II Trinity 2020
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
I John 3.13-24   St. Luke 14.16-24
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Welcome back...to those who weren't here last week for our first in-person Mass in three months. And to those who were here last week...welcome back again. Welcome back to feast on the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. Welcome back to a foretaste of the "Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven!"

This morning's Gospel is the *Parable of the Great Feast*. It is one of two invitation-only dinner stories Jesus tells...the other is the *Parable of the Wedding Feast* in Matthew. Both stories make the same point. Invitations are sent out...invitations are ignored...there are consequences for ignoring the host's gracious invitation.

The setting for today's Gospel is dinner at an important religious leader's house on the Sabbath...and Jesus is a guest. He watches other guests rush to get the best seats in the house. He gives his audience a lesson in humility and hospitality...and tells the host to invite the poor and less fortunate to dinner...because they won't be able to pay him back for his extravagant hospitality...but God will repay him for his kindness on Judgment Day.

One of the men sitting at the table said to Jesus those who will sit down at the Feast in the Kingdom of God will be very happy. Jesus uses this opportunity to tell the story of the man who planned a great feast and invited many people. We have now set the stage today's Gospel.

When everything is ready, the host in the story sent out a servant to tell his guests to come and enjoy the feast. One by one they made excuses. The first just bought some land and needed to go sign the papers. A second just bought some farm equipment and needed to test it out. A third just got married and was on his honeymoon; he certainly couldn't be expected to come to the dinner.

Each of these excuses might seem reasonable...but keep in mind the host in the story sent out invitations long before the three men made other plans. What the three guests are really saying is they don't care enough about the invitation or the host's extravagant hospitality to set aside their other plans. Jesus said it was their loss...their places at the table were taken by the poor and disenfranchised. The uninvited became the invited.

The Parable of the Great Feast is about God's extravagant hospitality available to us now and the invitation he sends out to everyone to join him and "sit down at the Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven!" God never forces his hospitality on anyone...the choice to accept it is ours...how will we respond to his gracious invitation?

Our attendance at Sunday Mass is the most visible way we show our acceptance of God's hospitality now...it should be a priority in our lives...not something we do when it's convenient. Now more than ever in this time of global pandemic and uncertainty...we should respond to Jesus' invitation to bring our cares and concerns and our sins to him so he can help us sort things out. He then invites us to feast on his own Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar...a foretaste of the "Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven."

God has shown us extravagant hospitality and unconditional love in the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus. If we take his hospitality and love seriously, we will want to do what Saint John tells us to do in today's Epistle when he writes…"Our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action." We too need to show extravagant hospitality and unconditional love toward others.

Let's read God's invitation:

"You are invited to dine with me from now through all eternity. Believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And dine with Jesus as your host. To live in heaven eternally, all you have to do is RSVP…Yes!"

How could we possibly pass up an invitation that takes our breath way...an invitation so extravagant it's beyond our wildest imaginations?

Let's not wait any longer to answer the invitation to "sit down at the Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven." We have every reason to say…**YES!**
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