

Priorities: The Second Sunday After Trinity

June 14, 2026

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

In our modern, technological world, distraction is rampant. According to some research, it's estimated that 2.1 hours of office time are lost on distractions. The average worker finds themselves able to focus on a task for about 11 minutes before getting distracted, and it often takes about 25 minutes to return to the task after being distracted. That means I only have about 10 minutes of sermon left. While it's true that we might be more distracted now than we ever have been, what we see this morning is that this has always been a struggle in human beings since the Fall and the fickleness of our brains can prevent us from fully realizing our potential. While in some areas of life, distractions don't seem too bothersome and may even be welcome to alleviate stress, the issue is that when we allow them to derail us from accomplishing small things, they have a way of working on us so that they distract us from big things. But today, our prophets warn us against giving into lesser distractions so that we might be free to follow our Lord.

Today, in our Gospel lesson, we are given a parable that teaches us a lesson in this regard: we should rightly prioritize ourselves so that we can answer God's call with urgency. Luke 14 details a sabbath dinner party that Jesus attended in the home of a Pharisee. After addressing the legalism of the Pharisees and warning them against angling for seats of honor, one of the guests proclaims: "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" This prompts Jesus to tell the parable of the Great Banquet. A man throws a feast and invites many. He sends his servants to tell those who had been invited "Come; for all is now ready." But no one shows up because they make excuses: The first man cannot go because he bought a field and has to go see it; The second man excuses himself from the feast because he just bought five yoke of oxen and needs to examine them; The third man does not attend because he just got married. So the jilted host sends his servants out into the streets and lanes of the city where he instructs them to bring in the poor, maimed, blind, and lame. Even after the marginalized come to the feast, he still has room so he sends out his servants again, this time even further out to the highways and hedges. Meanwhile, the excuse makers who were originally invited lose their invitation. They have been supplanted. A few things to recognize about this. First, is the fact that the offer is open at all. There is no reason the master of the house has to throw this party. To host a feast requires immense generosity—it is the opening of one's personal space and resources for the joy of others. But the excuses offered by those who decline the invitation fail to appreciate that generosity; instead, they show a tragic preoccupation with the day-to-day. But even though the invitations are declined does not mean that the party is closed. The host insists that his hospitality continue to be offered and so the invitation is extended two more times: first to the poor and marginalized and then to those in the highways and byways. In context, Jesus is probably talking about the Gospel invitation first to the Jews, many of whom rejected it, and then to the Gentiles. But for those of us reading it today in a largely different context, we can come to appreciate the generosity of the host because it's such a keen picture of what God's generosity looks like to us, invited to his table based on no merits of our own. And further, the parable can function as a

warning to us because it reminds us not to get so bogged down in day-to-day matters that we miss the urgency of the Gospel.

But how do we accept the invitation? According to today's Epistle, we accept it whenever we "keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." In St. John's Gospel, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (14:15). Now, it is important to note that the obedience our Lord demands here is in the context of love. When we hear obedience, we often think of acquiescing to an overbearing authority; but that's not what Jesus or John have in mind. They are not thinking about cold, unfeeling, robotic obedience. This is not the Christian way. Rather, the Scriptures are getting at a kind of relational and imitative obedience that looks to Jesus as our model, whose life gets transposed into our own lives as we grow closer to him. We've all heard people say, "Do what I say, not what I do"; but if you look at the relationship between kids and their parents, you find, far more often, that the kids imitate what the parents do more than what they say. For example, one of the big reasons church attendance has been declining over the past 20 years or so, especially in younger demographics, is because families will often make a compromise with their actions. Maybe they'll talk about how their faith is important, but then when it comes time to put Johnny in sports so that they have to travel on the weekend and play games on Sunday mornings, well it should be no surprise, no matter how much lip service is paid to spiritual things, that Johnny is not going to see the point of going to church. He's imitating his parents. And so what we are called to do is imitate the example of Christ. The goal is not to check things off a to-do list, so much as to follow him with every part of who we are—our bodies, hearts, souls, and minds.

The point of a feast is to share love amongst friends. We receive his love simply by the fact that we are invited. He didn't have to invite us, but he does anyway. But we experience the fullness of his love when we accept that invitation. But it changes us; when we come to the feast, "our cup overfloweth." The love we receive from God will overflow into our relationships with others so that we become the messengers by which they receive an invitation to the party. Christ laid down his own self for us, and so we are called to emulate him and lay ourselves down for others.

As we navigate a world brimming with distractions, let us not lose sight of the profound invitation extended to us by God. The parable from today's Gospel lesson serves as a poignant reminder that the trivial pursuits of our daily lives can easily sidetrack us from what truly matters. Jesus' teachings urge us to prioritize our spiritual call with urgency, not allowing the mundane to overshadow the divine. Just as the host in the parable extends his generosity despite the rejections, God's invitation to us remains steadfast, calling us to a feast of love, grace, and community. Accepting this invitation involves more than mere attendance; it demands our active participation in living out His commandments through love and obedience. It is through our actions and imitations of Christ that we truly embrace His invitation. In accepting God's invitation and prioritizing His call, we find true fulfillment. Our lives become a testament to His love, drawing others into the warmth of His embrace. So, as we leave here today, let us commit to shedding the distractions that hinder our spiritual journey and embrace the feast that God has lovingly prepared for us. May we live in a way that honors His invitation and inspires others to join in the celebration of His eternal banquet.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.