

Grace: God's undeserved love for each and every one of us. Mercy: God forgiving us our sins for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ. And Peace: peace of heart, peace of mind... peace with God. All of these are yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke the fourteenth chapter beginning at the sixteenth verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

*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.'"*

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Have you ever stopped and counted the number of excuses you use in any given day? I can't workout today it is too hot. I can't get up with my alarm, it is too early, or, I didn't get enough sleep yet. I can't read my bible today something else came up, my television shows are more important, I just don't have time. These are but a few of the excuses most of us use daily and they are exactly that, excuses.

If we wanted to workout and get fit, we would do it. If we wanted to get enough rest we could find a way to do that also. But when it comes to reading the Bible... I don't know of many people nowadays who are willing to go out of their way to do that.

On the one hand we make excuses for so many things on a daily basis... and on the other hand when we want something bad

enough we will find a way to get what we want, no matter the cost. But when it comes to God it is hard to tell which side we fall on on any given day.

However, thanks be to God that when it comes to the important things it is not up to us. It is not up to us to earn salvation. It is not up to us to defeat satan. And, as we learn in our text, it is not up to us when it comes to: ***Filling God's House.***

When we look at the parable that Jesus is telling us we learn some very important facts. First, we learn that when it comes to our salvation, we make excuses like none other. The men in the story had their excuses down and they used them perfectly, did they not?

I can't come to the free dinner, the free banquet, I just bought a house and I have to go check on it. Such a common thing to do is

it not, buy a house without seeing it or knowing anything about it. That is what we would have to equate it to, buying a house and not knowing anything about it... so you have to check it out. Is that a good reason to not come to church, and better yet is that a good reason to give up your salvation?

I can't come to the free dinner because I just bought a new car and I have to go give it a test-drive. Now, we're getting a little smaller in our purchases but it is still the same thing. I know all of us buy new cars or tractors or really any vehicle without any information on them and we have to go test them out... not like you can pre-test these things. So, I have to give up my spot at the dinner, I am choosing to give up my salvation because I have to play with the things of this world. I like the new cars and the new toys... and I have to play with them, that is why I can't come to church.

I can't come to church because I just got married. So unfortunately, my wife is my priority now... I can't be bothered with anything else. You know, that was Solomon's issue also. Yep, King Solomon had many wives and concubines and the Bible tells us that when he focused on them and not on God they drove him away from God. So, I choose to give up my salvation so that I can chase a spouse or a boyfriend or a girlfriend... or even companionship.

Now, let's understand something, in their proper place and perspective, nothing these men were doing is wrong. They were caring for their livelihoods, they were looking after their land, their possessions, and their spouses... but when that got in the way of God, then all those other things became a problem. When we are no longer seeking God and giving Him first place in our life then we have a big problem: hell. When we are not giving first and foremost to God and

what He wants, we are putting ourselves on the road to perdition.

***As Koren says, “Just pay attention to how it goes when we seek something else in this world, whatever it may be. As long as you are seeking, you are concerned about finding what you are looking for. This is in your thoughts and uppermost in your mind, and you do not rest until you either find what you are seeking or you give up. So also with the one who seeks God. Alas, the majority do not seek God. They don’t care; therefore, they do not come to Him. They seek the things of this world; those they seek diligently, earnestly and with self-sacrifice. But their Christianity amounts to nothing.”***

And is that not the case with us so often? When we want a spouse we will search and search and search until just the right one is found. When we want a house we will spend

years searching and seeking to find that right one. When we want a new car, we will not take anything less than everything we want... but when it comes to God, we are very content not seeking Him out and just doing the bare minimum. Instead of diligently seeking Him in His word, we make excuses about the difficulty of finding time to read or the difficulty of the words themselves. Instead of diligently seeking His will, we just prescribe to Him our own flawed will, then when things don’t turn out we blame Him. Instead of seeking God, we are just like those making excuses in the story... we make excuses and we turn away from God.

Yet, thanks be to God that He does not give up seeking us. God never gives up on seeking the lost and finding all those who are His. He sent prophets in days past, He sent evangelists in this new era... and just in

case those weren't enough, He sent His Son to find us also.

Yes, Jesus Christ came into this world to seek that which was lost and to bring back those sheep that had wandered away. He came in the fullness of time to live the perfect life for us. He came to perfectly fulfill God's law for us. He came to live the life that we could not, perfect obedience, perfect love, perfection... and for this life He was given death. For this perfect life, Jesus was mocked and ridiculed, He was beaten and spit upon, Jesus was hung on a cross for us to make full atonement for our sins. And Jesus died.

However, Jesus did not stay dead. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead. He rose to proclaim that His life and death were perfect payment for all of our sins, for all of our wanderings. He rose to proclaim to us that He has borne our guilt and our

punishment and now through faith in Him we have eternal life. He rose, so that those who have faith in Him until the end will rise also.

And still to this day Jesus is seeking us. He is seeking us in His word and in His sacraments. He is seeking us generally when He casts His word before all people, sharing His love and His grace with all of us. And He is calling us specifically when He baptizes us into the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and He makes us one of God's own children. And He calls us personally when we come to His table, at His request, to partake of His body and blood for the forgiveness of all of our sins.

Jesus spends His days, to this very day, calling and seeking each and every one of us and He has called others to help Him in this task. He has called me and He has called you to take His word to all of His children. He

has called on all of us to be faithful to Him and to continue to seek Him and His will in His word.

Just like in the parable that Christ has shared with us in this text, we know that many are invited, many are called but only few will enter. Many people that the master called had other things that got in the way of their coming to His banquet and still to this day many people have things that they are choosing over heaven. But that does not stop God and His message... God has a large dining hall with many spots and there is always room for more. So He continues to send out His servant, our Savior Jesus Christ, to invite more and more and more and more. Calling in the blind, the lame, the deaf, the weak... calling in us. We find ourselves blind in spiritual matters, deaf to the many kind words spoken to us, weak and lame when it comes to our own powers bringing us to God. But thanks be to God

that He looks beyond all of that and sees His children, His beloved children.

He knows that we are blind and so He sent His Son to call us and when we hear His voice, well then we follow that to our heavenly home. He knows that we are deaf, so He has opened our ears with His healing so that we can hear the voice of Christ all the more. He knows that we are weak and lame so He strengthens us; not with workouts or physical training, but He strengthens our faith through His word and His sacraments. God has healed us and He will continue to take care of us so that in the end we will be in His heavenly home.

Dear friends, thanks be to God for loving us and sending His Son to continually call us home. Thanks be to God for preparing a banquet, and though many turn away from Him, He still keeps it ready for me. And thanks be to God that though I am not a

perfect child, His Son Jesus Christ has lived  
and died for me so that I can be with Him in  
heaven.

Thanks be to God. Amen.