**Heard What Things?**

**Luke 14:15-24**

Trinity II – 06.18.2023

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

Did you read the question that is our sermon title? If you heard it, and read it in our text, it is hard not to ask the question. Seriously!

Let me read the few first sentences of our Gospel lesson again. *When one of those who reclined at table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" But He said to him…*

You have heard this Gospel lesson from Luke 14 on the 2nd Sunday after Trinity for years. It starts so strangely. Why? I know sometimes people hardly hear the rest of this lesson because their mind is off and wandering, “What had the man heard which moved him to say such a thing to Jesus? What did he hear that prompted the comment which led Jesus to tell this parable about all the invited guests who will not be at the banquet – that is – those who will not join Christ in the eternal banquet, the eternal heavenly feast. And how there will be others, some seen as the serious undesirables in the community, who will be a part of that eternal feast?

To be fair, we really need to consider the context. Jesus was dining at the home of “a ruler of the Pharisees”, and they were watching Him closely. Jesus was getting popular with the people, and the Pharisees were not popular. Jesus was teaching and doing some things which the Pharisees thought He should not be doing, because they were Pharisees. Their understanding of the law was not based upon love of God and neighbor, but upon strict adherence to a list of things which were actually added to aid in understanding how to keep the Law. They had made an entire list of which things might amount to work on the Sabbath – things which were therefore forbidden in their eyes.

As it so happens, Jesus heals a man of dropsy right there in this Pharisee’s home – He does it ***on the Sabbath.*** Jesus’ doing of miracles on the Sabbath, freeing people from the physical consequences of their sinfulness, was something the Pharisees despised. They claimed it was working on the Sabbath – therefore, forbidden.

Jesus heals the man and explains that it is not against Torah to save life, even on the Sabbath.

Next, Jesus tells a parable about people coming to a banquet and sitting in places of honor, only to be told by the master of the feast to “move” when someone more distinguished shows up. All this is part of our Gospel lesson for 17th Sunday after Trinity. But then there are verses we normally never hear as part of any Sunday Gospel lesson in our lectionary. The words of Luke’s 14th chapter – verses 12-14.

*Jesus said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”*

It is after hearing these words that one of those seated with Jesus at His table says, *Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.”* It is after this comment that Jesus launches into His discussion about the master of a banquet – and about who came and who did not come.

When do you eat bread in the kingdom of God? Is this man saying that those who will be with God for all eternity – in heaven will be blessed? That is of course true. But who will be at the eternal banquet of the King at His heavenly table?

All the Pharisees understood this parable Jesus tells. They get it! Who are those who were invited? You know them! God’s chosen people, the people of Israel! God’s chosen people, good Christians – the long-standing members of the congregation – the charter members and their families.

Their names are written in the book. Pastor visited their family shortly after the birth. Then, they were baptized here! They were confirmed here! They were married here! They may have served on a board! This is ***THEIR*** church! God knows they are long-time members in good standing.

But, the grandkids had a ball game – God understands!

The lawn needed mowing – God understands!

It is best to be fishing when the fish are on the beds – and Saturday their was thunder and lightning, so had to go on Sunday… - God understands!

They all made excuses at the time of the banquet. One bought a field that he hadn’t looked at previously – not real bright.

Another went to look at the five yoke of oxen he had purchased sight unseen – not real bright.

And another had just gotten married – what, she doesn’t need to be at the banquet?

At book study, a group of us pastors were discussing the idea of encouraging parishioners to attend services EVERY week – what a novel idea that would be. And encourage them to develop a DAILY home devotional life. One pastor brought up the point that our parishioners were too busy. They have too many things going on, and we should not attempt to encourage them to weekly attendance at the Divine Service AND have a daily time for family Bible reading and prayer. They have so many things to do, both spouses may be working, and the children have various events in which they are involved. All this takes time, how can they possibly squeeze in time each day to study the Bible together as a family? And how many times do the kid’s activities get in the way even of Sunday morning attendance at the Divine Service? Parents want well-rounded children. Maybe we should just regular attendance at church, once a month is fine.

