

GOSPEL FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Luke 14:16-24

But He said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

1. Contrary to the ordinance of the ancient church, the Papists have chosen this Gospel reading for the First Sunday after Trinity, because this week they have observed the festival of Corpus Christi, as is still done among them. They have taken the supper of which this Gospel reading speaks and stretched it to apply to the Sacrament, and by so doing they want to establish one kind in the Sacrament, which is one of the chief points of their abuse and anti-Christian perversion of the Sacrament, on which we disagree with them.¹

2. Now, because young people grow up and know nothing about such festivals or the pageantry connected with them, and even we older people forget it, it would be good to remind our people. Then, when our youth come into their churches and see such things, they will not be offended by it, but can say that it is not right for them to carry the holy Sacrament around in

¹ Under medieval canon law, the laity were allowed to receive only one "species," i.e., the body of Christ under the form of bread, and not the cup of Christ's blood in Communion. The followers of John Hus (1369-1415), as well as the Lutherans a century later, insisted that both species should be administered to the laity. Luther first published against the administration of the Sacrament under only one kind in *The Blessed Sacrament and the Brotherhoods* (1519), LW 35:49-51. See also *Babylonian Captivity* (1520), LW 36:12-28; and *Report to a Good Friend concerning Both Kinds in the Sacrament* (1528), WA 26:560-618 (LW 72).

that way as a spectacle and in that way distribute so many lying indulgences.² They do not do this with the intention of honoring the Sacrament; otherwise they would carry around the whole Sacrament or both kinds. Rather, to the shame and disgrace of the Sacrament, they honor themselves through this, namely, by preserving the distinction that the priestly estate is an especially high estate before God, more than the other common Christians, because they alone receive the whole Sacrament, or both kinds, the body and blood of Christ. The other Christians as lesser people must be satisfied with only one part of the Sacrament.

3. With this festival they have wanted to bring this distinction among the people and to praise their estate above others in this way, to the disgrace and shame of the holy Sacrament and of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not institute His holy Sacrament for a special estate apart from the common Christians, just as He also did not suffer and die for a special estate but for the comfort of His Christian Church. His Church is not divided but is one body of the one Head, Jesus Christ, in which all the members are equal as far as life and condition are concerned, even though their works are unequal and different.

4. We should not forget this abuse, which is very great and harmful, but call special attention to it, because they persist in their godless conduct so stubbornly and impenitently. How does it happen that the holy Sacrament is used to make a distinction among Christians, when the Lord Christ instituted it chiefly to comfort the conscience and strengthen faith? Accordingly, it should be in Christendom just like a bond which binds the Christians most intimately together. They are just like one bread or one cake, not only because they together have one God, one Word, one Baptism, one Sacrament, one hope [Eph. 4:4-5], and all the grace and benefits of Christ in common without any distinction, but also in their whole external life they are one body, since each member is to assist, serve, help, aid, sympathize, etc., with the other.

5. The Papists have completely abolished this use of the holy Sacrament, so that they alone receive the Sacrament in its complete form; in that way they have made a special group which is to be better than the common Christendom. Yet, so that the common man would cherish and not completely despise the one kind, they celebrated this festival every year for eight days, in which they carried the one kind with magnificent pageantry through the city as a spectacle, with cymbals and stringed instruments. In that way they made people open their eyes wide so that they would think that even

² The feast of Corpus Christi with its associated indulgence was commanded in the bull *Transiturus* of Pope Urban IV (r. 1261-64) and included in canon law.

though the priestly estate was much more glorious and greater before God, yet they also had something which could be exhibited.

6. That is why they have moved this Gospel reading here, even though it agrees very poorly with the one kind—as if this master of the house had arranged a mouse meal³ and only gave people things to eat and nothing to drink! Nevertheless, they themselves sing about this: *Venite, comedite panem meum et bibite vinum meum*, “Come, eat my bread and drink my wine” [Prov. 9:5].⁴ Yet they only gave the one kind and retained the cup for themselves. But it always happens to our Lord God that whatever He institutes and orders must be perverted and desecrated by the devil and his followers. So it also has happened with the Sacrament, which on this festival still to the present day is slandered most horribly by the Papists.

