

Pray: Lord come to each person here today assuring them that you want them at your celebration banquet. We don't want to be people filled with excuses, but people who rejoice that we've been invited by you to be where you are, with you – in your magnificent presence. Make our hearts glad today as we hear your voice and make our feet ready to walk with you that we might invite others to be with us in your presence. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

1. Something really interesting happens with new housing estates. They're done in stages. So after all the land sales, the new houses go up – which seem to be getting bigger and bigger.

Then you see schools being built because that's a high priority for families of course; then shopping centres are expanded and upgraded. Then you need cinemas, maybe a golf course for the residents. If it's in a nice spot, then you need some classy restaurants around the place that then open and flourish and gain reputation in the community as 'the place to go.'

Supermarkets add gourmet sections for that high-end cooking that's so important if you're into hospitality. You'll also notice the café in the good estates - because good coffee is important when people catch up through the week. Developers think of almost everything people could want.

Now I see all this and it makes sense to me – I understand and I even enjoy it. There's nothing wrong with these things.

But what strikes me about the many new developments today is that old run down church that is always there - just outside all the new development. And that's how people refer to it! 'The old church.'

Thousands upon thousands of families are moving into these new estates with all the trimmings and services to excite their senses – but the worship space stays the same. It stays known as that old church down the road – and people seem fine with that. It's a curious thing isn't it? The most important thing isn't seen as an *essential service* in a new estate – but more of a rustic decoration down the road somewhere. *How do you picture this church?*

It's this kind of mindset that Jesus is challenging today. So he tells another parable following on the last two weeks where we've encountered the two sons and the tenants in the vineyard.

This week it's all about an amazing invitation from the King to attend the Royal wedding banquet of His Son.

2. Invitations back then came in two parts.

The first was the general preparatory invitation which was like saying, "please be ready to come to this event" but with no specific date or time given.

Then a bit later the specific *second invitation* would come saying, "Please come now – everything is ready!" The second invitation meant it's time to hit the road and arrive at the party. So you had notice at the first invitation and you would be ready hit the road once you had that second invitation in your hand.

The people in the parable had received that first invitation: "please be ready to come to this event." Everything seems fine until they get the second invitation saying the wedding banquet is ready to

go... Then things get weird. They treat the second invitation like *that old church down the road in the new housing estate*. They ignore it! It's time to move and get to the banquet but they respond like it's not important at all.

⁴ "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'⁵ **But they paid no attention and went off**—one to his field, another to his business.'

What is so striking is that people have in their hands an invitation to the Royal Wedding banquet of all time and they ignore it or refuse it **to go off and do average everyday stuff**.

It's a no brainer... Royal wedding banquet or stay home and veg out? I'm not sure what was at home that trumped a massive Royal banquet. Royal wedding banquet or go to work instead? Would any of you rather go to work?

The RSVP comes back, "We're not interested."

Some even get violent, abusing, roughing up and killing the King's servants just like they did last week in the parable of the vineyard.

3. You couldn't find a TV channel with something to watch – other than William and Kate's wedding earlier this year.

Imagine the Queen if all the high flyers, celebs and close friends who received the invitation ignored it – or said in the RSVP, "yeah I got the invite, but nah – not interested your majesty."

There would be people lined up - who would do almost anything to attend a Royal wedding banquet at Buckingham palace. Imagine the spread?

The Lord says today in Isaiah, ⁶ *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.*

I'm not sure what you've got in your wine rack at home, but I know it's got nothing on this! The best of meats and finest wines that God prepares will be simply amazing! If God calls it the BEST, then that's a party and a banquet you're not going to want to miss out on. The food at Buckingham Palace would look like my spaghetti bolognese compared to the LORD's banquet. [pause]

Sometimes people are content with the invitation, but don't want to come to the banquet.

There are people who are happy with the title or status of "Religious leader" [like Jesus was speaking to] or in our case maybe "Lutheran Christians." They're okay with the first more general invitation that says *there's going to be a banquet and you're invited* but they're not interested in coming along to the party – they just want their name on the list.

You can be happy to be known as a member of a congregation, or maybe come to the church for a baptism or special event, but you're not the slightest bit interested...**in the joy of Christian discipleship - pictured today as a wedding banquet here and now.**

That's what this banquet pictures – the greatness and at times, the comfort of living your life as a follower of Jesus in the Kingdom of God. The King of Majesty thinks that's worth celebrating.

For those who weren't interested in celebrating, who mocked the king and killed his servants; they faced the holy and righteous justice of the King.

Jesus tells you that today:

- Not to frighten you or raise doubts in your mind,
- But that you would turn to him and come to His banquet of joyful discipleship,
- *That you would find life in His name and never look back.*

Which is what happens next.

4. "9 So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find" is the command.

A wonderful mission to all people takes place where servants go out into the streets and invite the good and the bad. Problem people, the un-impressive; people who've made a mess of their lives, who struggle daily with their circumstances and sins, who are ashamed of their past and maybe even their present, people who think they're unworthy to recline at the table of the King - everyone.

The wedding hall is filled with guests who are there to celebrate; who I'm sure are in absolute **awe** being in the presence of the King, reclining at His table and eating and drinking the very best the King has to offer.

It's a beautiful picture of the power of the Gospel at work in God's people. **God calls out and fills His banquet hall!** These celebrating guests are a picture God's children continually filled with the Holy Spirit. People – both good and bad who are invited to recline with God and feast on His words of life.

5. God is inviting you to His wedding banquet today. He's inviting you to participate in the resurrection life that Jesus won overcoming death and sin once and for all on the cross.

Is it possible that you could really only want your name on an invite? Is it possible that you could be satisfied smelling the aromas of the best banquet ever, but not coming into the hall to participate in the meal? Friends, don't settle for just a whiff of the things of God! Please!

Instead will you gladly receive His invitation and walk with God, be with Him and celebrate in His presence? Will you participate in the kind of faith-filled life that Jesus says is like a Royal Wedding Banquet with the very best of meats and the finest of wines?

Well...the invite has arrived and it's time to go! Time to live the banquet day by day.

It's time to celebrate clothed in the wedding garments given to you by the King. Galatians 3 says,
²⁷ *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

God clothes you in baptism with the robes of faith and trust in Jesus - wedding garments that we live in day by day as we follow Jesus and live in His kingdom where love comes to life. [10AM – consider those yet unbaptized by with faith in Christ]

6. Where love comes to life.

In a few weeks' time we're having the Longest Lutheran Lunch here at Trinity under that banner, "Where love comes to life." God is going to be at that banquet table too. And so His call goes out

through every one of us today and in the short time we have left: ***'So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'***

Take a look at where God has placed you in your life. Look at the people He's brought into your life. God wants them to know the joy and celebration of kingdom life as you do. He wants to invite them to come here and see a place of celebration and life – ***not just that old church down the road that decorates the neighbourhood.***

He's calling you as His servants, clothed in the love and righteousness of Christ to issue those invitations. He asks you to do it believing that He is the God of the nations, the God who fills His banquet hall, the God whose word doesn't return to him void. Will you trust him and give someone this gift of love?

You'll all receive an invitation today either at the door or over morning tea. This part is great – so listen up: ***Through you the LORD will issue His invitation to someone in your life that they might come to a Reformation Day banquet. And we're praying that people will also take up the Lord's invitation to worship in the presence of God and taste the real wedding feast that Jesus is talking about today.***

We're not just that old church down the road – regardless of what anyone says or what our buildings look like. We are God's Spirit filled people – Wedding banquet people and a church where love comes to life because we know the joy of being found in Jesus and living with Him each day. Amen.

Pray: