

II Trinity 2023

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

I St. John 3.13-24 St. Luke 14.16-24

✠

We just logged in to our e-mail. There is the invitation we have been expecting. We're invited to the greatest feast ever. It's now time for to RSVP...how will we reply?

Today's Gospel is a parable about a dinner party. Parables are short stories Jesus tells to make a point. They are the Biblical equivalent of "one upon a time" fables. Jesus, of course, is not talking about a little girl with golden hair and her encounter with three talking bears. Jesus gets the material for his parables from everyday life...events people could relate to...like great feasts.

First, we need to set the stage for today's Gospel. Jesus and his friends are guests at a dinner hosted by an important religious leader in the community. Jesus watches other guests push each other out of the way so they can get seats closer to the host. We can relate to that...it's more fun to be seated next to the host. Right? But Jesus then gives a lesson in humility and hospitality. His advice..."Don't be so pushy; you might embarrass yourself." One of the guests then says to Jesus, "How happy are those who will sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of God".

Let's get back to the invitation in our e-mail. We are happy the host invited us to the celebration. He even made it easy for us to RSVP...we just have to click on the Yes or No button. We're eager to answer **YES!** There are, of course, circumstances that could keep us from going. In that case, we will want to thank the person who invited us for thinking of us and send our regrets.

In today's Parable of the Great Feast, the host has sent out many invitations. Imagine how disappointed...and angry...he was when all of the invited guests said they weren't coming. One said he just bought some land; another said he just bought some farm animals, another said he just got married.

We might think the excuses the people give for not coming are reasonable. Considering the fact they all had their invitations in hand for a long time...the reasons they give for not coming are all lame. They could have taken care of their other obligations later. It's now too late for them to change their mind; they missed the best dinner ever. Now other people get to take their place.

The Parable of the Great Feast isn't really about a dinner party. It is, as many of Jesus' parables are, a story about heaven and God's invitation to join him

in the Great Feast with his Son, Jesus. The invitation goes out in a global e-mail to everyone. We might be surprised to learn it even goes out to people we don't like...or think shouldn't be invited. The good news is all of the seats at God's dinner table in heaven are the best seats in the house. There is no such thing as more or less of heaven...there is just heaven! And Jesus makes it clear there really isn't a good reason not to answer **YES!**

We can answer God's invitation to join him in heaven **NOW!** We get a taste of heaven every time we respond to the Invitation to Confession in the Mass, and promise to love our neighbors. God expects us to show the same hospitality toward others he shows us.

Hospitality and Christian love are actions. We are show hospitality and love even if we don't know the other person well or don't like them much. And we experience God's hospitality and a taste of heaven every time we receive Jesus' Body and Blood, which helps us and give us strength to do the right thing.

The invitation to join God in heaven is still in our Inbox and it reads, "How happy are those who will sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of God. Will you be there?"

We have every reason to click on the **YES** button right now. And let's not forget to click the Send button...God is waiting for our RSVP...and how happy he will be when he receives it!

✠