

“Uninvitable”

Luke 14:1-14

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, we see a pattern for how He conducted His schedule. On the Sabbath, He would go to a synagogue. As a visiting Rabbi, it would be customary for Him to be invited to speak. Then a Pharisee or leader of the community will invite Him to have dinner at his house so that he and his guests can hear more from Jesus. And sometimes that invitation would come from tax collectors.

The thing is, it seems there are always uninvited guests and undesirable people that seek out the Lord. Remember the sinful woman, the prostitute, who washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. There always seems to be someone around, an uninvited guest who needs physical or spiritual healing.

The prostitute who washed Jesus’ feet was not invited to Simon the Pharisee’s house. Likewise, the man with dropsy was not an invited guest. Dropsy is an ailment where the cells and even cavities of the body retain large amounts of fluid. It is painful and can be grotesquely disfiguring. It also made you ceremonially unclean under the Law of Moses. We know this man was not invited because, he is

“uninvitable” – and according to my computer spell-check, I know that is not a real word. But he is “uninvitable” because the Law forbids you from eating with him or even touching him.

But Jesus took him (it is implied that He touched him). He heals him and sends him away. He does not invite him in – even though he is now invitable (which I don’t think is a real word either). This man is no longer unclean in the eyes of the Pharisees. He could come in. However, the goal of being healed was not so that he could join those who thought they deserved to be invited.

Jesus is going to teach the guests a lesson that they should already know from reading Proverbs. I mean, these guys are supposed to be the teachers of the Law. He says, “When you are invited to a wedding feast, go and sit in the lowest place.” Go sit at the “kiddie table” and let the host move you up and honor you. If you try and figure out how high up the pecking order you belong and assume you deserve to be honored by the host at the wedding feast, you will end up being put to shame.

The healing and the parable are really two separate events, but there is a connection. Whenever Jesus tells about a “wedding feast,” He is always referring to the wedding of Christ and His bride the Church. That is the feast to which Jesus invites those He has healed.

The man with dropsy is grotesque and disfigured and he is hurting. In his eyes, he knows he is uninvitable. This is the reality of our sinful nature. The ugliness of sin with which we were born keeps us from being worthy of being invited to the wedding feast. We are poor, miserable sinners. We deserve present and eternal punishment. We do not deserve a seat at our Lord's Table. We don't even deserve to be at the "kiddie table."

For us to be eligible to enter the banquet hall, we must first be healed; we must be made clean. The ugliness and uncleanness of our sin must first be washed away (as it is in the waters of Baptism). Baptism now saves you [1Pt. 3:21]. Having been saved, healed, washed clean, we are now invitable. And we are invited. We are invited into the kingdom of God – His kingdom of grace on earth (His church); and eventually the kingdom of glory for all eternity.

When you look at yourself and see the ugliness of sin, that is the Law leading you to repentance. Have confidence that Baptism now saves you. You have been saved, healed, washed clean, and now invited to the feast which has no end.

When you have already been shown your sin, been led to repent of your sin, when you know that you don't even deserve to sit at the kiddie table, you are like the man in the parable who goes and sits in the lowest place acknowledging "I don't deserve to be here."

But your Father in heaven is a gracious host. You have received an invitation to the feast even though you do not deserve one. You have been clothed in the honor and righteousness of His Son and have been lifted up out of the lowest place. God's forgiveness – the Absolution has been spoken, the body and blood of Christ has been received – if you still feel the ugliness of sin, if you still feel uninvitable, that is Satan trying to deceive you; that is Satan telling you a lie.

As I said last week, no gift that God has given you is cheap or common. The forgiveness of your sin is real and complete.

Like the man with dropsy, sin is grotesque, ugly, and painful. It hurts. You have been healed. This is why Christ has come. He came to heal you.

And He invites you into the wedding feast. You have not been invited because you are so invitable. You do not have a seat at the head table because of the great and glorious things you have done.

At the wedding banquet of Christ and His bride the Church, He has invited the uninvitable. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That has been Jesus message from the beginning of His ministry. He came to bear the grotesque burden of the ugliness and pain of sin and death.

We are the "poor in spirit" who come to our Lord empty-handed with nothing to offer. We are the uninvitable whom our Lord has invited into His Kingdom. Amen.