7. As was said, they do not observe this festival to honor the holy Sacrament—otherwise they would carry around both kinds and the entire Sacrament—but to honor themselves. They elevate it, not so that we would have much of it, but only so that we would know what a difference there is between a priest and a layman. In other things which God has created in that way, it is very good to make distinctions. For example, a woman remains a woman, a man remains a man, the secular government is to be separated from its subjects, and so on with other secular estates.

However, it is not right when they here—where God has abolished all distinctions—want to make the distinction that the pope, bishops, even St. Peter or St. Paul have a better Baptism or a better Gospel than any common Christian. Therefore, it is also wrong when they want to have a better Sacrament than other Christians. Nevertheless, our Savior, the Lord Christ, did not institute the Sacrament (as was said) to distinguish among His Christians, but to make them all equal, just as with Baptism and the Gospel, so that each one would have just as much of it as the other.

³ *meuse mal*. The expression is used only here in Luther's extant writings. Below, in paragraph 8 (p. 84), Luther claims that mice and rats do not drink (at least when they eat). DWB, s.v. “Mauszeche,” cites Johann Baptist Fischart (1546–90), who describes a “dry Mass” as a *Mauszeche* (“mouse-boozing” or “mouse-drinking-party”), apparently with the same understanding that mice do not drink.

⁴ The Responsoy for Vespers of Corpus Christi included this verse with Luke 14:16–17: “*R: Homo quidam fecit cenam magnam et misit servum suum hora cene dicere invitatis ut venirent. Quia parata sunt omnia. V: Venite comedite panem meum et bibite vinum quod miscui vobis. Quia . . . Gloria patri . . . Quia . . .*” [*R: A man made a great supper and sent his servant at the supper hour to tell the invited to come. Because all things are ready. V: Come, eat my bread and drink the wine I have mixed for you. Because . . . Glory be to the Father . . . Because . . .*]. See Vincent Corrigan, “Critical Editions of the Liturgical Manuscripts,” in Barbara R. Walters, Vincent Corrigan, and Peter T. Ricketts, *The Feast of Corpus Christi* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), p. 363.

8. I wanted to say this briefly for the sake of the young and also for our sake, so that everyone would be on guard against the abomination which the papacy has introduced here. They have thus divided Christendom, which our Lord God had united. They condemn and persecute us because we will not allow ourselves to be made into mice or rats who want to eat without drinking, or receive only one kind. For this reason, we have completely done away with this festival in our churches, because it has been made into nothing but idolatry, done directly against the order and institution of Christ, to the disgrace of the holy Sacrament and to the significant harm of Christendom. We will stay with the unity of Christians, so that here one is as good as another, and every distinction is abolished. That is enough about this for the sake of the young and the simple. We will now take up the Gospel reading.

9. This preaching of Christ came about because of the miracle in which the Lord Christ healed the man sick of the dropsy in the Pharisee's house [Luke 14:1-4]. However, the evangelist speaks about how they were watching and lying in wait for Him, so that they might trap Him [Luke 14:1]. Therefore, He also begins to read them a lecture, one after another, about how they are full of arrogance and pride and insist on sitting in the first seats [Luke 14:7-11]. Finally, He comes to the host and also reads him a text about how he should not ask rich guests to come, who can ask him back here on earth and thank him for it, but the poor guests, who can invite him back there in the life to come [Luke 14:12-14].

10. To these words, one among them who wanted to be much more learned than the Lord Christ began to say, "How blessed is he who eats bread in the kingdom of God!" [Luke 14:15]. It was as if he meant to say as great wisdom: "You are more than overzealous with Your preaching! If preaching could do it, then I could also do that, even better than You; for I think these words are truly noble preaching: 'Blessed is he who eats bread in the kingdom of God!'"

11. Christ answers him: "Yes," He says, "I will tell you how blessed you and those like you are. There was a man who made a great supper and invited many, but they despised it and would not come" [Luke 14:16]. This rebuff fit him, as if He meant to say: "You talk much about how blessed the man is who eats bread in heaven—how very serious you are about that! What an exquisitely holy man you are, namely, one who is invited and yet does not come." These are harsh, sharp, and frightful words, if we consider them carefully. He is speaking with nothing but arrant rogues, who sat about the table not because they wanted to learn anything, but so that they could watch Him, to see where they could get at Him and catch Him. To them He told this parable.

"There was a man who made a great supper." [Luke 14:16]

12. The man is our Lord God Himself, a great and rich Lord, who also once prepared a meal according to His glorious majesty and honor. This supper is called great and glorious not only because of the Host, who is God Himself—so that it would have been a glorious mealtime, even if He had given only pea broth or a dry crust—but the food is also exceedingly great and exquisite, namely, the holy Gospel, yes, Christ our Lord Himself. He Himself is the food which is brought to us in the Gospel, that He has made satisfaction for our sins through His death and redeemed us from all the misery of eternal death, the wrath of God, sin, and eternal damnation.

13. This preaching of Christ is the great and glorious meal with which He feeds His guests and sanctifies them through His holy Baptism. He comforts and strengthens them through the Sacrament of His body and blood so that nothing is lacking, there is complete abundance, and everyone is satisfied. Thus this meal is correctly called a gloriously great meal because of the food, so exquisitely and plentifully prepared that no tongue can fully speak of it and no heart sufficiently grasp it. It is eternal food and eternal drink, so that one never again thirsts or hungers but is eternally satisfied, his thirst is quenched, and he becomes cheerful. This is true not for one person only; but as wide as the world is—even if it were ten times wider—they would all have enough in it, for it is endless food and eternal drink. This is what our Gospel says: "Whoever believes in this Lord Jesus Christ, who was born for our sake from Mary the virgin, crucified for our sins under Pontius Pilate, died, descended into hell, rose again, and sits at the right hand of God," etc.⁵ Whoever believes this genuinely eats and drinks from this meal, for believing in the Lord Christ means to eat and drink, from which people become satisfied, fat, big, and strong, so that they are eternally cheerful.

14. This is rightly called a great supper, because it is so exquisite and is served to so many people that everyone can eat his fill, and yet the food never becomes less. It is a great, nourishing food which lasts eternally and gives eternal life. Thus Christ informs these hypocrites at the table that this is a different meal than they had given Him. They are such villains and evildoers that, even though they can gossip and chatter much about it, nevertheless they despise God and His mercy, eternal life and blessedness, and value everything else more. Next follows:

"And invited many to it." [Luke 14:16]

⁵ See the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed (Kolb-Wengert, pp. 21–22; *Concordia*, p. 16).

15. The many who are invited to this are the Jews and the whole people of Israel, who had especially been invited from Abraham on through the prophets. The Seed through whom the blessing would come was promised to the patriarch Abraham, and so this supper was first announced to him as the father of this people. Afterward the prophets carried it further and pointed the people to it, so that our Lord God's will was not lacking, but they were diligently invited. This is why St. Paul everywhere in his Epistles puts the Jews first: *Judeis primum et Graecis* ["first to the Jews, and to the Greeks," Rom. 1:16].

16. Now when the hour came for people to go to the table—that is, when it was around the time that our Lord Christ was born, would suffer, and would rise again from the dead—then the servants (John the Baptist and the apostles) went out and said to those invited, to the people of Israel: "Dear people, you have previously been invited; now is the time. Come, now it has been prepared! Your Lord Jesus Christ, your Messiah, has already been born, died, and risen again. Therefore, do not remain outside for long; come to the table, eat, and be cheerful!" This means: "Receive with joy the treasure promised to you; according to the promise, He has released you from the curse of damnation and saved you." This message was especially brought to the highest among the people, who were in the spiritual and civil government. But what did they do with it?

"They all began one after another to make excuses." [Luke 14:18]

17. This is a rebuke for the guests who sat at the table with Christ, especially for the idle gossips who wanted to find fault with Christ during the meal and preached much about bread in the kingdom of God, saying, "Blessed is the man who eats bread in the kingdom of heaven" [Luke 14:15]. "Yes," He says, "do you want to know how blessed you are? I will tell you. The bread has already been served, and the meal is prepared. John the Baptist is there. I and My apostles now tell you to sit at the table." However, you not only remain outside, letting the master sit there with his great and glorious supper, but you still want to make excuses and be pure. Thus this is a twofold sin: not only do you despise the Gospel, but you also want what you did to be considered right and still to be holy, righteous, and wise. This is a very grievous sin. It would be too much if you did not want to believe God's Word, but you go further and despise it—and yet you want to be righteous! That is too far and too much! Our noblemen do the same thing: they disgrace and slander the Sacrament and give to us who are in the wrong only one form, and yet they make excuses and claim that they have done right! Yes, even more, they condemn us, inflict all torment on us, and murder and put to

flight the people who desire to use it correctly. Let them only pour it hot enough⁶—who knows who will yet sweat in this bath?⁷

18. The Jews also did the same and made excuses: "We certainly cannot accept Your teaching, since it is against the priesthood and the Law which God Himself gave us through Moses; it also causes disorder in our kingdom which God established. We have to look at how we can preserve our own affairs!" So the first made the excuse of his field; the second, with his oxen; and both think that they are doing well. The third makes no excuse at all, but simply says that he cannot come.

19. This is also the excuse that we allege against the Gospel, for we are not better than they were. They first of all alleged that the Law of Moses had to remain; because the apostles preached against the Law—namely, that neither their Law, temple, nor priests were necessary, for a greater Priest was present, Jesus Christ, of the tribe of Judah—they did not want to tolerate such preaching, but retained their Law, as they still do. Because of that, things go on so that still to the present day they wait—and must wait until the Last Day—for their Messiah to come. They hope that He will reestablish everything again—the old priesthood and kingdom—as it was in the time of David, and then give them everything abundantly.

20. Christ refers here to these three people. The first says, "I want to inspect my field." These are the foremost and best; among the Jews they were the entire priesthood and the authorities. They say: "We must work, cultivate, and harvest the land; that is, we must rule the people" (just as Christ also called the preachers "farmers" who sow the Gospel [Luke 8:5–8]) "and attend to our priesthood, entrusted to us by God. Now, because the teaching of the apostles is against this, it is wrong, and we are justly excused for not accepting it."

21. So the second group—those in the temporal government—makes an excuse about oxen (since oxen refers to those ruling the people in Psalm 22 [12]: "Large bulls have surrounded Me; fat oxen have encircled Me"). These also have an honest excuse: "We have a kingdom and government formed and arranged by God. We must persist in this and see how we can preserve it."

22. The third group says: "The Gospel is a teaching which will not tolerate being greedy or striving to have enough for ourselves, but commands us to risk everything—body and life, money and goods—for Christ's sake. Therefore, we will not and cannot come, for we must see how we can keep for ourselves what God has given us." Taking a wife does not mean being

⁶ *Aber laß sie nur heiß genug aufgießen*, that is, "They had better make their trap a good one."

⁷ I.e., perhaps their evil plans will work against them.

occupied or busy with something dishonest, but submitting to an honest estate, sitting at home, and thinking about how to earn a living, which is everyone's duty. However, all of that is just where an honest host sins, if he thinks only about how he may become rich, keep house well, and prosper, no matter whether it happens with God or against God.

The Jews only looked at Moses' promise to them of temporal blessings, if they were righteous and kept God's commandments, so that cattle, fields, wife, child, and everything would be blessed and prosper. That is why they only strived to have their kitchens and cellars full, and to become rich, and thought that then they were righteous, and God would have to bless them, as Psalm 144 [:13-14] says.

23. Our Papists also still make excuses in just the same way and say: "The teaching is certainly correct, but we must still remain with the Church and its orderly government. Likewise, we must above all things obediently preserve the secular authorities, so that there is no dissension and rebellion." So they have the same concern the Jews do, that if they accepted the Gospel, they would lose their Church and government. Yet it is the Gospel alone that builds up the true Christian Church and restrains all injustice, violence, and rebellion. Accordingly, greed is also present. Because they see nothing accompanying the Gospel except only poverty and persecution, it happens the same as here, that they simply without fear refuse to obey the Gospel and say that they have taken wives and cannot come—and still they want to be considered Christians who have done what is right! They want to be regarded as good bishops, good princes, and good citizens.

24. But how will it also turn out for them? Just as with the Jews, they held onto their Law, priesthood, kingdom, and possessions so long and so firmly, until finally they were completely wrecked and lost, one with the other. Now they sit in their houses here and there under foreign princes as if on a balance. This is the reward they wanted to have, for they did not want this supper but were more concerned about their kingdom, priesthood, and houses than about the Gospel. For that reason they lost all three and received the verdict that none of them would taste this supper. Thus they were deprived of both the temporal [supper] here on earth and of the eternal supper. This will certainly also happen to our adversaries.

25. Thus the Lord Christ has now given a lecture to the acute doctor and his companions at table and pointed out to them how they stand against our Lord God, namely, as follows:

"Then the host became angry and said to his servants: 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city,' etc. [Luke 14:21]"

26. It is as if He meant to say: "Well, since it must happen that you will inspect your field and oxen and take wives, and because of it you will neglect My supper—that is, you want to preserve your priesthood, kingdom, and wealth but abandon Me and My Gospel—so I will in turn abandon you, so that because of this you will lose everything, and I will procure other guests for Myself. Therefore, go forth, My servant, into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind." This is what happened among the Jews, for when the great lords, princes, and priests—the best in the people—would not accept the Gospel for the reasons pointed out above, our Lord God accepted the common fishermen, the poor, miserable, and despised little flock. St. Paul also says: "Consider your calling, dear brothers: not many wise according to the flesh, not many powerful, not many noble are called. Rather, God has chosen what is foolish before the world to frustrate the wise; God has chosen what is weak before the world to frustrate what is strong; God has chosen what is base before the world and despised and what is nothing to destroy what is something," etc. (1 Corinthians 1 [:26–28]).

27. According to this passage, everything that was wise, holy, rich, and powerful in the people was rejected by God because they would not accept His Gospel, and the foolish, simple, most worthless people, such as Peter, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, etc.—poor fishermen and needy beggars—were chosen. No one would have considered them worthy to be the servants of the priests and princes of the people. These were left over like slime and, as Isaiah says, the dregs of the good, exquisite wine [cf. Isa. 49:6 Vg]. The best among the people—the priests, the princes, the rich, and the powerful—were poured out like a cask of good wine, and only the dregs remain, which the Lord here calls the poor, the lame, the crippled, and the blind. They have come to the grace and honor of being pleasing to God and dear guests, because the other, high, great people would not.

28. The Pharisee says, "Blessed are they who eat bread in the kingdom of God" [Luke 14:15]. "Yes," answers Christ, "they are blessed, but you and those with you are concerned about a field and oxen, about which you speak. Therefore, you should know that a supper has been prepared, of which the poor are to eat." The text says, *Pauperes evangelizantur* ["The Gospel is being preached to the poor," Matt. 11:5], for the powerful, the holy, and the wise did not want to have it. Therefore, it happened to them in such a way that both priests and princes were poured out like the best wine, because they held so firmly to their oxen, fields, and wives, and in their place the poor beggars have come to the Gospel at this magnificent meal.

