

Luke 14:15-24; I Tim. 2:1-7; Invited to the Feast #2 I. Who God Invites II. Those who will not Taste

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who does God invite into His kingdom? Who- or what kind of people does He welcome in? Our sermon this morning is a continuation of the concept of the Kingdom of God- and the invitation to come in and celebrate this feast with Jesus our heavenly host. We have already considered the attitude of those invited- that we must be humble and joyful in the fact that we too have been called. We have also considered our own inviting of others into our homes and lives- that we should consider the poor and share our gifts with those who will not or cannot return the favor. In this way we reflect the true hospitality and generosity of our God who showers us with gifts- even though we are so undeserving and cannot repay. Today we come to parable of the Great Banquet- and we note who it is that Jesus invites to His feast. When throwing a party- or when planning a wedding- we are usually limited by space. At some point we have to say- we cannot invite any more people. There are simply not enough seats! I would love to have our whole church come to our house for a feast- but we would not all fit! But today we see that our God is not bound by these limitations! His house is large and He will not stop until a great host of people are gathered in! This sermon serves as a continuation of last week- really built upon the same context. Where last week focussed on our need to be generous- to invite people into our lives and homes that have nothing to offer us- so we find that our God invites the social outcasts into His Kingdom! We look at this theme: Jesus Christ invites a great number of people to come so that His house may be filled!

### **I. Who God Invites**

We start by considering who it is that Jesus invites. Remember, as we saw last week, that in v. 24 it is Jesus who is the one throwing this party- it is His banquet and thus it is His house- and so also it is His prerogative to invite anyone He sees fit to invite! Jesus has the freedom to invite anyone he so chooses. Children, it is like your parents telling you on your birthday, you may invite 10 people to come to your party. So who will it be? So this parable told in v. 16 and following is going to answer the question- how many and what kind of people

does Jesus invite into His Kingdom- what kind of folks does He call and welcome to His banquet- what kind of person does He beckon to His banqueting table? As v. 15 proves, the Kingdom of God is in view! There is a divine, spiritual focus to this parable. This parable is all about grace- and the generosity of our God! It is an invite concerning the welcome into God's presence- to come to the feast as we saw last week! We start by seeing God's desire- the Son's design- this party is a great banquet and many are invited- v. 16. It is both a large and a lavish party. Our God is so generous- and He wants many to enjoy His blessings! This is not a small gathering of few people. No, it is a royal, lavish and extravagant affair for many! As the parable concludes in v. 23- He wants His house to be filled! In other words, the benefit of Christ's work- the act of redemption and reconciliation- is a work that God wants many to enjoy! As we read in 1 Tim. 2:4- our God and Savior desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Yes, all those whom God has chosen will be saved. Election is also a truth taught in God's word. But here the focus is on the Son's desire- He wants many to come! Even after many had been gathered- there was still room in v. 22. So we could echo today- there is still room! The door is still open- the day of salvation is still at hand! The invite is still going out- and many are still coming in! The heavenly mansion is being filled up- just as Jesus desires! So the Son desires that the invite go out to all- Come for the feast is spread. Come to me all you who are weary- and I will give you rest! The work of Christ is sufficient for all- as CD 2:4 says- Christ's death is more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world. As we heard from 1 Tim. 2:6- He gave Himself as a ransom for all. Our God delights to see the salvation of sinners- and thus it should be our delight to see sinners hear this invite as well! As CD 2:5 says- the gospel invitation should be announced and declared to all without distinction. The fact is, salvation is freely and graciously offered. And Jesus has a strong yearning for the lost- so that He even compels them to come in as we read in v. 23. The word in the Greek is "anagkason"- meaning to compel then, encourage and persuade them- so that they come. Jesus sends His servants into the world- with an invite. To apply this- if it is Jesus' desire it should also be our desire! We should delight and rejoice with the angels when one sinner is brought into the Kingdom! We plead with our fellow man, flee from the coming wrath! Come

into the Kingdom! Enter in through the narrow gate! And praise God, that the Holy Spirit accompanies this work so that their hearts might also be changed. One of the reasons we can celebrate the coming of the HS this time of year- is because the Spirit is the one who compels men- who changes hearts- so that the invite is received and responded to. In this way, Jesus compels His people to come in! Throughout this parable we find 2 invites to 3 different groups. The first invite was a RSVP of sorts found in v. 16- A save the date notice- He invited many. To those who RSVPed, another invite on the day of the banquet was sent out in v. 17. Now the day arrived, and the servant of the master is telling those invited to come. This first group would be the Hebrew or the Jewish people- particularly their religious leaders. Those who had many advantages as Rom. 3 says- to these belong the prophecies, promises, covenant, glory and law. The Jews were the people of God in the OT- and when Jesus arrived on the scene the day of the feast had arrived. However, when the servants called the Jews to come to enjoy the feast- to embrace Christ and be gathered into the Kingdom, most of them refused to come, believe and receive what had been promised. Both John the Baptist and Jesus made it clear- the Kingdom of God was at hand! Jesus desired to gather them in- like a mother hen desires to gather her chicks- but they were not willing! More about this in the next point. Because of this refusal, a second group of people were invited in v. 21. Those in the streets and the lanes of the city. This is the common folk- the residents of the city- those who embraced Jesus because of His teaching with authority and celebrated His signs and wonders. But still there was room, so a third group of people were invited in v. 23- those in the highways and byways. The roads and hedges of the countryside. We see that after the initial rejection by the Jews, the Gentiles received the same invite to come to the feast that Jesus had prepared. Those who were on the outside and far away- the ones who were at one time not God's people- who had not received the covenant and the promises- these too were called and now grafted in! Come and enter into His Kingdom and enjoy His banquet! The rejection by the Jews is what opened the way for us Gentiles to be gathered in as Rom. 11 says. The fact is, our God is much more generous than we are! Jesus associated with the sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes. It was He who has preached the gospel to the poor. People from every nation are

being gathered, and Jesus will not stop sending out His servants- He will not stop inviting men to come until His kingdom is full and His feast enjoyed by a mighty host of men! The sinners were entering into the kingdom, while the spiritually elite were not. As Mt. 21:31 put it, tax collectors and prostitutes go into the kingdom before you. These believed in me- but you would not change your mind. Even now you refuse to enter in.

## **II. Those who will not Taste**

But although Jesus graciously invites many to come, the fact is some will refuse. Some invited will not enter in- and thus these will not taste as v. 24 says. The Israelite people- for the most part- after receiving the OT promises did not enter into the Kingdom because they had rejected the Son. These spurned the invite- rejected the free offer of salvation- and offered pitiful excuses for their lack of interest. Children, remember illustration earlier I told about your birthday invite? Well, what if the first 10 people you invited to your birthday did not want to come? What if they each come up with a lame excuse on the day of your birthday? One says, I'm too busy because I have a new Lego set I want to build. Another says I have a video game I want to complete. How hurt- even mad you might rightly be! Well, the fact is, some who hear the call and invite of the gospel do not respond with faith. Let's look at the reasons given- very briefly. Why do these refuse or reject the invite to such a gracious and lavish feast? Notice that the first group invited all alike began to make excuses in v. 18. Particularly the religious leaders of Jesus day were not interested in the spiritual, future kingdom and feast that Jesus was offering. The very one who invited Jesus back in v. 1- was part of this group that had no desire for a King who would associate with the lowly and the poor. So in our parable we find 3 excuses in v. 18-20. A new field, a new set of oxen and a new wife. Each person was not interested in the king's feast- they had more important and pressing things to do. Each of these excuses are not valid- and the first invite had been sent out days in advance. To say this another way, when Jesus came preaching and inviting into the Kingdom of God, the Scribes and the Pharisees were not interested because they had more pressing matters. They had earthly kingdoms in mind- physical pleasures and material gain where their gods.

And even among the common folk- the general Israelite people- many of this group did not remain with Jesus because they were following Jesus for earthly bread alone. They remained with Jesus when He would heal their sick and feed their bodies, but when the hard truths were taught they too went their own way. This fact still holds today- financial concerns, business needs and worldly desires still trump the call to come, believe and enter into Christ's kingdom. This shows a lack of love for the true king; as each pursued passing priorities. But they have no excuse- it is insulting to the King and it rightly rouses his anger. Everyone likes the idea of going to heaven- but many fail to come in and enter when the invite is heard! When the message is received, many postpone and thus they will be shut out of the Kingdom. As v. 24 concludes, many who had heard- many who had externally been called- will not taste Christ's banquet because of pride or ambivalence. For these, the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. These will not be ready- like the foolish virgins who forgot their oil. Or they will be asleep- failing to stay away and remain diligent. The sad fact is, there are many who have heard the call to come- who have externally been invited to the feast. But hearing they did not respond- seeing they did not believe. This fact brings me back to the point- how necessary the Holy Spirit is! It is the Spirit who changes hearts- to compels sinners to come in- who gives us eyes to see and ears to hear! That the internal call would follow the external call- this is a gift of the Spirit's presence! And this is the Son's Desire- that His Father's house would be full- that all those given to the Son would be gathered- and His feast would be shared and enjoyed by a great multitude of guests!

To conclude, the generous and genuine invite of Jesus is one that should move us to both gratitude as well as action! If Jesus wants many to come- if He bids all to enter in- then what does that say about our calling to be mission minded? Praise God that His invite has been received by us- and that by His Spirit He has compelled us poor and wretched sinners to come in- so that His house might be full! And let us work while it is still day- bringing the King's invite to all who have ears! Jesus Christ invites a great number of people to come so that His house may be filled! So let us each respond in faith- heeding the call- and by the strength of the Spirit enter into the kingdom of God and the feast of the Son!