

Trinity II @ St.Thomas Anglican Church

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] One of the first things I was taught in English class is that you must cite, give credit to the source you are using or the person whose ideas you are stealing.

Pledgierism was the unpardonable sin in composition. I don't know if that's still the case, but anyways, you should all know that I relied heavily on a book by Kenneth Bailey called *Poet and Peasant Through Peasant Eyes* for a gospel text this morning.

Bailey was a solid, very solid Anglican biblical scholar who spent most of his life teaching and living in the Middle East. He taught for years at the University of Beirut.

In his book, he has beautifully captured the ancient Semitic culture and its relationship to the gospel of St. Luke, especially the parables in this gospel.

So, I am relying on his excellent work for his invaluable insights here for our gospel text from Luke chapter 14. Here in our gospel text, we heard the story of a man who had planned a great supper, a great banquet.

[1 : 21] And according to Bailey, this planning would have taken a considerable amount of time, effort. It was a grand event that would have taken months upon months to prepare.

The entire village or community would have known about this extraordinary event. It would have been on everyone's social calendar. So, this gracious host finished the preparations for this extraordinary, this extravagant banquet and was now ready for his guests to arrive.

So, he sent out his servant to tell the people that the time had come. The banquet was ready. After reading these words of invitation, then we heard those words in verse 18 from our gospel text.

But they all, with one accord, began to make excuses. And some of these excuses were about as exaggerated as the dog ate my homework.

The first excuse was from a man who had said he bought a field and now he must actually go out and see it. Now, what kind of person buys a piece of property, a field, without first seeing it?

[2 : 41] I mean, would you go out and buy maybe a small farm or a big piece of property without first checking to see if it was fit for use?

I would hope not. The excuse is simply absurd. No one goes out and buys land before seeing, before testing to make sure that they could actually use the land.

The second excuse is even more absurd. The man says that he had bought five oxen and now he must go out and test them.

Bailey notes this would be equivalent to you going out and buying five slightly used cars without knowing whether or not they even ran.

Five oxen would have been an extremely expensive purchase in that day. It would be like you and I going out and buying five slightly used Teslas, 2023 Teslas, and not even know if they would even start.

[4 : 00] One in the ancient world would never make such an investment without first seeing and testing these oxen. Once again, totally absurd.

Now, the final excuse comes from a man who claimed to have married a wife. Now, this excuse might appear feasible, even honorable.

But there's something sinister going on here. First, this gracious host would have never planned a great banquet, put all the preparations into this banquet on the same day that a wedding was already planned, especially in the Middle Eastern culture.

Weddings were events that involved the entire community. Such celebrations would last days upon days. Such a wedding would have been known months in advance.

The ancient world, they did not have couples that just went to the justice of the peace. Weddings were events, big events, where families were united because it was more than just a husband and wife coming together.

[5 : 16] It was families coming together as one. And in the ancient world, this would have been arranged by the parents ahead of time. The reality is that each one of these stories is a lie.

It is a lie to mask the real issue at stake. And the real issue is these people, they do not want to come to the banquet.

Now, I need to underline the fact that our reading this morning is a parable. It's an allegory. It's a story. It's a story to tell or convey an important truth.

So what is the truth that we are supposed to learn and glean from this story? Well, the supper or banquet in this story signifies the kingdom of God.

The lame excuses represent Israel's rejection of God because they rejected the one who had ushered in this great banquet, Jesus.

[6 : 24] The one who invited them to come now and to participate. Therefore, they rejected their king. They rejected the kingdom of God. So what does the master of the story do after he is given these multiple lame excuses?

Well, he sends his servant out to the poor, the blind, the lame, and the maimed. These people represent people like the tax collectors, the hated ones.

These people represented all groups of sinners, the ones rejected by society. These were the harlots and the sketchy people who were seen as hopeless and utterly unclean.

These are those long forgotten by the establishment. These are the ones that the master invites to come to his banquet after Israel rejected the gracious invitation of our Lord.

But we go on to read that there's still room at the table. So the master sends out his servant to the highways and to the hedges. What does that mean?

[7 : 46] The highways and the hedges represent the Gentiles who lived outside of the covenant, so to speak. These are the pagans.

These are the enemies of Israel. You see, Jesus did not come to call the self-righteous. He came to call sinners to repentance.

I don't think it's difficult to connect the dots this morning at all. Our Lord is still calling the unclean to come and to be cleansed.

He is still calling people to be baptized for the remission of their sins. He is still preparing his banquet meal for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, longing for meaning, abandoned by the establishment.

And the people that are most likely to respond in faith are the outcasts of society. Such people are those that maybe live with addiction.

[8 : 57] Those that struggle financially to survive. The people that have the material wealth of this world are often the ones who just simply make excuse after excuse.

They never lift a finger to help anyone, and they only look out for themselves. These are the people that live for retirement, and they never think about serving others.

These are the people who live by that evil philosophy that only the survival of the fittest really matter. To heck with everybody else.

Dear people of St. Thomas, the Lord has graciously raised up a priest for you to lead you to engage this beautiful community in northern Georgia to be a place that invites, that calls people to come home to the banquet.

He has given you a priest to teach and to be an example of calling people to come to the kingdom of God.

[10 : 20] And your mission field are to those who will come, not simply to those who want to make excuses. Your mission is to the poor, to the addicts, the downtrodden, the elderly, the lonely, the vulnerable, the moms who have been abandoned, the souls that have been hurt due to religious legalism.

And the list goes on and on. This is your mission field. God has placed you here to be light, to spread abroad, and to invite people to come into his kingdom.

This is why you are here. And the Lord has provided you with a priest who will lead, who will love you, but you too must come to the banquet of God.

You must make this your number one priority. You must make this your number one priority in life. Everyone wants to reduce all that we are, all that we have, to the things of this world.

We live in a hectic, materialistic world that reduces everyone and everything for something to be used.

[12 : 00] We are called to invite people to come and to be a part of a banquet, to enter the kingdom of God, to be family, to care for one another, to look out for one another, and to seek out those that are hurting.

Therefore, make the Eucharistic feast your life. And after feasting on our Lord's body and blood, after receiving his mercy, you are called to go out and to be merciful and to offer the bread of life to Jesus Christ to those around you.

Neighbors, family, friends, coworkers, the Lord invites all. He invites all to come and to feast with him at his supper where he gives himself freely and he invites all to enter into his kingdom.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen.