

## The Great Supper.

Text: Luke 14:16-24

1) Great As To Its Preparation

Suggested Hymns:

2) Great As To Its Participation

326, 377, 307, 305, 219

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 14:16–24, <sup>16</sup> *Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, <sup>17</sup> and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’*

<sup>18</sup> *But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ <sup>19</sup> And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ <sup>20</sup> Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’*

<sup>21</sup> *So that servant came and reported these things to his master. 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 here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ <sup>22</sup> And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’*

<sup>23</sup> *Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. <sup>24</sup> For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.’”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*“I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.”* These words are directed against the Jews who rejected their own Messiah and refused to be saved through Him. The Jews were the invited guests.

They were favoured before all nations, so that David could say to the Lord, as written in 2 Samuel 7:23, <sup>23</sup> *And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name — and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land — before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods?*

Sadly, they did not prove themselves worthy of their preference before the nations. They rebelled against the Lord and provoked Him to anger in the wilderness on the way to Canaan.

Shamefully they forsook His statutes and followed after strange gods, when their kingdom was established in the Holy Land.

Still, the Lord never forsook His chosen people. He punished them for their sins, He delivered them into the hands of their oppressors, and at times it seemed as if Israel would be utterly destroyed, but He always restored them again.

At last God's long-suffering and patience with the Jewish nation was exhausted. When His own Son appeared in their midst and did among them the greatest signs and wonders, and spoke as never a man spoke, proclaiming the words of eternal life, and when in spite of all this they rejected their own Messiah, stained their hands with His blood, and cried, ***“His blood be on us and on our children,”***<sup>1</sup> then God withdrew His merciful hand from the people of His choice so that they lost their land, and were scattered abroad, and became a proverb among the nations of the earth.

An important lesson for us is involved in this. God's dealing with Israel shows us that God is truly slow to anger and plenteous in mercy; but it teaches us, at the same time, that His patience and forbearance with nations and individuals may come to an end if continually, stubbornly, and maliciously they oppose His love for them and refuse to do His will.

How kind God is to us! How abundantly He provides for our souls! We have His precious Word proclaimed to us in its purity and His holy Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution.

The table is set before us, and we can freely partake of the gifts of His love. Let us be careful that we do not despise God's love, but appreciate the great supper which He serves for us and of which our Gospel deals with.

Let us consider, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *The Great Supper*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Great As To Its Preparation

Jesus says, "*A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, <sup>17</sup> and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'*"

As to the exposition of this parable there is no difficulty. That certain man is the Lord God. The great supper which He prepares is the redemption of the sinful world. The time of the supper is the time of the New Testament, beginning with Christ's great work on this earth. When the eternal Son of God appeared on this earth, when God became man, when the Bread of Heaven was given to the world, then the great supper was served, and ever since then the table is set and the supper continues to the end of the world.

Is not this a great supper indeed? To a supper we apply the expression "great," if the host went to a great deal of trouble in arranging the supper. If he spared neither time, nor pains, nor means that he might royally entertain his guests, and if he abundantly furnishes the best that can be had, and lavishes upon them his hospitality it is certainly great indeed!

It was a great feast which Solomon made for Israel. When the temple was dedicated and sheep and oxen were sacrificed there were so many that they could not be counted or numbered.

It was a great feast which King Ahasuerus<sup>2</sup> made for the people of Shushan in the court of his garden where they feasted seven days and drank wine in abundance from vessels of gold.

But what are these feasts of men compared with the great supper which our God has prepared for us? The preparations for this glorious feast date back to the beginning of the world, yes, to eternity. Before the foundation of the world was laid, before a human soul breathed, God knew what would become of the world

which He had resolved to create. He knew that the human race would fall into sin and be punished with eternal starvation for tasting of the forbidden fruit.

And how did God counteract the evil which He saw coming? What did God do when He saw that by Adam's fall the whole human race would be doomed to eternal ruin? He made a plan to redeem the fallen world, to feed the starving souls, to prepare for them a great supper, to set a table before them laden with living and refreshing food for the soul, that they might not perish eternally, but live forever.

He determined to send His only-begotten Son into the world that He would render that obedience to God in which we fail, and bear the punishment which we deserve for our sins, that He would live for us and die for us, that He would be the Bread of Life for us all, as Jesus says in John 6:51, ***51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.***

And when, after the creation of man in innocence and blessedness, the great disaster came which separated him from his Creator. But look at what pains God took, what provisions He made to carry out His eternal decree of the redemption! Preparations were in progress for four thousand years.

Already in paradise God promised the Deliverer; He repeated the promise to the patriarchs; He singled out the Israelites among the nations of the earth, and made them His chosen people, and revealed to them His glory, and sent to them His prophets. Why did God favour Israel? Was it that Israel was worthier than others?

No; read the history of the Jews, and you will find that almost continually they rebelled against the Lord, and that they killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to them. The reason why God selected a certain nation for His chosen people was because the Bread of Life was to come into the world, because His dear Son was to become man.

