

Trinity 2

Faith is a strong and active thing.
It drives the life and choices of every single person.
There is not a person I know who doesn't act on their belief.
I say this, of course, not meaning that everyone is a believer in Christ.
But rather, meaning that everyone believes in SOMETHING.
And it is that "faith" that drives all of their life and choices.
You might THINK all kinds of things--and even claim that you believe them.
But when the chips are down, idle thoughts matter nothing.
It is what you truly BELIEVE that will guide you.
If you want to know what someone thinks, you can find out by asking.
But if you want to know what someone believes, what they do in a pinch.
So, we have three people presented to us today.
They had already been invited to come to the banquet.
They THOUGHT that they wanted to come and were only awaiting the time.
Now the final summons comes and we find out what they really BELIEVE.
They believe that the banquet is a waste of their precious time.
They believe that the fare is unappetizing;
 or that the time spent will be boring...
 or that the company will be undesirable.
Their choice to stay away, shows that they believe they have better things to do.
What makes their behavior so startling, is that we know they are wrong.
We have a "bird's eye view" of the situation and it is obvious that they are
 excusing themselves from the greatest and best opportunity of their lives.
Not to mention that they are insulting the Host of the banquet.
From where we sit today, it's not rational!
We can see this clearly because we know the end of the story.
"Hind-sight is 20/20" they say.
It is easy to look at the life and choices of others and second guess them.
But it is a different thing to be the one living the life and making the choices in
 the present time. And this is where you sit today.
Each and every day you are given the choice between heaven and hell.
Each and every day--even every hour--you are invited to participate in heavenly
 things and lead a heavenly and joyful life.
And yet, each and every day you decline the invitation and instead choose hell,
 pain, sadness and death.
"When are we invited to heaven and joy and life?" you might ask.
THAT'S the question, isn't it!
If only you knew, you wouldn't have turned down the invitation.
Just like the folks in today's Gospel who traded heaven for oxen, land and wife.
You look on their choices with horror and wonder, "how can I be wise enough to
 accept the invitation when it comes?"
The answer is knowing who it is that invites.

When you know that the devil is inviting you, you know that the invitation is to
 hell, sorrow and death.
But when you know that Christ Jesus is inviting you, you know that the invitation
 is to heaven, joy and life.
And how can you know which is which? The answer is very, very simple.
Where the word of God speaks, there Christ is speaking and there is heaven.
But where the world speaks, there the devil is speaking and there is hell.
The word of God is summarized in the catechism.
There, in the 10 Commandments, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer you
 have a complete outline of the heavenly love, faith and prayer.
So, you are invited to obey your parents and other authorities.
When you choose to do otherwise, you choose hell, sadness and death instead.
You are invited to be content with what God gives and not to steal or covet.
You are invited to speak well of others and support them by your words.
In all of these things you are invited to the heavenly banquet.
This is very simple--not confusing--confusion comes from the devil--not God.
The devil's job is always to make God's feast look unappetizing.
 ...to make the Lord's Cup seem distasteful...
Likewise, his job is to make every alternative to God's invitation seem more
 inviting and alluring.
He does this by filling you with fear, lust or greed.
Greed makes you believe that what the world gives is better than God's gifts.
Lust makes you believe that the pleasure the world can give is better than God's.
Fear makes you believe that the pain the world give you is worse than hell.
Don't you believe it! Don't fall for the Devil's lies.
Believe Jesus' words instead.
Just as surely as you can look at the three men in today's Gospel and know what
 they should have done, so also you can know what you are to do.
Jesus' words to you are just as clear as it was to them.
But today you know the outcome--the rest of the story!!!
It is just exactly this certainty which kept Jesus from falling for the devil's lies.
Neither the greed for bread, nor the lust for worldly glory, nor even the fear of
 His own suffering and death could prevent him from His work.
And because He finished His work, today's feast is spread.
For that reason, your invitation to come here today is an invitation to heaven.
For in the feast of the Scriptures and the Sermon and in the banquet of the Body
 and Blood you are blessed to participate in all the joys of heaven.
The missed opportunities of the past are behind you.
Past sins where you chose hell and death and sorrow are here forgiven.
Today you are no longer numbered with the unfortunate who opted out.
Instead you are numbered with the poor, maimed, lame and blind who are
 compelled by God's grace and favor to come and receive all the riches that
 He has prepared for you.
You are blessed to be eating bread in the kingdom of God. AMEN.