

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Tenth Sunday After Trinity, August 8, 2021**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 149, 276:1, 281, 277, 469.

Lessons: Psalm 63, Revelation 22:1-6, John 4:4-26.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 55:1-5.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Isn't it nice to get an invitation to a meal? And isn't it even nicer to get an invitation to a banquet? Think of the most elegant banquet you can. Surely you've at least seen pictures of such banquets, with extra fancy place settings, and multiple courses of really great food, prepared with great care.

Five times in three verses today you are invited to

**THE BANQUET OF SALVATION**

- 1. Let's look at God's gracious invitation and**
- 2. The cost of this banquet.**

This is an invitation from God, who offers – and can provide – the most sumptuous, most special banquet anyone could imagine. But it isn't just an earthly meal. It is more.

The Lord invites people to receive the blessings he offers. God does not renege on his promises but fulfills what he promises. Later in this chapter God tells us: *“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”* Isaiah 55:10-11 (NIV)

Today we hear about a great banquet which God offers. Isaiah has told us previously that in Jerusalem, *“On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine -- the best of meats and the finest of wines.”* Isaiah 25:6 (NIV) It was in Jerusalem that God's Son Jesus was crucified to provide eternal life. That is the best possible banquet.

And it is free! Free? Who doesn't want “free stuff”? We want things free, but somehow mankind doesn't want God's salvation free. Man wants to earn it. Satan, the devil, so controls the hearts of men before we have faith in Jesus Christ that he wants us to think that we must pay for salvation. And then he wants us to wonder if we are able to pay for it properly. He wants us to think that there are strings attached – you know, like what is it really going to cost me? What do I have to do to get it? Even the Christian, after Christ has come into his life, always has his sinful flesh clinging to him and often seems to think that ‘I must do something to deserve what God is offering.’

But God makes it clear that we are saved by his free grace, his undeserved love and mercy, as we sing:

“By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless;

My soul, believe and doubt it not.

Why stagger at this word of promise?

Hath Scripture ever falsehood taught?

Nay; then this word must true remain;

By grace thou, too, shalt heav'n obtain.

By grace! None dare lay claim to merit;

Our works and conduct have no worth.

God in His love sent our Redeemer,  
Christ Jesus, to this sinful earth;  
His death did for our sins atone,  
And we are saved by grace alone. (The Lutheran Hymnal 373)

Our text today talks about God's free banquet, starting with free water, moving through free wine and milk and delighting our souls with the best, the richest, and the choicest foods – all free.

Of course, the older you get and the more you learn about the hidden costs of “free” stuff in this world, “free” things often may not turn out to be really free. Just read the fine print on the next advertisement you get for something that is supposedly “free”. We often think there are strings attached – and often there are.

But God does not attach strings to his grace. God extends this invitation to all mankind and it is really free. He invites us: ***“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”***

If you are thirsty come. If you have no money, come. But God offers not just bread and water, as if we are prisoners. Well, by nature, we really are prisoners of Satan and he is the one who will give us a much worse diet than just the proverbial “bread and water” that prisoners get. Satan will give us the fires of hell!

God doesn't just offer water – he offers wine and milk, things that were considered special food to his Old Testament people! The New Testament gives us a more complete picture of what people are thirsty for and what God provides, when Jesus himself tells us: ***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”*** Matthew 5:6 (NIV) We want to stand righteous before God, knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we have received abundantly from God all the things – especially spiritual gifts – that are good for us. And we receive these gifts through faith.

The Word of God goes on: Why spend money on junk food? ***“Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.”*** Did you hear that? Eat and drink from God's banquet and your soul shall live, not just your body for the short time you are on earth! What great food!

This isn't just a sip of water to hold us over until we are thirsty again. This isn't just a taste of wine. This isn't just a sip of milk. It is all we need and want! This is enough of the things, especially spiritual things, which are necessary to sustain us – repeatedly – if only we come to drink again and again.

Isaiah asks us: ***“Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance.”*** Isaiah 55:2 (NASB) Why spend money, why devote your life to acquiring things that don't satisfy, especially since this is free? Why spend money or time on junk food? And I think you know what junk food is. It is all the stuff that is not good for us, literally and here, figuratively. The supermarket makes those things that aren't really good for you look so inviting, and places them in pretty displays in prominent places right where we can see them and be tempted by them.

People spend all their lives working for earthly possessions – and sometimes for power and prestige. People struggle in a vain effort to gain true, lasting peace of mind by acts of their own righteousness. Jesus asks ***“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”*** Matthew 16:26 (NIV) All the efforts of men to find true satisfaction and happiness in things which this world has to offer are vain and useless. We must listen to God and eat the good things he provides. ***“Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.”*** The spiritual eating of the believers is done through their hearing of the Word, for God has given us his salvation through his Word, in the Gospel, and the greatest joy, happiness and consolation are to be found in him.

We hear much about “food insecurity” right now. Many people literally don't know where their next earthly meal is coming from. I don't know if there are any among us in those dire straits, but if you have needs, please share those needs so that your Christian family can help.

But more important is spiritual food. In these verses God invites us five times to “*come*”. He invites those “*who are thirsty*,” and those “*who have no money*.”

“Buy?” If you have no money how can you “buy”? It is free. Really free.

In the previous chapter, Isaiah told us “*Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,*” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.” Isaiah 54:10 (NIV)

The Gospels tell us of times Jesus fed thousands of hungry people, and their bodies were satisfied with the simple earthly food he supplied. But he had also given them spiritual food, proclaiming the Gospel to them. It is the love of God which supplies the food – physical and spiritual – that we need.

Jesus himself told us that his Father in heaven “*causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*” Matthew 5:44-45 (NIV) This chapter, too, shows the fullness, freeness, greatness, and everlasting nature of the blessings of the Gospel.

God invites people in need to come to him. By coming they admit that they are trusting in him and relying on him for salvation. The blessings God gives them are available without cost. Salvation is a free gift of God. The Lord asks people how they could be interested in other things besides him because he is the only one who can bring genuine satisfaction. Throughout all history people have tried to find satisfaction through many things other than God.

The water, the wine, the milk, the food stand figuratively for spiritual blessings.

You may have noticed that on communion Sundays our bulletin sometimes announces that ‘*Jesus of Nazareth invites you to a banquet in his honor.*’ This is a reference especially made in catechism instruction, pointing out the importance of the Lord’s Supper. We want to be prepared spiritually with repentance, and as Luther says, “outward preparation” is a fine custom, but he points out that faith is essential. We approach that banquet of the forgiveness of sins with respect for the meal of the forgiveness of sins and respect for others in a dignified, appropriate manner.

God says ‘Listen carefully.’ ‘Pay attention and come to me’.

He speaks of the everlasting covenant of grace which is offered to all mankind. God’s chosen people, the Jews, will lead them to be witnesses to other nations about the Savior to be born from them, a Savior for all nations. And we, today, are among the nations that the descendants of David and Abraham did not know. Yet we have been blessed with the Gospel of Salvation.

God offers it free! Trust him! Come to him.

When? You are right now hearing that Gospel of Jesus Christ. And the very next verse after our text offers this warning and encouragement: “*Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.*” Isaiah 55:6 (NIV)

Today is the day the Lord may be found for you. Tomorrow may be too late. Lord, keep us in your grace! Amen.