29. This means giving the Jews a really good rebuke, especially the one who wants to be so clever and eat bread in heaven but yet wants to retain the priesthood and kingdom, no matter what happens to Christ and His Gospel. The condition of his heart is that he does not at all need the Lord Christ for heaven, but [thinks that] our Lord God will say to him and all Jews: "Come, you Jews, and especially you priests, you holy people, you princes, you fat citizens! The supper has been prepared for you!" "Yes," He says, "it is true, you have been invited, but you pay no attention and make excuses and still want to be right. Therefore, I cast you away and accept rather the most common people, even if I should get no one other than despised, miserable cripples and the lame."

30. The same thing will also happen to our adversaries, and it will not at all help them that they are great, holy bishops, powerful princes, and lords who think that our Lord God will not reject them and only accept the poor rats' nest at Wittenberg and the small group of those who love the Gospel. Yes, my friend, if He has rejected the best in His people—who had such glorious, great promises—and accepted the dregs, He will not grant it to you. You will not eat bread in heaven because you are great, holy, and powerful, but "the Gospel is preached to the poor" [Matt. 11:5]. Our Lord God is much greater, stronger, wiser, and holier than all kings and all devils. Therefore, He does not care much about your holiness or power, but if you still intend to defy Him and impudently despise His Word, then He will oppose you, so that all your wisdom, power, and holiness will come to nothing.

31. So far this Gospel reading applies only to the Jews. When He speaks about the lame and crippled who are in the streets and lanes of the city [Luke 14:21], He is calling the Jewish people a city, because they were a prepared and well-ordered people who had the Law, worship, temple, priests, king, and everything ordered by God Himself and arranged through Moses. Now He sends His servant also onto the highways and commands him to take guests wherever he finds them, even the beggars along the hedges and everywhere.

"And the lord said to the servant: 'Go out onto the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may become full.'" [Luke 14:23]

32. These people are we Gentiles who have dwelt in no city, that is, had no worship, but were idolatrous and did not know what we or God were. That is why He calls our condition an unconfined, open place on the highways, in the field where the devil runs about and has his space.

33. "Go there," He says, "and compel them to come in," for the world everywhere and always struggles against the Gospel and cannot tolerate this teaching. Nevertheless, this Host wants His house full of guests, for He has

made such preparations that He must have people who eat, drink, and are cheerful, even if He has to make them out of stones [cf. Luke 3:8].

34. Here we can also see that the Lord Christ has let the world stand so long for our sakes, even though He had reason enough because of our sins to overthrow it every moment. However, He does not do this because He wants still more guests and for the sake of the elect who also belong to this supper. Therefore, the fact that His servants now bring the Gospel to us points out that we who are baptized and believe also belong to this supper, for we are the great lords who are along the hedges, that is, blind, poor, and lost Gentiles.

35. Yet how is it that we are compelled? God does not want any forced service, does He? He compels us when He sends this preaching to all people: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" [Mark 16:16]. Here He points out both hell and heaven, death and life, wrath and grace and reveals to us our sins and ruined condition. The result is that we are to be frightened, because we hear that as soon as a person is born he belongs to the devil and is condemned, no matter what he does. This is part of the compulsion, through which we are frightened of the wrath of God and desire grace and help from Him.

36. When this has taken place through preaching, and the hearts are broken and frightened, He wants to have it further preached: "Dear man, do not despair that you are a sinner and have such a frightful verdict on you, but do this: Go and be baptized, and listen to the Gospel. You will hear that Jesus Christ died for your sake and has made satisfaction for your sins. If you believe this, then you will be safe from the wrath of God and eternal death, and you will eat at this magnificent supper and live well, so that you become very fat and strong," etc.

