

I.N.R.I. *"The Lord was my support in the day of my calamity."* King David sings out in the 18th Psalm. How did the Lord support David the soldier in all of his battles? *"This God - His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord proves true."* It was through God's living Word - His promise of salvation in Jesus - David's Son and David's Lord - by which David was supported. God the Holy Spirit teaches the perfect way of peace through St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians - *"13 But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace. He made the two groups one by destroying the wall of hostility that divided them." (Eph. 2)* The answer to the hate that is tearing our nation apart is the peace that is found in Jesus alone. Christ's Word and His Church unite humanity, as Scripture confesses, *"There is not Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one and the same in Christ Jesus.(Gal. 3:28).* This truth is echoed by God the Holy Spirit In the tenth chapter of the book of Hebrews, *"19 Brothers, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place through the blood of Jesus. 20 It is a new and living way he opened for us through the curtain, that is, his flesh. 21 We also have a great priest over the house of God. 22 So let us approach with a sincere heart, in the full confidence of faith, because our hearts have been sprinkled to take away a bad conscience, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold on firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful. 24 Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works. 25 Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

Wise Solomon instructs us that Wisdom has built her house and cries out inviting us to feast together in God's House. Feasting together - something that we take for granted. Then COVID-19 hits and we are isolated, or sports season begins and we are so busy running from event to event that our family never sits at table together. Taking time to eat together is crucial for family life and development of healthy children. *"A study done by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse revealed that teens who eat fewer than three family dinners per week compared to those who eat five to seven a week are twice as likely to use alcohol and tobacco and one and a half times more likely to use marijuana."* Psychology Today reports that family meals strengthen family ties improving the emotional well being of children and parents. Sharing a meal together with conversation connects our lives to one another. Perhaps that is why through out the Gospel of Luke we find Jesus at table - a dinner Guest - talking around a table and eating together. This reality of Jesus being present with us is reflected in the liturgy of the Church - it is divided into the service of the Word and the

service of the Sacrament. Listening and talking to Jesus and eating at His Table.

Jesus is again eating and drinking. No wonder the Pharisees accused Him of being a *"wine bibber and a glutton."* One of the Pharisees reclining at the low table from which they ate exclaims, *"Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God."* Our Lord tells a parable to warn us not to neglect

His invitation to listen to His Word feast with Him. He asks you today, ***"Neglecting the Feast - What Is Your Excuse?"***

Listen! (Vs.16-17) A man has prepared a feast. He must be a great man for it is a great feast. He had sent out his invitations long before the feast began. Now all is prepared and he sends forth his servant with a word of tender invitation. *"Come, for everything is now ready!"* Tender words of invitation - Jesus teaches us to call God *"Our Father, who art in heaven."* We echo Christ's teaching: *"With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father."* Trust that in Jesus you have a loving heavenly Father who richly and daily provides you with all you need to support your body and life. Trust His Word that He will give you day by day your daily bread. As our nation celebrates father's day - learn that true Fatherhood is found in God the Father alone. As sinful fallen fathers we give good things to our children, but our Heavenly Father gives us the greatest good by giving us God the Holy Spirit through His Word that we may feast with Jesus.

How do those invited to the feast respond to the great meal and tender invitation? (Vs.18-20) In unison, together, immediately they all begin to make excuses why they can't come to the great feast. The first claims to have bought a field sight unseen and at this moment has to go inspect it. Another claims to have purchased five yoke of oxen sight unseen and now has to go test his investment. A third claims that his marriage is more important than the feast. These are lame excuses, but they appeal to our fallen flesh when it comes to excusing ourselves from gathering together in person every Sunday morning in the divine service.

Wise Solomon teaches, *"Proverbs 17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men, And the glory of children is their father."* Grandchildren are a great blessing, but children watch and follow their father - sometimes to the chagrin of their mother. Study after study has found that *"when the father is an active-believer, there is about a 75% chance his children will grow up to be active believers. If only the mother is a believer the number drops to only 15%.* Dr. Luther understood this truth in the 1500's that is

why each section of The Small Catechism begins, “*As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.*” Fathers don’t neglect bringing your children with you to the feast every Sunday. Open your hymnal and teach them to sing the Faith. Bring the feast home and every day take time to feed them Jesus in His Word. Feast your family on the ABC’s of Christianity - The Ten Commandments, The Apostles’ Creed, and The Lord’s Prayer. Then enjoy the dessert of Jesus’ promises to you in Holy Baptism, Confession and the Office of the Keys, and The Sacrament of the Altar. Teach your children and learn with them the Table of Duties. Teach them to pray - to call God their Father - as they hear you pray and sing the hymns of faith around your family table.

Solomon also teaches, *Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*” Don’t allow your temporary property, your job, or even your spouse to stop you from coming to the feast! *John 17:14 I have given them Your word;.....* The greatest inheritance a father can give to his children.

Grandpas, uncles, and men of Emmanuel this is your duty also. Unfortunately we live in a culture that encourages men to abandon fatherhood. Where children have been deserted by their biological father, step up to help instruct and father the fatherless. Offer to be a good role model of a loving fatherly caring man who feasts with Jesus. Mothers don’t allow your children to starve after they were born from above in holy baptism. Be like Lois and Eunice who from infancy fed Timothy on God’s Word by bringing him into the divine service and teaching him the Holy Scriptures to make him wise unto salvation which is through faith in Jesus within their home. Even though Timothy’s father remained a pagan.

The Master of the Feast receives the report of His beloved Crucified - Risen - Glorified Ascended Servant - Jesus (vs.21-22) The Master of the Servant is angry - exasperated - He is the loving Heavenly Father whose love and desire to feast with His sinful rebellious children has again been spurned. Fathers may not say it, but it is heart breaking when their children refuse to feast with them. Those who reject God’s invitation to the feast of forgiveness in Jesus within the Divine Service - the Lord will give them what they want. His anger is shown in giving them over to their own debased mind to do what they want - ultimately destroying themselves, their families, and their nation.

Still God the Father lovingly seeks out the lost. Jesus came seeking sinners - the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. The outcasts of society - those whom no one wanted to deal with and crossed the street to

avoid even getting close to them. These are the ones that Jesus seeks out to personally invite to the feast. Dear fellow sinner - don’t allow the devil, the world, our your own poor, crippled, blind, and lame conscience convince you that you must stay away from the feast - the gathering together of your Christian family in your local congregation around the Father’s great feast of forgiveness, life, and salvation for you in Jesus. God the Father waits for you to come home and feast with Him - here and now in time. Christ Jesus seeks out really sinners to feast on real words of forgiveness, life, and salvation. This feast is for us sinners - who bring nothing to Jesus but our sins - that He might heal us and fill us with His perfect life declaring us saints by grace through faith.

The Servant returns to the Master with good news. (Vs.22) The poor, the lame, the crippled, and the blind have been carried and led into the feast - still there is room. This is great news - the doors to our Father’s eternal Home are not shut and locked. (vs.23) Now the loving Father - the Master sends out the Word of invitation to scour the highways and hedges to seek out the spiritually homeless and to compel them to come Home to the feast. St. Paul echos Jesus’ invitation to the feast: “*2 Corinthians 5:20-21 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. (21) For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” We cannot keep this Word of invitation to ourselves. Fathers invite your children, children invite your parents, wives invite your husbands, mothers invite your family, reach out to your next door neighbor - invite them to come with you every Sunday to this great feast. We must go out - send forth God’s Word - not only through an internet connection - but we must go out in person - take the time to listen and invite our neighbor to join us now in the feast of forgiveness that they may celebrate with us in bodies perfectly restored in the resurrection feasting in the life of the world to come.

Don’t neglect the invitation written upon your forehead with water and God’s Word - as God the Father put His Name upon you redeeming you with the blood of His Son and birthing you from above in the Holy Spirit. (Vs.24). Those men who thought they could answer the invitation anytime when it was convenient to them were sadly mistaken. Their excuses were only a thin veil to hide their disdain for the Master and His House - to reject the Father and His mercy in Christ Jesus. Dear baptized Christian - your invitation is written upon you by God’s grace - don’t neglect to feast with your True Father - all is ready for you in Jesus! In this day of your calamity - “*Come, for everything is now ready!*” Amen. (Sermon written by Rev. Nathan J. Rusert)