

Feasting with Jesus

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Mark chapter 2 verse 13.! He went out again, that's Jesus Christ, Jesus went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them.

And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at a tax booth, and he said to him, follow me. And he rose and followed him.

And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to the disciples, Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

[1 : 15] I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Verse 18. Now, John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting.

And people came and said to him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? And Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guest fast while the bridegroom is with them?

As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them. And then they will fast in that day.

Verse 21. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it and the new from the old and a worse tear is made.

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins and the wine is destroyed and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.

[2 : 30] It's the word of God. The only authoritative, infallible and inerrant word from the Lord. So, may God bless it as we open it.

One author I was reading about this week tells the story of a young mother quickly and firmly ending a squabble between her two boys. He said she did a great job ending the squabble and bringing order, but then she turned to her boys and made a fatal error.

She said it's never right to fight. Now we all understand what that young mother was trying to do, but her advice would not serve her boys as they grew older and mature.

The Bible, as we know, tells us that some things are worth fighting for. Some things are right to fight and wrong to walk away with some things. In fact, the Christian life is called the good fight of faith.

We're called to make war, Paul says in several places. Most of the time, this does not include fisticuffs, but sometimes it does. But there's another reason we shouldn't walk away from a fight.

[3 : 48] Or every fight, maybe. Fighting is not just a moment to defend what is right, but fighting helps clarify what is right as well.

Over the history of the church, fights have cropped up and pushed the church back to the scriptures to recover and clarify what was true. In the fourth century, when confronted with Arianism, the belief that Jesus was created and therefore was not fully God, the church called a council in Nicaea to search the scriptures and recover, or maybe discover what was true, what was right.

And in fact, tensions were so high in the air that day that St. Nicholas, the one whom we base much of our Santa Claus upon, crossed the room and slapped Arius in the mouth.

I just love that. He's not just a pleasant guy upstairs with a belly, you know? That's the way it has continued throughout church history.

There's been wonderful fights that have pushed the church to recover. That's what they recovered in 381 and later about the person of Jesus Christ. What is this man that is a person and yet has two natures of human and divine?

[5 : 07] It clarified our basis of acceptance before God, justification by faith alone, or the priesthood of every believer that we need no priest to go to and confess our sins because every believer is a priest and has access to God, or the authority of scripture in the 80s on the inerrancy of the scripture that the council got together, and so many others.

There's wonderful fights that help clarify. Right now, there's quite a bit of fighting going on about gender and femininity and homosexuality and social justice and so many things, and we don't need to worry.

I remember teaching a class on the authority of scripture years ago with a student that went to, I won't mention the name, but a Christian college and talked about the assaults on God's word that she was being taught.

Well, the first thing I want to say is let's not worry. Let God be true and every man be proved a liar. The Lord is not worried about the fights, and so there's no reason to whine.

There's no reason to worry. There's no reason to walk away, and the same thing's happening in our text this morning. A fight is brewing against Jesus Christ. You remember when we went through chapter 1, after all the healing and casting out of many demons, the scribes began to question Him.

[6 : 29] And what began with questioning in their hearts in our passage from last week leads to two tense confrontations with Jesus Christ in our passage this morning.

And these questions and these confrontations are not simple scenes describing Jesus' opposition. They're not mere descriptions by Mark.

Mark carefully crafts them to clarify why Jesus came and how He came to open wide the way to God for filthy, unwanted sinners.

The main point today is the way to God is always and only Jesus. In some ways that feels like that's the point of the whole book of Mark, you know, but there's going to be a whole lot of that. The only way to God, the way to God is always and only Jesus Christ.

And I'm excited for us to dive into these verses and see how they articulate it in a fresh way. The first point is Jesus saves the unsavable.

[7 : 28] Jesus saves the unsavable. Our passage begins where Jesus calls a tax collector to follow Him. Look in verse 13. He went out again beside the sea.

So He was at Capernaum, which is on the sea, but He went out walking beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to Him, and He was teaching them. And I just love this emphasis.

We talked about that. Mark is going to keep emphasizing that Jesus is a teacher first and foremost. And so here He is. Jesus is not posted up in Capernaum taking visitors. He's not a king like the king or queen of England.

He's not receiving guests. Jesus is out. Jesus is on His feet doing what He came to do, which is teach. And I just love that little mention, brief, that Mark includes.

Look down in verse 14. And as He was teaching, He passed by. He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at a tax booth, and He said to him, Follow me.

[8 : 27] You know, at first glance, this seems very much like the calling of Simon and Andrew and James and John in chapter 1. It seems to just emphasize the all-powerful call of God in Jesus Christ.

And of course it does. But the emphasis is deepened here because of who He calls. Jesus passes by Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at His tax booth.

It would be hard to find a more despicable character in the first century. At the time, Galilee was ruled by Rome through local kings.

He's like a half-Jew. Herod Antipas. So He ruled over Galilee. And these local kings would recruit Jewish tax collectors to collect taxes for Rome on many different things, including fish.

They taxed the fish when it came out. That's why He's right beside the Sea of Galilee. But these guys weren't just doing the bidding of Rome.

[9 : 38] I mean, that's collusion at its worst level, you know, to work with Rome. So these Jews did not like them. But these guys weren't just doing the bidding of Rome.

They loved money and they loved it more than anything else. See, this is the way taxes worked in Galilee. It's that a tax collector would bid for the taxes in an area.

So he would bid for an amount for the taxes in this area. And he would commit to that amount in advance. And then all he gained above that amount is just gravy.

All that is just straight profit. You understand? So he would bid for an amount, commit to an amount, and then he would try to get more than that amount so that he could load his pockets.

I mean, the same thing is actually done with debt in America. You know, eventually your home loans or your student loans are sold to someone at a fraction of that rate.

[10 : 32] That's part of what's going on and whether they're going to forgive college debt, which everybody's against when they don't have it. But, you know, the idea is they buy the debt at a certain amount and then anything they make over that amount and collecting debt, collecting is just gravy.

And the percentages are very different. And that's why debt collectors live in big houses. No offense if you are one. But it was more unregulated in Roman rule.

The tax system was complex and confusing and these tax collectors would prey on the vulnerable. They would prey on the people, charging more than they owe and often changing what they owe at a moment's notice.

So you can imagine now why these tax collectors were hated. They weren't just symbols of Roman rule. They were friends who had turned for money to benefit themselves.

In fact, Jews considered them so wicked and worldly that they were unable to enter the synagogue and not allowed even to give alms. That is just for the poor.

[11 : 41] They weren't even allowed to give to the poor, let alone a tithe. They were considered ungodly, unclean, and unwelcome. So in many ways, this is not just what Jesus did in chapter 1.

In many ways, when He called the fishermen, He called them because they were unqualified. But what Jesus does here, He doesn't just call somebody who's unqualified. He calls someone who is disqualified.

And when Jesus passes by Levi, He sees him sitting at the booth. I mean, that phrase is pregnant with meaning. Mark's detail is very careful.

Levi did not come up to the house last night. Levi has not been following the crowd. Levi does not even stand when Jesus passes by. Levi is sitting.

The position, the posture of settled conviction and self-satisfaction in the course of life that He has chosen, which is grief. And while He is still sitting, Jesus says, follow Me.

[12 : 46] And He rose and followed Him. What's all this mean? Jesus saves the unsaved.

I think it's a very intentional, or the same emphasis is found in Romans 5.8. God chose His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God chose His love for us and that while we were still sinners, while our hands were still bloody in the midst of sin, Christ died for us. The tax collector is not saved when He walks down the aisle.

He's not saved when He prays a prayer. He's not saved when He asks Jesus into His heart. The tax collector is saved while He's still collecting taxes. While He's still a sinner and can do nothing for Himself.

How else could a tax collector get saved? Every first century Jew knew this. I mean, how else would a tax collector say? No one would trust a tax collector who had seen the light.

[13 : 48] No one would trust a tax collector who's taking Financial Peace University trying to straighten out his financial world. No one would trust a tax collector who says he's reformed.

Only God can save a tax collector. What's impossible with man is possible with God. That's what's underneath these verses. Here's the idea. The only thing necessary for salvation is the all-powerful call of God in Jesus Christ to bring sinners to life.

The only thing necessary. Even better, the only thing decisive for salvation is the all-powerful call of God in Jesus Christ to bring sinners to life.

Salvation is a sovereign act of God. A sovereign act of the all-powerful God. That is what's underneath this passage. I told you that. We went through the calling of Simon and Andrew and James and John.

There's no other takeaway here but that God called them. And the same thing is here. Look at the way John 1 describes this encounter and regeneration.

[14 : 57] He says, But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Our choice is there, right? All who did receive Him, who believed in His name, but what's decisive? You get a good hint in that triple negative.

Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John Piper says this in his new book, Providence. How does John understand? That's the Apostle John.

Not himself. Understand the relationship between our act of believing and God's act of begetting, that is giving birth to. Does the new birth bring about faith?

Or does faith bring about the new birth? The answer is clear. The whole burden of these verses is to deny, not, nor, nor, that human causes can bring about a child of God.

[16 : 12] Not human, but God. God's begetting, not man's believing, is decisive in bringing about the new birth. I mean, that is the emphasis of this passage.

It's well, the only thing decisive for salvation is God. Salvation is a miracle. Who chooses where they're born? Who chooses if they're born? Who chooses where they're born?

The same thing with being born again. Salvation is a sovereign act of the all-powerful God from beginning to end. If salvation were not, the tax collector would never be saved.

And you know what? If salvation was not, neither would you be. Because you were saved while you were still a sinner.

You were saved while you were dead in transgression and sin. how dead is dead. You were saved. You were saved.

[17 : 11] 2 Timothy 2 says, while you were ensnared by the devil and still doing his will. The wonderful thing about this, and I don't know where you're at in reformed theology.

We don't talk about this stuff a whole lot. That's what this is underlining. I don't think reformed is the most important thing. Is it the biblical theology? That's why I point to John 1.

Other places. But here's what's incredible. If salvation is a sovereign act of God, then anyone can be saved.

That's what the point is. Anyone can be saved. A tax collector can be saved. No one's sins are too great.

No one's failures are too severe. No one's background is too broken. Jesus does not care. That's why, in fact, Jesus said, I'll raise up from these stones sons of Abraham.

[18 : 16] Do you want to boast in your background? I'll call stones to life. And that's exactly what it does in conversion. He takes out a heart of stones and puts it into a heart of flesh. So who have you placed in the never going to be saved column that you need to move out?

Because if the tax collector is out of it, then anybody in your column must be as well. Your abusive father, your drunk neighbor, your Muslim friend must move out of that column and into the column, Oh Lord, please save.

It's incredible, isn't it? The only way to God is only and always through Jesus.

Point two, Jesus loves the unlovable. Jesus loves the unlovable. After calling Levi, Jesus goes to eat with him and his friends at his house.

Look at verse 15. As he reclined at table, that's the way they would do it. They would recline down at table, sort of laying beside it. You've probably seen that Leonardo da Vinci's little Last Supper thing.

[19 : 26] As he reclined at table, in his house, that is the tax collector's house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

I just love this. There was one and then there were many who came after him. Oh my goodness, Levi got saved. I got to get in on this. And I just love, they moved to him three times.

They used this phrase, tax collectors and sinners. Look at verse 15. Tax collectors and sinners. Verse 16. Sinners and tax collectors. Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Look at verse 17. Sinners. The idea is that these folks that were reclining with Jesus are those people. The unclean, the ungodly, and the unwelcome in the synagogue, the outcasts.

They're the people Israelites avoided. But Jesus doesn't avoid them. Now, that's incredible. Just right there. Jesus goes to eat at their house and at their table.

[20 : 30] The scribes are appalled. Look at verse 16. Scribes are of the Pharisees when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors and said to the disciples, why does he eat with them?

Now, culturally, there's something going on. You know, we live in the world of supersize me and quick meals.

If you wait for like a Starbucks longer than two minutes, you're like, come on. Or maybe that's just me. But that world is very different.

To eat with someone symbolized more than a meal. Symbolized acceptance, closeness, intimacy. Scott Barkey says, it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of table fellowship for the cultures of the Mediterranean basin in the first century of our era.

Mealtimes were far more than occasions for individuals to consume nourishment. Being welcomed at a table for the purpose of eating food with another person had become a ceremony richly symbolic of friendship, intimacy, and unity.

[21 : 41] They were slow evenings because of what they symbolized. So there's a cultural thing, but even more significantly, religiously, for a Jew to eat with a tax collector was deeply wrong.

The law commanded Jews to distinguish clean and unclean. They were commanded to eat only what is clean with utensils that are clean in places that are clean with people that are clean. But Jesus goes into this unclean tax collector's house.

If a tax collector touched a house, it was declared unclean. according to the oral law. But Jesus goes into this unclean tax collector's house and eats what is unclean with him.

Probably bacon. Jesus had to get a load of that. You know, in the flesh, I've got to take this stuff while I'm down here.

Lord knows the Pharisees aren't going to cook it up. Why does He eat with them is what they say? This is one of those confrontational questions.

[22 : 49] So it was in their heart at the beginning of the chapter. Now it's out loud to His disciples. So why are they angry? Even culturally and religiously?

I mean, are they making much ado about nothing? Here's the idea. They're angry because Jesus is hanging out with them before they repent. Jesus is hanging out with them before they change.

Jesus is befriending them while their pockets are still stuffed with money. They thought, what's going on? We're okay with reformed people once they reform and change their lifestyle, but we're not okay with this.

He knows they'll become unclean, so why does He eat with them? And Jesus overhears and look at what He says. Verse 17, those who are well have no need of a physician for those who are sick.

I came not to call the righteous but sinners. Now, that's a very straightforward analogy. The well don't need a doctor. You don't go to a doctor when you're well unless you get a well checkup, but you get the idea.

[23 : 59] You don't go when you're well. When you're sick, you do. In the same way, the righteous don't need a Savior. Sinners do. The Pharisees knew that they were not like that tax collector and sinner.

That's what it means to be a part of that group. You are wearing the label. The name Pharisee comes from separate one or holy one. They were known for their zeal, but they often made a fatal error. They began to believe that God accepted them because they obeyed the law carefully.

They began to believe that that's what made them good. But Jesus said, I did not come for those who think they are good. I came for those who know there aren't. Did not come for those who think they are good, but for those who know they aren't.

And so what's this mean? What is Mark trying to say is that Jesus loves the unlovable. These scenes, and these two scenes, the scribe's question, Jesus' response, unveil the staggering mission of Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not come to hang out with the who's who in the church. He came to hang out with who's not. Look at this. The first tax collector is just an exception.

[25 : 08] But a whole company of them in a house is a rule. That's what Mark is trying to say. The first comes the exception. First comes the one, and then comes the many. What Jesus is saying, I came to call sinners.

I came not to call those who think they're on the inside. I came to call those who know they're on the outside. I came to call those who are unclean, unholy, and unwelcome in the presence of God.

And Mark is laying it out this way so that we know that it is not an exception, but it is the mission of Jesus Christ. Richard Baucom says it like this. Now this is way understated because this guy is a super scholar.

But look at this. The generous representation of destitute people and outcasts in the Gospels reflects the way in which Jesus seems to not only have attracted such people in search of healing or forgiveness and acceptance, but also deliberately to have sought them out.

It's one thing to attract sinners. It's another thing to seek them out. It was part of his understanding of his mission to pay attention to those whom most people brushed aside or scorned.

[26 : 17] It was to them especially that the kingdom of God belonged. Oh, man. Jesus came to love the unlovable.

The ones most people brushed aside and scorned. there's a couple things we must say in application.

First is, you're not loved because you are lovely. You are lovely because you are loved. To reverse the order is to un-Christian yourself.

that may be overstated, but reverse the order is to reverse the gospel. You are not loved because you're lovely.

You are lovely because you're loved. One of the old hymns that I really love, which is hard to sing, so I never have led people in it or sung it. At least in a church that I've been at.

[27 : 28] It says, My song is love unknown. My Savior's love to me. Love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be. Oh, who am I that for thy sake my Lord shall take frail flesh and die?

Jesus loves the loveless and the unlovable. And that is what makes him lovely in the end. The same metaphor is there in what's all throughout the Bible.

Ezekiel 16. The whore is lying in her blood. Jesus says, Live. Did he go to her? Because she was beautiful?

Same thing. In Ephesians 5. That's what's behind the metaphor of the Lord being the bride and the people being or the Lord being the bridegroom and His people being the bride.

What's behind that metaphor is that He's the one who makes them lovely. His call, His love beautifies them. It's what Ephesians 5. I never got to that. Husbands, love your wife.

[28 : 39] Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. I don't remember at all. But that He might love her. That He might wash her with the water of His Word and present the church to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

So she's beautified by the love of God. It helps us understand the blood statement to the Pharisees. They obeyed carefully.

They were good. So they thought that God loved them because they were good. Because they were lovely. But it was actually their obedience that pushed Jesus away from them. Your obedience may be your greatest problem.

Your goodness may be your greatest problem. It's a wonderful thing to grow up in a Christian home, young folks. But it's a dangerous thing. You might begin to believe that external obedience is what makes you lovely.

Lovely. It's not. It's the love of God and Jesus Christ. Those who are completely unlovable.

[29 : 52] So you are lovely because you're loved. Therefore, you should love the unlovely. Now, I know you're probably love, love, love, love, love. Whatever. You're lovely because you're love.

Because the order was in reverse when God found you, you were completely unlovable and He loved you and made you lovely. You should love the unlovable. In the 1700s, there was an important, though still relatively unknown, conflict in the church in Scotland.

I love the church in Scotland. My family's from Scotland. I just began a new book called Theology in Scotland and the History of it from the 1500s to 1700s. Pretty great. And it doesn't hit this part, which is kind of sad when I got the book.

But anyway, some preachers had a creed that they went by. I think this will help us, so just hang with me for a minute. They had a creed that they said they would stand by.

These are ministers of the gospel. They said, I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to follow Jesus Christ or in order to come to Jesus Christ. So I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ.

[31 : 11] To put it positively, what they said was, I believe it is sound and orthodox to teach that we do not need to forsake sin in order to come to Christ. Now, if you heard that right, something in you is going, that's not right.

You know, many didn't agree on this, but they believe that sinners must turn in order to receive. That's what they believed. Many preachers of the gospel in Scotland, they believe that sinners must turn from sin in order to believe.

They believe that sinners must repent before they are saved. Ultimately, they believe that God helps those who help themselves. That's what the Pharisees believed in this passage and so they became angry with Jesus, but Jesus is not like that.

Jesus helps those who cannot help themselves. So to reverse the order, to reverse the gospel, Jesus comes to save those who have no idea often that they need help.

John Calvin said all throughout his institute, man cannot or does not anticipate God. He just comes and breaks in and rescues and saves. So God does not help those who help themselves, even though people in America believe that's the number one Bible verse that they know by heart.

[32 : 29] God is the truth in a survey, I promise. God helps those who cannot help themselves. That's how we're in the family of God. So we too should help those who cannot help themselves.

We too should love the unlovely. We should not, and this is the implication, this was the implication of that schism in Scotland, we should not restrict our love to the repentant.

We should not reserve our time for the penitent. We should not avoid those who cuss around the kids and disagree with our life choices.

We are lovely because we're loved. And because we're loved, we should love the unlovely. Isn't that helpful? Third, point three, Jesus ushers in the unbelievable.

After the confrontation about eating, the people questioned Jesus about fasting. There's lots going on about the belly and this fasting. Look in verse 18.

[33 : 34] They say, John's disciples and Pharisees were fasting. People came to him, why do John's disciples and the Pharisees fast? But your disciples do not fast. Now, fasting was one of the three pillars of Judaism and Day of Atonement.

Everyone to fast. But often in that day or in the day of Jesus fasting was just an idea of religious commitment. So they really committed fast. That's why in the Pharisee and tax collector of the parable, he said, I fasted two days a week.

So they fasted on Monday and Thursday. The real true disciples did that. But Jesus' disciples don't fast. Now, one author says in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus ate himself through it.

He didn't fast. Now, this is in every Gospel. The bigwigs get mad at Jesus because his disciples don't fast. Look in verse 19, this is how he answered.

Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come, the bridegroom is taken away and they'll fast in that day. So Jesus uses an analogy and said, would it be appropriate for wedding guests to fast at a wedding?

[34 : 44] No, right? It's very, you know, weddings in those days were seven days long and your only responsibility was to eat and drink. So it would be inappropriate.

So too it would be inappropriate for Jesus' disciples to fast while he is with them. Then he has two parables that underline this incompatibility or this inappropriateness.

Look at verse 21 and 22 that help us here. These are both underlining that it's inappropriate and incompatible.

No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away and the new from the old. It would be inappropriate to an unwashed garment. Now, I don't know much about sewing, but the idea is that the fibers are too strong on the unwashed, unshrunk cloth and don't match the fibers of the area.

And so it will tear quickly. I think. Joy could answer though. 22. And no one puts new wine into old wineskin.

[35 : 51] If he does, the wine will burst the skins. The wine is destroyed and so too are the skins. But the new wine is for new wineskins. It's the same thing. It's incompatible. It's inappropriate to put new wine in old wineskins because new wine continues to ferment.

Expand and contract in different things. And the fibers of the old wineskin can't take the movement. So what's this mean?

Mark? All the synoptic gospels include these right in this same section. Jesus ushers in the unbelievable. I think all these are underlining the staggering signs of what Jesus came to do.

Now they're parables so we have to take them out. But the idea is Jesus did not come to repair religion. Jesus did not come to call people to obey the law more strictly.