37. This is genuine compulsion, namely, to frighten with sin—not as the pope compels with his excommunication, which does not genuinely frighten the conscience. He does not teach what genuine sin is, but is busy with his nonsense that whoever does not observe his order and human precepts will be excommunicated. However, the Gospel begins to reveal sin and "the wrath of God" [Rom. 1:18], namely, that we all, with no exceptions, live unrighteously and are godless. Our Lord God commands us to proclaim this through His Gospel when He says to the apostles: "Go and preach repentance" [Luke 24:47]. However, we cannot preach repentance unless we say that God is angry at all people because they are full of unbelief, contempt for God, and other sins.

38. This wrath is to frighten them and make their consciences afraid and fearful, so that they are themselves compelled and say: "Lord God! Whatever should I do to be liberated from this misery?" Now, when he is frightened in that way and feels his misery and distress, then it is time to say to him:

"Sit down at the table of this rich Host and eat" (for there are still many empty tables and plenty to eat), that is, "Be baptized and believe that Jesus Christ has paid for you. There are no other means by which you can be rescued." Then wrath ceases, and there shines from heaven nothing but grace and mercy, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

39. Therefore, these words "compel them to come in" [Luke 14:23] are exceedingly pleasing and comforting for the poor, miserable group of those who are compelled, that is, especially for us who previously were lost and condemned Gentiles—words by which God wants powerfully to represent and show to us His unfathomable grace. His must be a very inexpressible love, because He shows in these words that He is so desirous for our salvation and blessedness that He commands not only that poor sinners are to be called kindly and exhorted to this supper, but also He wants them to be compelled and urged and not released from that compulsion until they come to this supper. With these words He sufficiently points out that He does not want them rejected or lost, if only they themselves do not refuse this compulsion through malicious contempt and hardened impenitence. As Tauler⁸ said, He is extremely much more desirous of giving to and helping us than we are or ever can be of receiving or asking. He asks and desires nothing higher from us than that we open our hearts wide and accept His grace.

40. Nevertheless, this compulsion is necessary for the preaching of both repentance and the forgiveness of sins, for without this [compulsion] we remain all too obstinate and hardened, without repentance, under His wrath, lying in our sinful way of life and in the devil's kingdom. On the other hand, when fright of divine wrath strikes us, we are again all too timid, fearful, and despondent to take courage and believe that He wants to show us this great grace and mercy. We are always worried that we do not belong and that He will cast us off because of our sins and great unworthiness.

That is why He Himself must here command and cause us always to continue and persevere, as much as we can, with compelling and urging, by holding out both wrath for the wicked and grace for the believers. Wrath and repentance force us to run after and cry out for grace. That, then, is the right way to go to this supper. Thus out of Jews and Gentiles there is one Christian Church, and all are together called poor, miserable people, lame, and crippled, for after the fright they accept the Gospel sincerely and gladly.

41. Those, however, who do not want to do this, no matter how wise and shrewd they can be, have here their verdict that they will not taste this meal; that is, the wrath of God will remain on them, and they will be condemned

8 On Luther's views of the Dominican Johannes Tauler (ca. 1300–1361), see the introduction to Luther's preface to Pupper of Goch, *Fragments* (1522), LW 59:13–14, and the notes there.

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because of their unbelief. Our Lord God does not care about how rich, wise, or holy they are. Therefore, even though they are secure and think there is no danger, they still will experience that this verdict will not be false, when the Lord here concludes: *Non gustabunt*, "They will not taste My supper" [Luke 14:24]. We, however, who accept it and, with hearts frightened because of our sins, do not decline the grace of God which is preached and offered to us in the Gospel through Christ, will receive grace instead of wrath, eternal righteousness instead of sin, and eternal life instead of eternal death.

