

COME, FOR ALL THINGS ARE NOW READY

Adapted from a sermon by the Rev. Daniel W. Heinrichs

Reading: Luke 14:16-33

“A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ But they all with one accord began to make excuses” (Luke 14:16-18).

The story of the Great Supper tells, in parable form, of the Lord inviting us to His spiritual feast—an abundant feast of good and truth to nourish our minds and souls. He has provided this spiritual feast for us in His Word—in the Old and New Testaments and in the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church. He invites us to this feast because He wants us to live in heaven to eternity.

Indeed, The Lord’s purpose in creation is a heaven from the human race. This is the most basic and universal truth of human life. It proclaims why each one of us exists. It tells us what the sole purpose of our life is. Each one of us has been created by the Lord to live to eternity in heaven, in a state of ever increasing joy and happiness.

Now, we know that our natural body lives by food and drink. If it does not receive enough of these, the body becomes unhealthy and weak. In the same way, if our spirit or mind does not receive enough nourishment from the Word, we become spiritually unhealthy. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that “To be nourished spiritually is to be instructed and imbued, consequently to know, to understand, and to be wise. Unless a person enjoys this nourishment together with the nourishment of the body, he is not human but an animal...” (*Apocalypse Explained* 617:2).

Earthly life is our preparation for eternal life. While we live in this world, we are forming our souls. Every desire which we cherish and every idea which we favor, becomes part of our spiritual life. So even while we live on earth nothing should be of greater importance to us than our eternal welfare. As the Heavenly Doctrine asks, “What should a person have more at heart than his life to eternity?” (*Arcana Coelestia* 794). Yet, how easy it is for us to feel that temporal things—the things of this world—are more important, more urgent than spiritual things!

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church tells us that those who made excuses for not attending represent those who delight in worldly things separated from heavenly things. They do not know what internal happiness is because they do not read the Word or look to the Lord. They care little for interior truths or for the goods of spiritual life (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9320).

With us, too, it sometimes seems that whenever we are invited to partake of spiritual nourishment, we begin to make excuses. Just as in the parable, there are many external circumstances that make it “inconvenient” to respond to the invitation to nourish our spirits. But we cannot avoid the consequences of our refusals by making excuses and apologies. No one else is permanently hurt by our failure to respond to the invitation. We are the ones who suffer. By not accepting the Lord’s invitation we deprive ourselves of nourishment which is vital to our spiritual life—nourishment without which our spirit cannot survive.

In the parable, the master of the house declares that “None of those men which were bidden [and sent excuses] shall taste of my supper” (Luke 14:24). This does not mean that the Lord seeks to punish those who refuse His invitation. Rather, those who refuse to partake of the supper while on earth, cannot taste it in the next world, because spiritual life has perished for lack of nourishment. Their spirits have died from malnutrition.

Just after telling the parable of the great supper, the Lord asked the people around Him, “[W]hich of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—” (Luke 14:28). If we want to get to heaven, we, too, must sit down and count the cost of our eternal happiness. We must see what is involved in living the life that leads to heaven. We must determine what our responsibilities are to the spiritual uses of the church, such as worship and instruction. These decisions are ours alone.

The Lord never compels anyone to believe and love the things of the church and of heaven. He has prepared for us a great supper: a feast of spiritual food and drink that will nourish and preserve our souls unto everlasting life. It is for us to accept!