2nd Sun. after Trinity Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

Luke 14: 17: "Come, for all things are now ready!"

THE DIVINE SUMMONS

The heralds cry out: COME! The church bells ring: COME! Choirs and choruses sing: COME! Pastors and missionaries plead: COME! The almighty God declares: "COME, FOR ALL THINGS ARE NOW READY!" Come, the heavenly feast is ready! Come, the celestial banquet is prepared! Come, your salvation is secured! Come, your eternal redemption is awaiting you!

Indeed, the royal proclamation -- "COME, FOR ALL THINGS ARE NOW READY" -- continues to echo and re-echo far and wide around the world. The King of glory sitting on the throne of grace extends His nail-torn hands in the gracious invitation to all who will but hear: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest! I have redeemed thee!" Filling both earth and sky the divine summons resounds! It is the King's decree! It bears the royal seal! And who is there who will not hearken? Who is there who will not come at His bidding?

Here is the imperial feast of unending bliss! Here is the banquet of divine glory! The heavenly court yards are radiating with sparkling beauty and majestic splendor. The festive halls of this never-ceasing paradise are luxuriously decorated. Tables are sumptuously set with immortal food -- food such as has never before so delighted the taste, so satisfied the stomach, so nourished the body. Goblets are filled with drink which will forever quench the thirst, forever give pleasure and delight to the soul. And in the background can be heard the ~~divine~~ wondrous strains of the celestial symphony. Angelic choirs blending their voices in anthems of adoration and praise to the King of Kings literally propel the heart to the highest heights of jubilation and joy. Who is there who ~~is there who~~ does not wish to be present at such a celebration?

It was when one of the Pharisees who was dining with Jesus remarked -- "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God" -- that the divine,

errorless lips of the Lord spoke the parable of today's Gospel lesson: "A certain man made a Great Supper and bade many and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'" Without a doubt everyone who heard this parable knew exactly what Jesus was talking about. The "certain man" is none other than the almighty God. The "great supper" is unmistakably salvation -- eternal life in the presence of the Lord God. The "servant" is anyone who brings the divine summons: "Come, for all things are now ready!"

God has exceeded all imaginable expense in preparing this magnificent Supper. No words in any language, no rhetoric of any oratory, no powers of imagery in any art, can do justice to express the brilliance and splendor of the Feast of eternal glory. If you were to take all the gold, crystal, sapphire, amethyst, pearls contained in this world and multiply their value by the highest number conceivable -- you would not be able to come within even the slightest fraction of the cost of but one bite of the heavenly manna placed in the banquet hall of eternal bliss. The sacred writers of Holy Scripture literally exhausting the resources of language in trying to portray in the smallest degree the exquisite wonder of eternity, the Great Supper which God almighty has prepared. Could there be anyone who would not jump at the chance to be there at such a meal?

"But how," you ask, "can I gain admission?" Ah, my friend, but the supper is free! It will cost you nothing! Jesus Christ, God's only Son, the Prince of heaven, has paid your entrance fee. "But still," you say, "I would never get by the angelic guards who are standing watch over the royal palace with flaming swords and armour that shines more brilliant than the sun. Surely I would wither before such holy splendor. MY SINS, MY SINS,-- I AM CORRUPT THROUGH AND THROUGH! SINCE THE TIME OF MY CONCEPTION I HAVE LIVED AND BREATHED ONLY INIQUITY! I AM DEFILED! Certainly I could not face such glory." Ah, my friend, but you are redeemed! Jesus Christ is your Savior! Hear the ever-sure declaration of divine truth: God "hath made Him to be sin for us Who knew no

sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!" "The Lord hath laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all." Yea, God poured all of His righteous wrath and holy anger upon Jesus, His Son, so that He could grant forgiveness to sinners. With our sin-stained souls washed clean in His holy, precious blood all of us can stand in the presence of heaven's majestic glory.

This everlasting feast of never-ending joy Jesus is offering you without cost or price. Heaven, with no sinful thoughts and impulses; heaven with no tears nor trials, no sickness nor sorrow, no hunger nor thirst, no pain nor sleeplessness, no weary bodies, weary hearts, weary minds, weary souls, no worries nor cares, no partings nor farewells, no death nor burial; heaven, with joy forever and not a trace of disappointment, with everlasting peace and not an enemy to oppose us, with never-failing light and not a moment of deep shadows or darkness; heaven, with the hosts of saints and blood-washed sinners, the great company of Christian martyrs, our Godly fathers and mothers who may have gone before us and our children who may come after us; heaven, where above all we shall be with God the Father, who created us, His Son, who redeemed us, the Holy Spirit, who sanctified and preserved us -- that is the Great Supper offered freely to you and to all who will but come at the Master's bidding, to all who ~~believe~~ trust in the Redeemer's eternally certain proclamation -- "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" -- to all who will forsake ~~all~~ everything, come, and follow Him into the royal chambers of unending gladness.

With each new day of grace this wondrous invitation -- "COME, FOR ALL THINGS ARE NOW READY"-- continues to be hurled in all its attractiveness over earth and sky, land and sea. Could there be any who hearing the Almighty's summons to the Great Supper would reject His courteous invitation? Could there be any who would decline to come to the heavenly banquet-hall? Could there be any who beholding the Savior's thorn-encircled brow, seeing His pain-racked, sorrow-ridden body, hearing Him say: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" -- indeed, the sure

Way, the errorless Truth, and the eternal Life -- could there be any then who would refuse to follow Him who is Both ~~Redeemer~~ Lord and Savior into the eternal mansions of paradise? Oh, but there are such! There are such who would deny themselves the opportunity of partaking of the feast of eternity!

Listen to Jesus as He continues the parable: "And they all WITH ONE CONSENT began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Think of it! -- They passed up all the glory, honor, joy, bliss, of eternity in favor of a few passing, material, earthly things.

A legend is told about Satan calling a meeting of his fellow conspirators for the purpose drawing more people into the clutches of everlasting hell-fire. When these beguiling demons had all assembled, they began to offer suggestions. One said, "I will instill into the human heart a burning lust for material possession and gain, a ceaseless passion to obtain more and more." Another said, "I will make the sinful pleasures of life and the world look ever so enticing and intriguing." And another said, "I will build up man's vanity. I will create in his heart a quest for power and authority. I will tell him that he is superior to everyone else." A fourth said, "I will deaden the conscience. I will tell man that he need not be ashamed of wrong-doing, that it is but the natural thing to do." And a fifth one said (he had the best suggestion of them all), "I will tell man that he still has plenty of time for repentance and the saving Christ, that he need not be in a hurry. And then, before he knows what has happened, it will be too late!"

YOU ARE TOO LATE will be the judgment of God toward many on the day of resurrection. Let us take an honest look at ourselves and see whether we have not perhaps asked to be excused from eternal life and the glories of the Great Supper. When the Lord says, "come," how many of us do not say, "I pray thee have me

excused. Wait, O Lord, not just yet! I cannot come today!" Is it not horrifying to note that on practically any given Sunday less the 50% of the 400 souls in our church ~~at~~ are present at divine services! How many of those missing are not giving God this very excuse? "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it. I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Really, Lord, I am more interested in this life! I have bought a new tractor, some new machinery, a new car and I have to try them out. I have bought a new house that I have to see. It is such a beautiful day, Lord, that I must work. I have to get my crop in. I have to earn more money. "And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." You know, Lord, my wife (my husband) doesn't like the minister we have. My wife (My husband) has other things planned. I cannot come. My wife (my husband) isn't of the same faith. Thus, neither of us go to church. My wife (my husband) wanted to go for a drive today, wanted to go fishing, wanted to go on a picnic. I CANNOT COME!

How many of us are not daily, constantly guilty of neglecting the Bread of Life? We become so involved in earthly necessities that we ever so easily fail to come ~~the~~ at the Lord's bidding, fail to nourish our faith with the divine food of God's Word and sacraments. We won't have any family devotions tonight. I have other things to do. I am just too tired to read God's Word today. I have a big day ahead of me tomorrow, and I do need my rest.

Divine wrath rests upon all who spurn the Lord's gracious invitation. Our parable concludes with these words: "So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. 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 hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, It is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

Make no mistake about it! -- The Lord God will not wait for you. And He will have guests at His supper. Wherever the Good News of Christ redeeming blood is told to men -- no matter who they are -- souls are being brought into the radiant splendor of eternal life. If you reject His mercy and pardon, others will be brought out of the highways and hedges. The poor, the maimed, the sick, and the blind will be adorned in the white robes of shining righteousness, sitting in the palace of heavenly splendor. "God is no Respecter of persons!"

Therefore, then, can't you see the urgency of the Lord's appeal: Come! "Come, for all things are now ready." Don't delay! Let nothing stand between you and the Great Supper, the feast of paradise. Cling ardently, tightly to Calvary's redeeming cross, the cross on which your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, paid the full price for everyone of your sins! Hold on with all your might to God's word of errorless truth! Search these Scriptures constantly, daily, for in them you will find eternal life, in them you will find Christ, in them you will find peace and rest for your accusing conscience, in them you will find joy, assurance, and the certain hope of heaven!

God grant that it is not said of you on the Day of Judgment that you refused to come at the Lord's bidding. Throughout the world this divine summons continues to be heralded. Christ, the Lord, beckons with the promise of incomprehendible love: "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Hear, then, and may God in His grace see to it that you do not delay. Come today! Tomorrow may be too late! Come now, let us set out together on the road leading to the feast of eternal life!

Amen.