42. As we can see today, this frightening verdict falls powerfully upon the Turks and Jews, so that they have no savor of the Gospel—yes, it is a disgusting abomination to them, so that they can neither tolerate nor hear it. So also our popes and bishops will not even savor this food, to say nothing of being satisfied from it. We, however, who by God's particular grace have come to this teaching, become fat, strong, and cheerful from it and are in the house at the mealtime of these good things, as long as we remain steadfast to the end. Amen.

43. Thus in this parable the Lord wants to admonish us to regard the Gospel as dear and valuable and not to go with the crowd who fancy themselves shrewd, wise, powerful, and holy. The verdict is that they are rejected and do not taste this supper, just as in the Jewish people they have been rejected, and only the inferior dregs remain. This will also happen to us, if we love our fields, oxen, wives—that is, spiritual (as it is called now) or worldly honor, along with temporal goods—more than the Gospel.

44. He says with simple, short, but very serious words: "They will not taste My supper." It is as if He meant to say: "Well, My supper, too, is something and is surely better than their oxen, fields, and houses or wives, even though they now despise it and regard their fields, oxen, and houses as much more precious. The hour will come when they must leave their oxen, fields, and houses and would gladly taste something from My supper. But then it will be said: 'Friend, I am not now at home, and I cannot now wait on the guests. Go to your fields, to your oxen, to your houses; they will certainly give you a better supper, because you have despised My supper so confidently and boldly. I have certainly cooked for you and spent much on it, but that is offensive to you. If now you have cooked something better, then eat and be cheerful—except that you will not taste My supper.'"

45. This is a very harsh, frightening, and intolerable verdict for them when He will call His supper "eternal life," and their fields, oxen, and houses, "the eternal fire of hell." He inflexibly insists that they will not taste His supper; that is, there is no more hope for them eternally. Neither repentance nor remorse will help them, and there is no return. Therefore, these are very furious words, which show the Host's great, unending wrath. It is the nature

of great lords and noble people not to speak many words when they are really angry; but every word they do speak weighs a hundred pounds, for they have in mind that they will act more furiously than they can speak. How much more do these few words of the almighty Lord point to an inexpressible wrath which will never be appeased!

46. Yet we go on as if these harsh, frightening words had been spoken perhaps by a fool or a child so that we could laugh and mock, or as if they were our Lord God's jest and joke. But then we do not hear or see that the text clearly says that He is angry and has spoken these words out of great wrath. He is not a fool or a child but the Lord and God over all, before whom the mountains justly tremble and are frightened with the ground and the earth, and both the sea and the water flee before Him (as Scripture says [Ps. 114:3-7]). But there is no creature so hard and adamant as the man who is not at all afraid of this but despises it and makes a mockery of it.

47. But we are sufficiently excused when we say it. This is our honor. On that day the whole world will have to testify and confess that they heard, saw, and learned it from us. We are not responsible when they call it "heresy"; we will gladly tolerate it, and we are more than satisfied with this, and in addition we thank them kindly for calling it "heresy," for in that way they are confessing that they have certainly heard, read, and seen it. I do not desire more from them, for when they confess that they have heard it, they are at the same time testifying that we have not been silent. However, if we have not been silent, but have faithfully and diligently taught and preached this, so that our enemies themselves say that we have preached it far too much—then let that Man judge us, whom we regard as having commanded us to do it, and let that god defend them, who urges them to condemn us! In the name of God it will become clear which side's God is the true God, which Christ is the true Christ, and which church is the true Church. It will appear when the snow melts.

48. There can be no better government for the world than the devil's—or, in the devil's stead, the papal government—for the world wants it that way. What the devil wants makes progress and follows mightily. What God wants both in the spiritual and worldly government makes progress nowhere and faces innumerable obstacles, so that, if I could separate the world and the Church from each other, I would gladly support subjecting the world to the pope and the devil. But Christ our Lord will do this and still other things and will keep His supper far enough away from the world and the devil. Amen.