

The Second Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 14:16-24
June 18th, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Constrain Them to Come In

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“And the servant came, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Lord, what thou didst command is done, and yet there is room.’ And the lord said unto the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, the Source of all life and joy, Who, by the glad sound of the Gospel, hast called us to have part in Thy Kingdom and glory: shine into our hearts, we beseech Thee, by Thy Word and Spirit, and draw us with the cords of Thy constraining grace, that we may heartily choose that good part which shall not be taken away from us, and give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Triune Lord God is a very gracious Lord God. He prepares for us a great feast; a great supper. He desires to give to us great gifts. He wills to give them to us abundantly. He has invited us graciously to this great supper. We who are unworthy sinners our Lord wishes to bless with abundant gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. How could we not want to come to this great supper and enjoy the precious gifts that He so freely is willing to give to us? But as we heard in the parable of our Lord + Jesus Christ from the Evangelist St. Luke, there were several that made excuses and did not come to the great supper to which they were invited.

Their refusal only prompted our Lord God to send out His servants to call others into the great supper. They went out and called all the ones who others would consider unworthy: the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame. These ones are unworthy, because they could never hope to return the favor and grace of the One Who offers the great supper. They could not repay Him the kindness. They do not have the means to repay Him or return His grace to Him. Therefore, we see our Lord's abundant mercy upon us. For we too, can never repay Him, or return His kindnesses to us. We are but poor, miserable sinners who cling to Him in faith; who cling in faith to His abundant mercies toward us. We know our sin and shame. We know that we are unworthy sinners. Therefore, we know that when our Lord God constrains us to come to the great supper, we find ourselves there by any means necessary.

And this is the point that our Lord + Jesus is making with His parable today. Today's Gospel reading is a continuation of a Gospel which we get later in the Trinity season. He had been invited to a supper of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on a Sabbath. He was invited not as an honored guest, but in order that they might "watch Him." Then a man with dropsy shows up, and our Lord heals Him—on a Sabbath—much to the chagrin of the Pharisees. He also watched them choose seats at this supper; fighting over who was to be seated in the place of the most honor. And this is the point that our Lord + Jesus makes today with the parable from the Gospel reading.

These men had it wrong—these rulers of Jews; the ones responsible for instructing the Jews in matters of theology and religion—they did not make this supper for the benefit of the people they invited. They only did it to make themselves look better. It was for their own benefit that they invited people to this supper on the Sabbath. The guest acted in kind. They only cared about themselves and not the other people with them. This was not a gathering of close friends to share in the joys of this life, but a supper designed to place themselves above others.

This is why the folks in the parable refuse the invitation. They see no benefit of going to this great supper. They do not see themselves gaining any personal benefit. They do not even see the most obvious benefit: a free meal. The attitude of the original invitees is summarized by the first person to make excuse. He had bought a field and *needed* to go see it. It was "necessary" for him to check out this field he bought for some reason without doing it first. The word translated "needs to" is the same word that the certain man of the parable uses when he tells the servant at the end to "constrain" everyone to come to the great supper; those in the highways and hedges (literally "the ways and fragments," or divisions).

He tells the servant to constrain them; to make them come by any means necessary. The word has the connotation of "forcing them by threats." Force them in if you have to, by threats of the preaching of the Law, so that when they have come, they will see the great supper to which they have been invited. Having come in, they will see the great blessings and benefits that the certain man desires so graciously to bestow upon them. Unlike the ruler of the Pharisees who invited our Lord + Jesus to his supper, the certain man of the parable does not do it to place himself in a favorable position with those he has invited. He does not send out the invitation so that those invited can compare themselves to one another and rate themselves according to each other's status and works. He invites them simply to give them a free supper. He invites them to reveal his abundant grace and mercy.

This is why the certain man who gave a great supper in the parable invites those who cannot hope to pay him back. He invites the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame. The same individuals our Lord + Jesus had told the person who invited Him that this person should have invited. If he truly wanted to show kindness and mercy, he should have invited those who could not pay him back, not his close friends, who were only there in order to trap the Lord in whatever snare in which they could entrap Him.

Therefore, my dearly beloved, we see in this parable how our Triune Lord God wishes to be toward us. For we are the spiritually poor, and maim, and blind, and lame. We cannot ever hope to pay back the Lord for all of His tender mercies toward us. We who are born dead and blind in our sins and trespasses have no gift we could proffer to return the benefits and graces our Lord God bestows upon us. But that is the point, we do not show our thanks by offering some work or merit we think we have. We show our thanks for His great mercies by actually enjoying the gifts that our Lord would bestow upon us. We show our thanks by actually accepting the invitation to come to the great supper our Lord has prepared for us.

For His servant has been sent out to constrain all to come to the great supper. All are invited to repent of their sins, to repent of their works, and enjoy the graciousness of the One Who has invited us

to this great supper. Here in the Church, we receive His gifts. We receive abundantly the gifts which He wishes to bestow upon us. Those gifts are the ones which our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ won for us by His suffering and death upon the tree of the holy cross. He has won for us forgiveness of our sins, eternal life with Him, and salvation from all our enemies. He bestows those gifts upon us here in this place. Here we receive life and forgiveness through the means of grace. Here we receive our Lord's great Supper; His Body and Blood given and shed for us poor sinners for the remission of all of our sins.

Therefore, my dearly beloved, having been constrained to come to this great Supper by the admonitions of the Law, and through hearing of the great benefits found in this Supper through the preaching of the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ, come and enjoy this feast that our Lord God has spread before us. He offers to us the forgiveness of all our sins through the preaching of forgiveness, and the administration of His Body and Blood in bread and wine. Come therefore and receive the gifts that our Triune Lord God would have us receive out of His abundant grace and mercy. Come and receive forgiveness, life and salvation. For these great gifts are bestowed upon us every time we come to this great supper. These gifts are given whenever we accept the Lord's gracious invitation, and come to the Great Supper which He has prepared for all. This Great Supper which is a foretaste of the eternal Supper we will enjoy forever in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!