

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The account of the great supper that Jesus gave was meant to stir the consciences of His hearers. Parables are points of comparison. Those who were in the Pharisees house, invited there to eat bread on the Sabbath, were to compare themselves to the men in the parable Jesus told. They were to look for themselves in the story. They were to peer into the mirror of Jesus' Words, and so see themselves in light of the account of the great supper. And so does God hold up the perfect mirror of His Word to you this day, and compel you to look at your reflection in the of the account of the great supper.

God daily bestows upon men land and home, animals and transportation, and a faithful spouse. These gifts are all good, and can certainly be well used in living out a life pleasing to God. Through these Gifts God brings us daily bread, gives us children, and provides support for our families. So the eyes of all wait upon God, and He gives them their meat in due season. God has indeed blessed each one of us richly.

As great as these earthly blessings are, they are signs, tokens, that point to the fact that God provides greater blessings, heavenly blessings. In His great love for you, the God that gives daily bread gave the True Bread from Heaven – He gave His Son to die for your sins. Jesus Christ took up His life again, that you too might receive the Gift of new life in Him.

The free gift of salvation God gives you, the faith God gives you, are heavenly gifts, gifts that transcend time and space. Not so His earthly gifts. Land and home deteriorate and erode. They require sweat and toil, and return thorns and thistles. Animals and transportation periodically wear out and are replaced. We enjoy the love and company of our spouse only until death parts us.

But the timeless gifts of God, the gifts that never rust or spoil, gifts of forgiveness and salvation and everlasting life, are greater gifts. They are gifts that do not perish. They are eternal gifts. They cannot be taken away. But they can be rejected. They can be forsaken. So it is with the men invited to the great supper that Jesus describes. When invited to the feast, they with one accord began to make excuses.

They rejected the gracious Gospel invitation. They chose the lesser gifts of God over the greater. They took what God had freely given for their benefit, and made those very gifts idols that kept them from God. Although the invitation to salvation was theirs, although seats were reserved for them at the supper, they would not come. By their refusal they would have made God's grace cheap, if that were possible.

So then, you who hear the account of the great supper, have you found yourself in the parable? When have you made excuses to God? Have land or animals, spouse or family, a round of golf or a day at the beach, the house up north or a hobby, football or family relationships kept you from God's gifts? Does vocation or avocation, duty or possession keep you from the daily reading of God's Word and from prayer? What in your life have you chosen over the everlasting gifts that God would freely give to you?

By the strong Word of His Law, God convicts you. By it He drives you to a realization that sin left you impoverished of salvation, your transgressions have made you blind to God's love, pride has made you lame that you cannot come to Him, greed has maimed your soul that you have not desired His eternal gifts. By the Words of His parable, God forces you to confront the fact that you have done the same as the men who rejected His invitation.

But in His mercy, God has not rejected you. Still His grace is boundless. He is longsuffering and full of compassion. In mercy, he fills His feast with men like you, the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind. He gives His gifts freely. He gives them to you, who could not earn them. For it is the sick who need a doctor. So He brings true healing to you.

And at the very moment that God's Law compels you to confess your utter unworthiness to attend His feast, the Gospel throws open the doors of that feast to you. For in Christ your sins are removed. God has prepared a place for you. He invites you to receive heavenly forgiveness, life and salvation as you eat the Gospel Word, as you read, mark, and inwardly digest the Holy Scriptures, as you believe the Promise that Christ won entry into the Great Supper for you. It is with you, O dear redeemed of God, you, made whole and healed in Christ, that His heavenly house is filled.

When Jesus proclaimed "It is finished", all the work of your salvation was done. In mercy, God sends preachers into the world to put to death with the convicting Law, and give new life by the saving Gospel. Baptized into Christ, believing in Jesus, trusting in His salvation, you receive God's temporal gifts with thanksgiving. In faith you return offerings to Him. But His heavenly gifts are your true Food and Drink. For the Gospel gives you life and nourishes your soul. Eating is believing.

Confidence, assurance and comfort come from trust. So, trusting, you know for certain that God gives you what He promises. To His gifts he attaches symbols, signs, that you might be sure that these gifts are for you, that through these gifts you may be comforted and strengthened.

The Lord of the Church places His Word with water, His Body with bread and His Blood with wine. And He sends His called and ordained servant into the highways and the hedges to find you, to announce to you that the Lamb is slain, risen and ascended. He reigns in heaven, and yet He is here for you now. Your sins are forgiven. You, O Christian, are invited. The feast is prepared. You are God's chosen guest. Come, for all things are now ready.

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