you into His kingdom. He is the one who has died for you. He is the one who forgives all your sins. He is the one who washes away your guilt in the waters of Holy Baptism. He is the one who through this humble mouth absolves you. He is the one who places His Body and Blood into your mouth. He sends out the invitation, as He has done again today, and He desires to have you in kingdom.

May God grant us grace to heed this invitation, to set aside all other invitations, and to receive Christ and His gifts in true faith.

In the Name of +Jesus. Amen.