

12 June 2013
Pentecost 3 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Come to the Feast!”

Text: Luke 14:15-24 (Proverbs 9:1-10; Ephesians 2:13-22)

It is easy to criticize the excuse makers in the Holy Gospel we just heard. Too easy. Yes, their excuses are lame. *I have to go see the field I just bought. I have to examine the oxen I just bought. I just got married and have to . . . well, you know.*

But what of the excuses that often come out of our mouths? Excuses not to come and spend time with our good and gracious Lord and the feast that He provides? I won't go through a litany of all the ones I've heard in my years as a pastor, but I also don't need to. You know them. You've spoken them. So have I. And you know how lame and inadequate they are too. So we shouldn't criticize the excuses of others, but repent of our own.

But here's the thing: the man giving the banquet will not be denied. The man who is our Lord. He wants only to give. He wants to celebrate. He wants to be generous. And so He will be. He sends His servants out to gather more guests. And then He sends them *again* to compel people to come in. And it doesn't matter who they are - that they aren't the cream of society, that they aren't the rich and powerful, that they aren't those who can repay Him. None of that matters. Our Lord simply wants to give. He has joy in giving, and joy when His gifts are received. So the banquet will go on - with or without those who were at first invited.

“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.” Those words from Proverbs are the invitation that is going out even now. The banquet is not yet full. There still is room. Room for you. Room for the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. Room for the sinner and for the saint. Room at the Table where the Lord serves and gives. Where the Lord serves the slave, the Creator serves the creature, and finds His joy in doing so. For to give is what our Lord does. He gives us life. He gives us His care. He gives us forgiveness. He gives us His Son to be our Saviour.

And that giving, of Jesus, is the greatest of all. *No excuses from Jesus*, just love and obedience. The Son obeyed His Father's will, was born of virgin mother, came as our flesh and blood brother, became a servant of the Law (to fulfill it), bore our sins on the cross, was placed into a tomb, and then burst the bonds of our prison-grave that not us, but the devil, be held captive in it forever.

So before, while there was (as Paul put it in Ephesians) a **“dividing wall of hostility”** between God and man because of sin, that wall has been **broken down** and **abolished** by Jesus. Where before there was separation, now there is unity. Where before there was hostility, now there is peace. Where before we were **strangers and aliens**, now we are **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God**. Members of the household as baptized children of God, blood brothers of Jesus, taking our place alongside the apostles and prophets on Christ, the cornerstone.

All of that is what is being given at this banquet! No mere ordinary food, but a feast of the Word of God which gives life, a feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus, which give salvation. A feast of forgiveness. A feast unlike any other. A feast that is given for us each day in the words of Holy Scripture, and every Sunday in the holy meal, that not a day go by that our Lord does not give and we do not receive. That not a day go by for us to be without our Lord's good things, and to be filled by them. For He loves so to give.

And so the call is still going out: *Come to the feast!* Don't let the day go by while your soul hungers. Don't let the day be so filled with busyness that you go unfilled by your Saviour. Don't let a day go by where your mind is set only on earthly things and not on things above. Come to the feast. Oxen, fields, spouses, and the things of this world are important, but do not let them separate you from the feast. Come to the feast. Or as a verse just before those we sang in the Psalm today puts it: *Taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him* (Psalm 34:8)!

Blessed indeed are all who receive from the Lord. Blessed indeed are all upon whom God has bestowed His grace. Blessed are you for you have received His grace, His forgiveness, His Spirit, and His life. Do not stop. Do not let the excuses return. Come to the feast *now*, and He will take you to the feast *which never ends*.

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