There had to be a people and a family from whom the promised Messiah was to descend, and this had to be made known to the world. The entire time of the Old Testament with its manifold promises as to the Redeemer, vague and dim at first and becoming plainer and clearer in the course of time, with its blood stained

sacrifices and divine institutions prefiguring and foreshadowing Christ, was a time of extensive preparation for the great event which was to come, for the great supper which in His unbounded love God arranges for sinful man.

At length the time was fulfilled. The supper was served. The Word was made flesh and dwelled among us. The Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus Christ appeared in the world as the Paschal Lamb, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He gave Himself a sacrifice for us all, and died on the cross for our transgressions.

O my friends, could God do more for us than not to spare even His own Son, but to deliver Him up for us all?

Does He not with Him also freely give us all things? Can we doubt that God is perfectly reconciled with us, that our sins are truly forgiven, that life and salvation have been procured, that heaven is ours, when we see Him preparing for us a supper in which He gives us His own Son as the Bread of Life that we should feed on Him, rejoice in Him, be delighted in Him, and live forever?

Surely, if there is anything in the world to make us sure of God's love and of His good will toward us, it is this great supper, truly great as to its preparation.

## **2. Great As To Its Participation.**

Great is this supper also as to its participation. We say that a supper is great if the attendance is great, if there are many participants.

Now if God's will was accomplished, all people would participate in the great supper which He has prepared by the sacrifice of His Son. Not a soul would be excluded. All would partake of this great gift of His love. God kindly invites all, and is willing to admit all, even the greatest of sinners.

But sadly, many people decline the invitation. In the Old Testament the invitation was extended to the Jews, and through them to the Gentiles. By faith in the future Messiah they could partake of the great supper, as Abraham did, of whom Jesus distinctly says, "*Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*"<sup>3</sup>

When Christ came, He extended the invitation to the Jews in person, as well as through John the Baptist and the disciples, and said, "*Come; for all things are now ready.*" But as a race, as a nation, they declined the invitation.

As we are told, “<sup>18</sup> *But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’* <sup>19</sup> *And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’* <sup>20</sup> *Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’*”

All the kind words which Jesus and His disciples gave to the Jews, urging them to believe in Him and to partake of the Bread of Life that came down for them from heaven, met with no response, but with vain excuses.

The truth was that they were so much absorbed in earthly things that the true conception of the Messiah, as outlined by the prophets, had faded away among them, and the Messiah whom they expected was a Messiah of their own fabrication, a worldly ruler to bring them independence, prosperity, and earthly happiness.

They had no use for the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth and His spiritual kingdom. Only a few individuals accepted God’s kind invitation in the days of Christ, and these were chiefly the outcasts of the nation, tax collectors and sinners.

Our Gospel says, “<sup>21</sup> *So that servant came and reported these things to his master. 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 here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’* <sup>22</sup> *And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’*”

While the head men of the nation, the scribes, and Pharisees, and rulers, declined to have anything to do with Jesus, His mission to the poor, maimed, lame, and the blind of the streets and lanes of the city was not in vain.

How gladly Zacchaeus, for instance, the chief among the tax collectors, accepted the kind invitation, when Jesus called up to him, as he sat in the sycamore tree, and said, “*Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house!*”<sup>4</sup>

How sweet the words sounded in the robber’s ears, “*Today you will be with Me in Paradise!*”<sup>5</sup>

God, however, was not content to have only a scanty attendance at the supper which He had prepared at the greatest cost. It was to be a great supper, great also as to its participation. The lord said to the servant, “*Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*”

God’s desire and express command is that the invitation to the great supper would be extended to those who are not from the people of Israel, those afar off, that is, to the Gentiles.

These are to be compelled to come in to the great supper, compelled not by physical force or temporal power, but by earnest pleading and beseeching.

Compelled by holding up to them the Law and showing them that they are an abomination in the sight of the holy God in their natural state, lost and condemned sinners.

Compelled by preaching to them the Gospel of the love of God, that God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that all sinners might be saved and have eternal life; whereupon they will gladly accept the invitation to be seated at the table of His grace and to receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Has not this command of the Lord to go out into the highways and hedges and to compel them to come in been carried out ever since the days of the apostles?

Did not many come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South and sit down in the kingdom of God?

Has not the Gospel been proclaimed in nearly all the parts of the earth? Has not the Church of Christ assumed much greater dimensions than the Church of the old covenant?

Do not the children of God in this blessed time of the new dispensation enjoy grace and peace, all *the liberty by which Christ has made us free*?<sup>6</sup> Is not the kingdom of God and all that pertains to it, appropriately compared to a great supper participated in by untold millions of all nations?

Still there is room. The tables are not filled, and upon us all devolves the duty to do our part and share, as co-workers with God, that they be filled.

Let us all take part in the blessed work of leading souls to Christ that they may taste of His love. Then together with them in heaven we shall eat of the eternal manna and drink of the river of God's pleasures forever and ever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 27:25

<sup>2</sup> Esther 1:5-8

<sup>3</sup> John 8:56

<sup>4</sup> Luke 19:5

<sup>5</sup> Luke 23:43

<sup>6</sup> Galatians 5:1