

Many members. One body united in Christ.

The Second Sunday after Trinity with the Rite of Confirmation for Shelly Hennig-Hoffman and Profession of Faith for Randy Hoffman

St. Luke 14:15-24

14 June, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved saints of the Most High God,

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is one thing to receive an invitation to a party. It is another thing to act on it. That is the very important distinction that our Lord Jesus Christ is putting before us today. Reclining at the table at the Pharisee's house, observing the politicking and jockeying for position on display from both the host and the guests, Jesus issued a very sharp and sobering warning that we must all let sink in.

But first, note that the master of the house wants his house to be filled. He wants people to receive and enjoy the riches of his household. He has great good to bestow. The fact that some despise that good doesn't change the fact that the master wants to share this feast with any and all who would receive it. Of course, in this parable, the master of the house is God. And the true God, the Triune God, who created man, desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. There is no person for whom Christ didn't die and no person who God doesn't want to be with Him in eternal life.

When God originally created all things, the entire creation was the recipient of His constant blessing. Everything was good. Everything was properly ordered. Adam and Eve lacked no good thing because they shared a pure and perfect unity with God. He was their good and therefore everything He gave and anything He withheld was also good. But the great deceiver, the devil, sowed the seeds of discontent. The feast God had laid before them suddenly wasn't good enough. The abundance God had given to them suddenly wasn't the abundance they wanted. They wanted something else, namely, the opportunity to be like God Himself. They rejected the invitation to the life that God had graciously given and chose death instead. That should have been the end of humanity and the rest of creation, right there. The hubris required to refuse or denigrate anything that comes from the hand of God is worthy of the deepest torment of God's eternal, unmitigated wrath.

Yet, strangely, God was merciful. He did not immediately strike down Adam and

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Eve as they and we deserve. He offered the most undeserved and incredible invitation. He promised them and all humanity after them that He would save them, that He would partake of our humanity in order to crush the serpent's head and restore us to His kingdom. "The Lord God said to the serpent 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.'" (Gen. 3:15b) God didn't say when, only that He would.

Adam and Eve received this invitation with the greatest joy! They wouldn't die under God's wrath as they deserved. Instead, God said He would die under His own wrath for them! They believed God and it was counted to them for righteousness. And the rest of their lives were spent looking forward to the feast of salvation. Every day they prayed that the Messiah would come. Every day they issued the invitation to their children, calling them away from their wickedness. Nothing mattered more. In truth, nothing else mattered at all. If there would be no salvation, no hope of being restored to God, no hope that the Blood of God would be poured out to make atonement for them, then every hour of every day would be a meaningless march toward the certainty of eternal damnation. But God had very clearly told them "I will save you. I will come and die your death so that you may live with Me." And so Adam and Eve, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, David, and countless others waited with baited breath. God would do it. God would save them. They prayed. They fasted. They mourned. They preached. They kept issuing the invitation - "God will save us. God will atone for the sins of all men and provide the way out of eternal judgment. He will prepare the feast of salvation and invite all, Jews and Gentiles alike, to fill His house and feast with Him in His kingdom."

Many heard this invitation. But only those who received it in faith, looking forward to the Messiah, repenting of sin and seeking the mercy of God, trusting that God would, for the sake of the Messiah, pardon them of their iniquities, would taste the feast. Those who heard the preaching of salvation but rejected the Messiah, whose hearts trusted in other things, who thought that by their works they could please God, died in their sin and now suffer God's eternal wrath. They were invited. But they spurned the invitation. And so God did not force Himself upon them but gave them exactly what they wanted - an eternity without Him.

It is not enough to simply hear about salvation and know the facts. The invitation to salvation is only received by those who believe and receive the salvation as God has accomplished it and gives it. Those who did end up in the house of the master were those who longed for the feast which was offered, those who had nothing of

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their own and weren't so delusional as to believe that they were worthy of the invitation or that they could somehow repay their host.

Each of us here this day should count ourselves blessed beyond our wildest imagination because this day, the Lord God has invited us yet again to put our whole hope and confidence in the Blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, which He offered up as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. We are invited to lay aside the riches and cares and pleasures of this world with which the devil is constantly trying to distract us and which are all passing away and instead receive the immeasurable, priceless, eternal peace which comes only from a conscience cleansed of sin. God in His mercy calls you to trust wholly in His all-sufficient grace which nailed His Son to the cross and laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.

What have we done to deserve this invitation? What could we possibly do or offer to God that could make us worthy of having a seat in His house? The answer, of course, is nothing. But if we believe that we can or we have or we must then we have received the invitation in vain and we will not taste the feast which He has prepared for us. Let us also not foolishly imagine that having once received the invitation with joy that we cannot then come to despise it and find ourselves left out of the feast. Believing yesterday does not save you today. The invitation to faith is an invitation to a daily life of faith - prayer, piety, humility, devotion, sacrifices, forgiveness, and obedience. These are the activities of faith. When God and his Word are the trust and desire of your heart, these are the works that will follow. If they do not, then you have refused God's invitation to life and have returned to the devil's slop trough of death.

Those who received the first invitation revealed the gods of their hearts when they began to make their excuses. Their replies may have been polite but they were wicked. It isn't that fields or wives or jobs or sports or even good works don't have their good and appropriate places. But when our Savior and the means of salvation are set aside for them, when our hearts are only satisfied when our bellies are full or when people like us, when we are filled with excuses as to why we don't have time to pray or read the Bible, why we can't forgive those who have trespassed against us, why we have to continue in our pet sins, then we have despised the Lord's invitation to freely receive the true rest, joy, and hope that He alone can and desires to give us. There are no excuses or justifications before the throne of God, no matter what your heart or others tell you. There is only repentance, forgiveness, and striving by the Holy Spirit to live everyday in living faith.

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All you whom the Lord has graciously gathered together again this day, rejoice because you have received again the Lord's invitation to trust in Him alone, to receive the life and salvation which He has prepared through His death and resurrection, and to feast at His table with all who hunger and thirst for the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Today again, God with His Church and the holy angels rejoice with us as Randy and Shelly, having heard their Lord's gracious invitation, confess the true and saving Christian faith and their fervent desire to join in the feast of salvation. Praise be to God who still desires that His house be filled and still sends out the invitation! And may He grant us all to remain steadfast in the one, holy, Christian, and apostolic faith until our Lord returns to gather together the whole Christian Church and inaugurate the fullness of His eternal feast of joy. God grant by His Holy Spirit that we would heed this invitation to faith and daily by faith partake of God's abundant mercy.

In the Name of +Jesus.
Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.