
Sermon

Luke 14:7a.15–24 (The Message)

“Celebrating God and each other.”

::: ZERO :::

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

::: Amen.

::: ONE :::

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We have come a long way already in the series
of our Mission Sunday.

After...

... Proclaiming the Good News of Christ.

... Encouraging spiritual growth.

 through Bible-reading and prayer.

... Accepting all-comers from all nations.

We have reached...

... CELEBRATING GOD AND EACH OTHER.

∴ TWO ∴

And... we have heard the '*Parable of the Great Banquet*', or as it is called in The Message bible, '*The Story of the Dinner Party*'.

This is a rather strange story, yet... these days this story might not be too farfetched.

Just the other day we spoke at the Homework Club that it is quite a *phenomenon*,

how you invite people to a party, and how you get some last minute Whatsapp messages, "Oh sorry, can't make it", and...

how on the other hand your party might up being packed with half of the guests being people you have never invites and might not even know.

I won't forget an article in "Der Spiegel" from 2011, translated it reads:

"A thousand guests attend birthday party uninvited

Hamburg - What a 16th birthday! After a mistaken invitation on Facebook, 1200 to 1400 people turned up on the street outside the house of a

young Hamburg girl on Friday evening to celebrate with her. But Thessa is hiding, instead the party-goers are met by police.

The hundred or so officers greet the party crowd that invades the neighbourhood in Hamburg-Bramfeld with barriers and dogs. The young people are wearing T-shirts that say "Congratulations" or have hearts and the name "Thessa" written on their shirts.

But Thessa doesn't know these people and the huge party was a huge mistake: "I'm celebrating my birthday on 3 June. Anyone can come, but please let me know in advance," she wrote. By mistake, the Facebook message and her address were not only visible to online friends, but to all users."

If only the host of the great dinner party would have had facebook...

::: THREE :::

Can you imagine such a situation. You prepare for a huge celebration. You send out personal invitation to many, many people.

And then, just when dinner is about to be ready, you get one apology after the other, a constant flow of regretful cancellations.

This is embarrassing. It's a social crash. A kick in the gut of self-esteem.

Here is a host who wants to celebrate, who wants to throw a party for many. And all he is an empty house and an angry heart.

::: FOUR :::

Now, what would I do. Yes, I would be angry as well as frustrated to rock bottom.

And after some time, I would try to get the food out to people. Maybe bring it to a shelter or a food bank.

But the host from the parable acts differently. And why? Not just because there is good food waiting for hungry mouths.

No, this dinner party is not only about eating, it is about celebrating.

And the dearest of the dinner party organizer is to celebrate, to have his house full.

He says to his servant:

‘Quickly, get out into the city streets and alleys. Collect all who look like they need a square meal, all the misfits and homeless and wretched you can lay your hands on, and bring them here.’

“The servant reported back, ‘Master, I did what you commanded—and there’s still room.’

*“The master said, ‘Then go to the country roads. Whoever you find, drag them in. **I WANT MY HOUSE FULL!**’*

Lk 14:21–23 (The Message)

::: FIVE :::

And here we are—right at the center of our theme for the day.

The mission: “Celebrating God and each other.”

This text tells us that God’s mission is not only to feed the hungry and needy.

The mission is to invite them to the celebration.

The mission is to open the doors and let people in—after you have gone out to their place and invited them.

The mission is to have open doors and to let people know that they have a guaranteed spot at the dinner table—even if they didn't know.

“I WANT MY HOUSE FULL!” says the host.

Could you imagine a better motivation to mission? The host has provided for a party, and the only thing to do is to step out and *go to the country roads, to whoever we will find and drag them in.*

∴ SIX ∴

“I WANT MY HOUSE FULL!” says the host.

With this wonderful wish to invite everyone to the great dinner party, this story also gives us a glimpse into the eternal kingdom of—God where there's space for everyone.

“I WANT MY HOUSE FULL!” says God.

Everyone who accepts God's invitation is welcome to the celebration—welcome at God's table.

That is the reason why we as Methodists celebrate communion in the shape of an open invitation to all who want to be guests at *Christ's table*.

“I WANT MY HOUSE FULL!” says Jesus Christ.

On every first Sunday of the month, we celebrate communion. *We* enjoy being guests at Christ's table.

We receive bread and cup.

We celebrate

... God and each other,

... we celebrate forgiveness

and the possibility for a new start

... we celebrate God's open arms to everyone.

::: SEVEN :::

Nobody deserves to sit at God's table. It is by his loving grace, his life transforming power, and his life-giving Spirit that we have found our place here—at God's table.

Be reminded of our being guests and our being messenger of God's invitation by words from one of Peace Church's most beautiful communion liturgies:

Jesus was always the guest.

*In the homes of Peter and Jairus,
Martha and Mary, Joanna and Susanna,
he was always the guest.*

*At the meal tables of the wealthy
where he pled the case of the poor,
he was always the guest.*

*Upsetting polite company,
befriending isolated people,
welcoming the stranger,
he was always the guest.*

But here at this table, he is the host.

*Those who wish to serve him
must first be served by him.*

*Those who want to follow him
must first be fed by him.*

*Those who would wash his feet
must first let him make them clean.*

*For this is the table
where God intends us to be nourished;
this is the time when Christ can make us new.*

“I WANT MY HOUSE FULL!” says God.

Let us go and be messengers of God’s wonderful wish. There is room for everyone at the great banquet table—where we celebrate God and each other.

::: Amen.