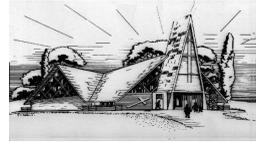




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 17C)

**“Blessed is everyone who eats
bread in the kingdom of God”!**



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 14,1-14

• **ESV 1** One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

• **2** And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.

• **3** And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”

• **4** But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.

• **5** And he said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?”

• **6** And they could not reply to these things.

7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them,

8 “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him,

9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.

10 But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

12 He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,

14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

• ***Let us pray:** Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that we will eat the bread of the Gospel in the kingdom of God, which will make us truly humble guests at Jesus' endtime table! Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

• [15c] *“Blessed is everyone who eats bread in the kingdom of God!”* This, dear congregation, is the reason why the world still turns! The reason that the Law's of nature continue to work is not to save the world-markets, is not to keep everyone working on this planet! It is not to keep the internet up and running for the young people, all the social media, all media, the whole music industry! These things are not all bad! That is not what I am saying. But they are not the reason that God allows this world to continue to spin.

• The main reason for the seasons and that we do receive rain in due season is not to make sure that we get our rainbow nation right. The universe is not up and running to make life possible for its own sake even, to preserve the world and nature. Not even that. The main reason everything continues is to ensure one thing. Our sermone text puts it this way: that there will be people in God's kingdom eating bread at His table!

- So, if you could think of a million ways to better spend your Sunday morning than to sit in a congregation and listen to the Word of God and eat some bread and drink some wine, consecrated by the Word of God, it simply reveals how far off your old Adam is from the mark, how little he gets from what God is preparing for His people to enjoy.
- In reality, you are at the right place at the moment. Here, and everywhere, where Jesus hosts His Meal on earth, is the place to be. This is why the cosmos still spins!
- Those who don't attend the Sunday morning invitation of their Lord are busy with much less important things. They are the ones losing out. This is what Jesus reveals in His sermon word for today!
- God prepares His mega endtime meal which will be revealed on the Last Day, in full glory. He prepares for this day by inviting people to come to His meal of peace. It will be the final outcome of His Mission through Christ and His Church on earth.
- But this meal will not be held in chaos, just everyone doing as he or she wills. That would not be the meal of God. There will be a certain table etiquette, for the guests and for the host. As Jesus invites guests to God's endtime meal, He also reveals what the table etiquette will be so that all guests will know and follow the table-fellowship rules of God's feast.
- Let us pause here for one moment: Salvation does not mean that we will be able to do what we want! Salvation never means the freedom of the old Adam! The very opposite: Salvation means freedom from our old Self, freedom from the desires and decisions of my old self with regard to spiritual things! Salvation means to become free from the old evil self so that the Word of God, the written Word of God, has full sway in my life!
- And this, dear congregation, is depicted as a feast, by God! It turns out to be a feast where our old self's are crucified and buried! Where this happens the new attitude of God is born! An attitude of divine humbleness!
- This preparation is what we see Jesus doing here in the Scriptures. He goes and meets up with people in their houses. He is out in the mission field. This is not yet the Holy Communion He celebrated with His disciples in the large upper room. That would come later. For now He reaches out to them and prepares them for the great feast.
- We realise something significant as we listen closely to what He was saying to the different people. We see that He proclaimed the true Law of God to the Pharisees and Scribes, those who refused to be baptised with the Baptism for Repentance administered by John the Baptist. On the other hand He proclaimed the Gospel, the good news, to those who realised that they had no good standing before God, to all the outcasts of society, like the tax-collectors!
- That is why Jesus asked this question concerning whether one is allowed to heal someone on the Sabbath, or not to the Pharisees! According to the original intention of God's Law the commandment not to work on the Sabbath Day was never meant to withhold help from your neighbour or animal on that day. This extra burden was loaded on top of God's commandment. So, the Pharisees were not checking Jesus against the original commandment of God, but against their own added set of rules which one can still find gathered in their Talmud today! These are gathered writings of Jewish philosophy throughout the ages. But, this is not what God had originally commanded. The commandment not to work on the Sabbath day was never given to outleverage the mercy your neighbour or own son or ox might need.

• In any case Jesus reveals their hypocrisy in that they were themselves not keeping it in this way, because they all went silent when He asked them, who is going to leave his own son or ox in the pit when he has fallen in on a Sabbath day. Who is just going to leave them in the pit? They all knew they wouldn't do it.

