

God's Banquet of Grace

Invitations

- When last invitation to special event/gathering? Kid: birthday party; sleepover. Adult: casual, supper, bonfire; formal, wedding – springtime, summer wedding; nice card mail, fancy lettering, RSVP. Nice to receive invitation: someone thought you, like you to be with them at imp event. So invite you.
- Today, God extends formal invitation to us, not in mail but holy Scripture. Here in lesson, invites us to banquet grace; want us with him there. Practically begs! Verbs (action words): commands, not mean (hurry, work!), but invitation commands (list). Prac begging us come to banquet of grace. Define: undeserved love/mercy to sinners; God's riches at Christ's expense. Banquet: fancy meal, wonderful variety of foods. Today, throughout whole lesson, God sets before us table filled with a wonderful variety of tastes of his grace. Invites us to dine at GBG.

Buffet of Gospel Truths

- Open invite, start reading: vs. 1a. Today in Gospel: **“Whoever drink the water I give them will never thirst” (Jn 4:14)**. In this life we thirst: meaning, purpose, answers to life's hard questions, peace. In world filled with setbacks, heartaches, unexpected catastrophes, sudden deaths, guilt: we thirst peace. That's woman at well: didn't have peace; had baggage, guilt; no peace. She spiritually dehydrated; we, too, unless Jesus gives us the “living water” of his grace, which alone quenches spiritual thirst. You know like: outside working on hot day or exercising hard, feeling fatigued – need tall glass water, feel so refreshed when drink whole thing. We understand! Why: vs. 1a; water of life.
- Another picture we understand: **“Come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk... Why spend money on what is not bread?... Listen to me and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.”** This is banquet, buffet with all kinds of tasty foods, drinks that satisfy spiritual hunger. Know what like to be hungry, so we understand what Jesus means in **Jn 6: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (vs. 35)**. At GBG, God sets before us buffet, with wonderful variety of diff Gospel truths, that satisfy spiritual hunger/thirst. Think; you've got: God recognizing sinful condition; coming up with plan to do something about it. JC leaving home in heaven, live among people who reject/hate him, same came to save. Cruc/res of Christ – real events with real results. Assurance of all sins comp forgiven. Promise God with you every day of life; never leave/forsake. Conx to Christ in baptism, adoption into family of God. Regular taste of heaven in body/blood of Christ in HC. Protection of God's guardian angels watching over. Rock solid promise of everlasting life in heaven when die.
- Everything just mentioned: like having big dinner plate, tray with dividers (like in school), go through buffet, God piles on tray great big scoops of diff Gospel truths; so heavy can hardly carry. At this banquet, no diet! All you can eat! Sit down at God's table; whenever water gets low, HS (like server) comes, refills glass to top, overflows. **Ps 23: “My cup overflows.”** This picture of you sitting at God's table, enjoying feast prepared for you, is what God wants you to see here – GBG!

It's Free, but Not Cheap

- If all that wasn't enough, also says free. All free. Major emphasis in this lesson: **“You who have no money, come, buy and eat...without money and without cost.”** If this banquet could be purchased, earned, merited, deserved, wouldn't be grace. Has to be free; otherwise not grace. You know, 2017, 500th ann of Luth Ref. What more Luth, Scriptural truth than that God forgives sins, declares us righteous, by no merit of our own, without our works, but solely for sake of Christ's suffering, death on our behalf. That's grace! Absolutely free, an undeserved gift from gracious God.
- But make no mistake: may be free, wasn't cheap. Sometimes as Americans, when talk re freedom we enjoy in this country, we say freedom isn't free. Means: if weren't for sacrifice of brave

servicemen/women, those patriots who put life on line, even give life, to defend liberty, we wouldn't be free. Our freedom comes at great cost.

- Same is true for GBG. May be free, wasn't cheap. God will never charge you dime to dine at his Gospel table, but only because already gave staggering bill to Christ. So when you see Jesus dying on cross for you; when you as Christian ponder sins you commit that he is there paying for; when think magnitude of God's love, how he's like friend at restaurant who picks up check, has server tell you good news that bill's been paid for – all that fills you with incredible gratitude to God for his banquet of grace. Free for you! Costly for God, but free for you!
- Incidentally, that also makes you wonder, in shame, why we don't appreciate banquet more, and why spend so much time at other banquet tables. God poses question: **vs. 2a**. Striking to me how quickly we (myself), say, "Grace, forgiven, good," then pour energy, efforts, time, talents, treasures into things don't matter. We've got to recognize that when we've got GBG before us, and we look for satisfaction elsewhere; when we consume ourselves with, pour ourselves into other banquet tables that interest us, gradually begin to disappreciate GBG.
- What saying: what's most imp to you life? What absolute highest endeavor, greatest treasure, "be all and end all," without which your life no longer worth living? If Christ, good; need to keep dining at GBG like no tomorrow. If not Christ, you've got to get to this table, eat this food, drink this drink, keeping dining, because everything else is junk food. It'll never satisfy, never give peace, never quench thirst. We need this banquet, this food, every day. Implications for how often we come to church, Bible study; and for our general involvement in life of church. We all need GBG; without it we starve ourselves to death.

Invitation to the World

- If that's true for us, think how true for rest of world, for all people who've never tasted from God's table. This banquet grace doesn't have exclusive VIP guest list; open house, prepared for a whole world of spiritually starving souls. Listen how open-ended invitation is: **vs. 4-5a**. Emphasis on peoples, nations. God wants banquet table full. Jesus told parable in Lk 14: man threw great banquet, invited many people, but lots came up excuses not come; man disappointed, wanted banquet full, just like God here wants his full.
- Since that's God's will, that's also church's mission. This lesson basically: mission of church, pass out God's invitations to his banquet grace to as many people as possible. First, we get to quench our own spiritual thirst, satisfy our own spiritual hunger with God's grace. Then we get to tell dehydrated, starving world that God says, **vs. 1-2**. Begging us to come! So let's go and dine at GBG.

Isaiah 55:1-5

"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. ² 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 you will delight in the richest of fare. ³ Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. ⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. ⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor."