

SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH

Trinity 2

June 12, 2021

A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

✠ May the Words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, Our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Every year, we read the same Epistle and Gospel on a given Sunday.

Some may wonder if this gets a little dull, repeating the same passages year after year.

Such an attitude misunderstands how rich and deep is the Word of God.

Every passage of the Sunday lectionary is like a gem turning in the light, catching a different reflection at each angle.

In a given year, one sentence, one detail may stand out more than others and generate a warmer appreciation for the mercy of God in giving Himself to us.

Today, I call your attention to the reaction of the invited guests, beginning with the time delay in the first sentence of Jesus' parable, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant to say to them that were bidden."

The parable does not tell us how long the many who were bidden had to wait for the servant to come say to them that all the food, all the drink, all the entertainment was ready.

The parable does tell us that those who had been invited to the party chose not to when the servant arrived.

Doing some basic Bible thinking, we know that “the certain rich man” is probably God the Father, the messenger is a prophet or an angel, and the party is heaven.

Who wouldn't want to go to heaven?

Who wouldn't want to be comfortable in paradise for ages to come?

Even stranger, the excuses given by these party guests sound a lot like those given in Deuteronomy 20 which is appointed the first lesson at Morning Prayer today and is printed in your bulletin on page 5.

The excuses that the Invited Guests made are exactly the valid excuses for getting out of the Israelite Army, the valid reasons for draft dodging when the priests needed to call a war against the enemies of God's people.

What did these party guests think they were getting out of?

Who was standing at the door with the message?

A Servant of the Certain Rich Man, yes, but who was that to make them fear the possibility of war?

A singing telegram messenger in bright red jacket and cap?

No, someone like that you ignore.

Who is someone so convincing that you must speak to deny?

The Servant who you think is calling you to war is the prophet Isaiah standing before them speaking of a Suffering Servant and a Messiah.

It is great Jeremiah in his lamentations.

It is Blessed Amos crying that God wanted obedience more than sacrifice.

It is the honorable Obadiah and Jonah proclaiming God's judgment on those who turned their back on Him.

All of the prophets spoke of the Promise of God to be with His people and the journey they would have to take to meet Him.

But the ultimate messenger was Christ Himself.

In Christ are all the riches of the Father.

In Christ, we find true meat and true drink.

In Christ, we find true joy.

In Christ, we find comfortable strength and rest.

And it is Christ who stands at the door and knocks.

And this messenger, Christ frightens us, when we answer the door in our sins.

Jesus doesn't frighten us when we think of Him as He was when He welcomed the little children, very kind and gentle, making little jokes—we like that Jesus who makes us feel special and loved.

Jesus doesn't frighten us when we think of Him as He calls to Mary Magdalene by name on the day of Resurrection—we like that Jesus who calls us into His Triumph.

But Jesus does frighten us on Good Friday.

Jesus frightens us when beaten, bruised, and bloody.

Jesus frightens us when nailed to the cross for our sins.

Jesus frightens us when we have to give up our selfish desires and actions.

Jesus frightens us when we are reminded that we are not here to be served but to serve.

Jesus frightens us when He tells us that the servant is not greater than the master and that we will be treated as He was treated.

Jesus frightens us when we see the scars in His hands, knowing what we did to Him and that He still loves us.

Will you follow when that bloody Jesus stands on the doorstep of your heart and says "All things are made ready; Walk with me."?

He is a reminder of our war against sin, death, and the Devil.

Our sin nailed Him to the Cross; more than the Roman nails, our need for redemption and atonement held Jesus to that Tree.

We needed to know that Death was not the end, that Death could be conquered; Jesus Christ therefore had to die and rise triumphantly.

The Devil thought he was finally getting a victory over God Himself; Jesus took the worst of the Devil's corruption and survived while encouraging us.

Now comes our turn.

Are we going to turn from battle against these three great enemies of sin, death, and the Devil?

Are we going to let our fear of death keep us in bondage to sin taking advice from the Devil?

Are we going to distract ourselves with new possessions, other work, or private concerns?

Are we going to stay in the lonely separation of our own homes?

Or Will we walk with the Suffering Servant?

Will we fight with him?

Will we prepare ourselves for the summons to the Great Feast?

Will our lives join with Him in seeking out the cripple and the blind and the lame?

Will we bring our gifts, our labor, our families along in the service of Christ?

Will we join the parade of faithful servants bringing their oxen and deeds along as tribute to our Host?

Will we do whatever is necessary to make the tables of that banquet hall full?

Before God's message was fully revealed in Christ, there was a time of expectation, but because of Christ's ministry, death, and resurrection, there is no longer any waiting.

We may be waiting for the final invitation, for the final arrival of the messenger at our door, for Christ's return in glory.

We may be waiting for guidance and clarity in our life's particular vocation, but we need not wait for an opportunity to grow in holiness.

Floridians are encouraged to assemble hurricane readiness packs for families; Christians can speak of regular prayer and fellowship with believers as a similar thing.

We may not know when or if a hurricane will come this summer, but it is better to prepare now rather than in the panic at the stores or when the storm passes over your home.

We may not know when our Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love will be tested, or when we will be asked to witness in word or deed to the truth of Christ's triumph, but we ought prepare when things are smooth and steady, rather than slink away from the opportunity to serve or to panic in the face of opposition.

If we will walk with the Suffering Servant, if we will follow Christ to the Great Supper of the Lord of all Riches, then our journey begins here at the Altar of the Lord.

In our confession, let us leave our sin behind, not to be picked up again.

Let us offer up praise and thanksgiving, bread and wine, so that we may receive comfort and joy, Body and Blood.

Every day is a new day in Christ.

Today His promises and mercies are new.

Today He desires to strengthen us, to feed us of his own Precious Body and his own Precious Blood.

Today, we begin again to taste heaven.

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