• And so Jesus refuted their own gathered traditions and teachings which were interfering with the true will of God.

• So, Jesus used the true Law of God to show to them what a hypocritical heart they had! He exposed and crucified their old Adam's! They were guilty of sin, just as much as the tax-collectors! They would have to repent first, because as it stood then, they were elevating themselves against the teaching of their own laws. They were seeing themselves sitting at the highest honoured places on the table of God's Kingdom. They were like the guests who would go sit at the best places but then the host had to come and remove them from their places. Their places were given to others. They were elevating themselves whilst in truth they needed to be humbled.

• These Pharisees and Scribes, dear congregation, have everything to do with us! They are a vivid picture of our old Adams! Our old Adam is the one who misuses the Law of God, who reinterprets the Laws of God to suite himself. Our old Adam is a master in this. He will always twist the Law of God so that he will come out on top whilst all others will be guilty. You see, he, like the Pharisees, likes to put himself at one of the better places at God's table! He doesn't want to sit with the low class raw sinners!

• And this fellow, dear congregation, our Lord targets first of all, the Pharisee of my heart! He takes him out with breathtaking precision every time! He nails him to the cross time and time again. He manages to escape my own discernment, but when the Lord comes with the Law of God, He pins him to the ground! He strikes him with the sword of His Law and immediately gives him a deadly cut!

• What a relief that someone takes him out for me! What great service our Lord is doing us to not be fooled by him! At last someone to fully sort him out, this old self of mine! Who will rescue me from this sinful self? Jesus does! That is His mission with you!

• It is by God's Grace alone if I realise: I am not worthy of any special treatment at the table of the Lord. It is by God's Grace alone if I go along with the Law of God preached by Jesus. This is the first rule at God's table: Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. It is a very important rule which sorts out all old Self's.

• Jesus then turns from the guests to the host. He reveals what attitude the host will have during this endtime banquet of God.

• [12] *“When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”*

• Jesus teaches that a blessed host is someone who invites people to his dinner who cannot repay him in any way! If you invite only your friends and all the wealthy people, you can be certain that they will return your invitation. You will be able to score something from inviting them. Jesus says, that is not what a blessed host does. A blessed host invites all the cripple, lame and blind from the streets, the dirty and smelly ones to his feast!

• The question is, who does this, who invites the cripple and lame and the blind, from the streets to his party? Do you do this? Who does this? It is certainly not custom to do this in any society I know of! Normally we invite our friends, isn't that true? People might speak about doing something like this, or that one should do something like this, but who really does this? And not just once, on-going, every year!? Answer: Jesus does! God does! He invites all who cannot pay Him back in any way, who cannot give Him anything! Jesus invites the beggars of this world to His Mega Endtime meal. He does so knowing He will never be repaid by them.

• So, then, who are those crippled, blind and lame ones He invites? Amongst those are you and me! We are all invited because we cannot pay, because we have debt with God which we will never be able to pay back. We are invited only because the host of the endtime Meal is merciful and acts in mercy. He may do so. He has God's authority, His Holy Spirit and He paid the bride price. He bought her free. She belongs to Him. And so Jesus continues to invite people from the streets to participate in His feast.

• In this way those who had been invited first will be last and those who had initially not been invited will be first now.

• So, we see, as we have seen during the previous Sundays too, whoever excuses himself from God's invitation will eventually lose his place. The one who is excusing himself from the feast of God is the one who loses out. It is hair-raising to consider how lightly people take the invitation of God! What silly excuses our old Adam comes up with not to participate in the feast God has begun! What in this world could be more important than attending God's global and universal feast of Salvation? What could be more urgent than following this invitation from the highest authority?

• Nobody expected a humble God, such a humble God, personally going around in His human nature inviting them to His endtime feast! Nobody saw in the man Jesus the godly nature of Jesus! Its the same issue we have to struggle with in our own lives and times. If you don't realise that God is really present in His Divine Service and active in, with and through His Word and means of Grace you will not realise what is happening where people are gathered in the name of the Lord.

• The Pharisees were blind. They didn't realise it was God Himself present in the man Jesus. In the same way God must open our minds so that we realise, it is God who visits us. Here we are gathered in His Kingdom. Here we participate in the feast of God, a feast of Salvation and Jesus is our humble host who feeds us with the Bread from Heaven.

• Indeed [15c] *“Blessed is everyone who eats bread in the kingdom of God!”* **Amen.**

• *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* (^{ESV} Eph 3,20-21).