Jesus did not come to call people to offer sacrifices more carefully. Jesus did not come to bury you in rules or burden you with regulation. Jesus did not come calling for repentance.

[37 : 01] That was John's message. That's not Jesus' message. That's why his disciples, John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees were so unlike Jesus Christ because they were the end of one error but a new error had dawned and so Jesus came offering joy, forgiveness, and wine.

Jesus came to invite sinners to feast now. I think this is what's going on in Isaiah's behind this. The people of Israel were looking and longing for a final feast in which all people would come and feast on rich food and fine wine.

We see that in Isaiah 25. Look, on this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food and a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow and of aged wine, well refined.

He'll swallow up on that mountain the cover that is cast over His people, the veil that is spread over all the nations. He'll swallow up death forever. He'll wipe away every tear from their eyes and the reproach of the people will take away from the earth for the Lord has spoken.

I think the idea is that through this emphasis on eating and drinking and not fasting and drinking wine, this feast is beginning now. There's people graduating from an earthly feast to this feast.

[38 : 17] It's a feast for all peoples. That's what the Pharisees didn't get. How are you going to invite these people that are not obeying, that are unclean? But this is a feast for the broken, the beaten down, the dirty, the guilty, the sinner.

It's not just a feast though of well-aged wine and rich food. It's a feast announcing the end of death and forgiveness of sins. That's what is going on. Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand and the beginning of this feast is at hand.

So He says to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven. Then there's a feast that announces not just the end of death but that the Lord is here.

Only the Lord can inaugurate this feast. Jesus says the bridegroom is here. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the Messiah likened to be the bridegroom but Jesus says He is because the Messiah is not just the coming King.

He is the Lord. He is the Lord. The Lord of hosts will make this feast. The Lord God that is Yahweh will come in the person of Jesus Christ to do these things.

[39 : 32] Can you imagine reclining at the table with Jesus Christ? This week as Buddy said marks the one year anniversary of the shutdown the beginning of our fight versus coronavirus.

virus. We grieve at the death of friends. I had a very close friend I met with. Well pretty close friend. Two weeks. Three weeks before he died.

Got the virus. Wednesday. Tuesday. Tuesday. He's dead. We grieve. And if there's one thing we were routinely called to cancel throughout this year it is feasting.

We weren't made to feast alone. We were made to find the meaning of our lives in giving and sharing of food laughter forgiveness and life.

And that's what those tax collectors and sinners realized that they were suddenly invited to this feast with Jesus of Nazareth who is the Lord.

[40 : 41] They weren't just feasting on food they were feasting on friendship forgiveness healing and more. The only way to God or the way to God is only and always Jesus.

Jesus invites you to come to him to feast in him. You know knowing something about Jesus Jonathan Edwards said that said this knowing the goodness of the Lord you can know it intellectually or you can and you can know it in your heart.

the difference is between knowing that honey is sweet and tasting its sweetness. Jesus wants you to taste the forgiveness of sins.

He wants you to plunge all in into that blood that forgives the sinners. There is an invitation for you. There is no more guilt to atone. There is no more sacrifices to offer.

There is no more wrath to fear. There are no more laws to keep. He invites you to feast. On Friday night we rented out the Athens movie palace and many of us watched Wall E together.

[41 : 49] It was a bit depressing. The movie depicts a society increasingly fattened and blinded by their indulgence to technology food comfort and ease.

they don't even eat their meals anymore. They get them in a shake. Not that we've ever done that. All this indulgence led them to leave earth in a spaceship for hundreds of years dumping all the trash on earth and being led to believe that they could never return to earth again.

Now robots wake them up. Tell them when to eat. When to sleep. And do all their work for them. And address them through the screen that is right before your eyes.

Yeah we walk around like this too you know. But hope enters when they discover a plant on earth. There's life again. There's hope of a world outside the ship.

And the movie ends with them taking this plant. pushing it into the ground and pouring water on it. If you will this feast is a bit like that.

[43 : 16] Jesus has come in to usher in the unbelievable not in a one fell swoop not by ascending the throne in Rome. He's come by inviting and plucking sinners to life one at a time.

So here we hold this little plant this little good news that announces not earthly satisfaction. If we believe in Christ just for this life we're most to be pitied.

But it promises there's a new world coming which all things will be made right and will feast will eat and will drink with him forever and ever.

Let us worship the Lord. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com