

**II TRINITY 2018**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**

***1 JOHN 3.13 St. LUKE 14.16-24***

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We just received the invitation of our lifetime.  
Let's read what it says:

*Dear Friends...you are invited to have dinner with me from now through all eternity. Do you believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Then come and have dinner with Jesus as your host, and live in heaven forever.*

*Love, God...Please RSVP.*

The Parable of the Great Feast is one of two "dinner" stories Jesus uses to teach us what it takes for us to get to heaven. In Matthew, Jesus tells a story about a wedding reception. Both stories make the same point. Everyone gets the same invitation to join Jesus at his dinner table in heaven. Not everyone wants heaven on God's terms...some want it on their terms...or wait to make a decision...or don't want it at all.

In this morning's Gospel Jesus is the dinner guest of an important civic leader on the Sabbath Day. He watches as other guests push each other out of the way so they can get a better seat near the host. Jesus gives some practical advice on dinner etiquette...don't be so pushy...take the seat you're asked to take...it might be next to the host...it might be far away...show some humility.

Earlier Jesus posed a question to some lawyers and religious leaders who were also dinner guests...was it against God's law to heal someone on the Sabbath? No one answered. A man with swollen arms and legs asked Jesus to heal him...and he did. Jesus used this healing miracle to teach us a lesson about compassion...and he mixed it with some common sense...wouldn't it be the right thing to do to pull your son out of a well...even on the Sabbath Day? Of course it would! The lawyers and religious leaders knew better than to say anything and risk looking foolish.

In the Parable of the Great Feast...the important citizens who were invited made excuses for not coming only after the host's employees knocked on their front door. In the end all of the tables are full with the marginalized and disenfranchised of the city.

The story concludes with the host saying none of the original guests will ever be a guest at his table.

Our dinner host in the Gospel put on an extravagant dinner only to be dismissed by people who should have known better. His anger is justified. The Parable of the Great Feast is ultimately about God's invitation for us to join him in heaven than it is about his anger toward those who dismiss him...although that would also be justified...and understandable.

The invitation to have dinner with God in heaven comes with an RSVP. When we answer YES to the RSVP...we take on the responsibility of mature Christians...to show the same kind of extravagant love and hospitality God shows us. Saint John writes in today's Epistle..."Our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action."

We have all heard the saying "actions speak louder than words." There is no price we can pay to get a seat at God's table in heaven...that price was paid by Jesus once and for all on Good Friday...and it guarantees the best seat in the house for all those who want to experience heaven...but we have to be willing to accept heaven on God's terms...not ours.

Let's read again the invitation we're holding in our hands:

*Dear Friends...you are invited to have dinner with me from now through all eternity. Do you believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Then come and have dinner with Jesus as your host, and live in heaven forever.*

*Love, God...Please RSVP.*

Exclusion from what God offers is possible for those who choose the option...not one he wishes.

So let's not look for excuses...there really aren't any. Let's RSVP 'yes' to God's generous invitation to have dinner with him for all eternity...with Jesus as our host...and live in heaven forever.

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