Another Pastor asked, “So what you're saying is, that God, His 3rd Commandment, His coming to feed and nourish us weekly in the Divine Service is something He would only desire of His people once a month? And, the study of His Word, prayer together, and sharing that in a family setting should take a back seat to the other things a family does? Boy, did that change the entire tone of the discussion.

No, it doesn't mean we're going to hell if we miss a Sunday (or Wednesday), or if we don't have a daily devotional time at home every single day. Sure, things may come up and plans may have to be changed, but are both these things on your weekly and daily schedule? Are you even trying to be in Church each week? Are you trying to spend time in God's Word and growing together in it as a family?

The biggest problem is not that people don't have time for these things, it is that they don't ***make time*** to make God time a priority. It is amazing what comes first, while God takes a back seat.

There are many worldly things which are not necessarily bad, but when they take priority over God, that is idolatry – having other things before God. It is in these subtle ways that Satan tries to win you and me over, and away from God. Getting us to think that the Word and Sacrament isn’t something we need ***OFTEN***, and that we can get by with a bit – or that family time in Scripture and prayer can be neglected is just one of those subtle ways Satan tries to lead us astray.

That’s where this man’s comment to Jesus is correct. *“Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”* Did you hear it? Those who eat bread in the kingdom of God are blessed! He’s right!

You kind of heard the law. You may be feeling a little guilty, squirming a little bit. You have heard the 3rd commandment about the Sabbath day and keep it holy. The Sabbath Day is a weekly thing, not a monthly thing. But the big blessing a bout here is not about the law, it is about what we received.

It is Father’s Day and we’re in the Father’s house. The place we should be. Here is where the Father feeds and nourishes and cares for us. We are gathered with those who are blood relatives with us – blood bought relatives with us. The blood of Christ. It is the family meal. As we gather together with our brothers and sisters in Christ and to eat that food which blesses us for our life in the world.

How many skip meals on a regular basis? If so, was it because the fish were biting, the grass needed mowing, or some other excuse? It is obvious I do not miss too many meals. We need food so that our bodies are nourished to go about the daily tasks of our lives.

But this meal, the one here in this house, is more important than any other meal that we could miss – meals that we would never miss – because this meal feeds us to go out there and love our neighbor. If feeds us in faith toward God.

Dear friends, it is all about the foolishness and weakness of God. God does it all – the inviting, the compelling, the bringing in, the filling of the banquet hall, and the feeding of the guests. In other words, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

Who are those that are blessed? Blessed are those who eat bread in the kingdom of God.

What is the bread they are invited to eat in the kingdom of God? Jesus goes into a great explanation in John six when He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst…” “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I give for the life of the world is My flesh.” (John 6:32-35, 48-51)

What is the bread that blesses in the kingdom of God? It is not simple bread, but the Bread of Life, the flesh of Christ which was sacrificed upon the cross to win forgiveness of sins and to grant life. It is bread which feeds the hungry, the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.

Those hungry for righteousness are fed by Christ, they are filled with good things. His righteousness comes to them and satisfies them unto life everlasting.

Those poor in spirit understand their sinfulness and know that this Bread of Life alone can make them rich in holiness by the forgiveness won and delivered by Him alone – in the bread of Christ alone.

Those crippled by their own sinfulness, unable to do any good thing, come for healing – come to eat and to be strengthened in a new life they cannot live alone – but in Christ.

We often try to walk by sight, leaving faith behind and resorting to reason and senses, only to discover that in so doing, we have become blind fools, stumbling through life as we trust in ourselves. But the table is set, the Bread of the Kingdom is placed before you to forgive your idolatry and open your eyes to God’s grace, to see that you are forever blessed in Christ.

Yes, this is the feast. This is the banquet table of the kingdom of God by which you are healed, no longer lame, but able to walk by faith and not by sight.

Blessed indeed are all those eat bread in the kingdom of God, for Christ is the Bread which came down from heaven and gives you the riches of God’s grace. You are invited, yea even compelled to come in and eat. Here is food for hungry souls. Eat and be satisfied blessed unto life everlasting. In the name of Jesus. Amen.