

Bread in the Kingdom of God

Lk 14.15-24

«The master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.»

Listen to me! My lord has invited you to a feast. Yes, you! Precisely you! Hurry, there are still free seats at his table. Have you ever been in his palace? No? Of course not! Simple people such as yourselves are usually not allowed in. You cannot even imagine how beautiful, how luxurious this palace is. But there's no need to imagine it, just go there. Today the doors are open for you.

A white, marble floor will be waiting for you; a pleasant coolness rises up from it. There are wonderful, gold-plated columns. They glimmer so mysterious in the flickering lights of candles, and awaken in you strange thoughts and feelings. Thick, soft carpets with unusual ornamentation will caress your tired feet. There, in the palace, are bubbling fountains of crystal clean water, with their splashing they bring joy to visitors' faces. And in the corners there are censors smoking with fragrant incense. They fill the air with sweet smells that make your head spin. The wonderful frescoes on the walls show wild plants and amazing animals. It will seem that you have once again returned to the garden of paradise.

Golden silverware and delicate china are on the dinner table. From even the slightest touch the wine glasses begin to quietly and melodically ring. It seems that this must be the way the heavenly spheres sing when all the planets come together in their parade. And the golden cups blind with their shining. It seems that you are holding in your hands a bundle of sunlight.

And the food – oh what food will be awaiting you! The best fruits are spread out for you in golden vases; they are from the garden of my lord. Velvet peaches are ready to burst with a thick juice that's almost too-sweet – just bit into them. And the large, heavy grapes are almost as big as plums; they are dark and full of sweet promises, like the eyes of a southern beauty. Ripe, bright-yellow lemons exude a tantalizing aroma.

From the heated stone ovens it is possible to catch the smell of fresh bread, bursting with heat, light and soft, but with a browned and crunchy crust. It's warm, comfortable smell spreads out

throughout the whole palace. And golden pitchers are already being filled with dark red wine. From a single drink of it a pleasant warmth flows throughout the body; it's surprising lightness fills ones mind with joy and wins over the heart.

And there's another smell, it seems, and you can catch it even here, beyond the palace walls. Do you feel it? Sniff the air! It's the meat dishes. Today my lord's cook worked especially hard. Tender veal has been marinated in lemon juice, delicately sour apples and fire-red pomegranate. Today no one is scrimping on expensive spices – peppercorn, the fresh scent of parsley and dill, strong basil, heady cloves, and winterfresh mint all tickle the nostrils. Their smells mixed with the thick and spicy aroma of the meat and the smoke from the hot coals and all swim throughout the air as they rise into the heavens.

A spicy and tasty sauce which has drunk up the heat of the southern sun scorches the tongue in a pleasant way. And next to it there are plates of huge, juicy, meaty olives as well as bitter, strong-tasting ones.

The musicians are already warming up their instruments. Very soon their music will be pouring out. A music that is rhythmic, bringing joy to one's heart, and at the same time smooth and melodic. It drowns one in dreams, opening up the mysteries of the world's harmony to sensitive hearts. Young girls will be spinning their enrapturing dance to this music, with their golden bracelets ringing out from their delicate and dark arms. And it is hard to say which will cause more excitement – their dancing or the sherbert that will be served at the end of the banquet, made from rose petals, it takes away one's tiredness and heals ailments. Together with it will be spicy pastries made from the honey of wild bees, with walnuts and cinnamon and liberally sprinkled with powdered sugar.

All this is for you. My lord open the doors of his palace for you. Come in! There are still places around his table!

They won't ask you where you came from. They won't dig up your past there. The house of my lord – this is the only place on earth, the only place, where you will be looked at without being judged. Those who come will not be divided into those who are worthy and those who are not. There all are welcome, there everyone is equally a part. They don't ask there why you came and what your motives are. Whether you came to show honor to my lord, as an act of respect to him, or from vain curiosity or simply in order to become eat your fill; in any case, you will be sincerely welcomed and treated as an equal.

No one will ask you what you've done for my lord in order to deserve his invitation. No one will demand of you that you follow the strict dictates of etiquette. They won't interrogate you with questions about your previous good deeds and acts. None of that means anything there. But if you really want to talk, you'll be listened to carefully and will be given a word of comfort. You won't need to prove anything, to try to get some result, to try to fight for the best place. There all the places are best and no one will be placed lower than the other. It is a place where it possible to rest from the struggle that is life. It is a place where one's conscience will finally stop tearing you apart. It's a place where all previous mistakes and sins will be covered in the shining of gold. It is a place where these things are forgotten, where the important thing is not your worthiness or lack of success, but you yourself. It is a place for you, whoever you may be, and where you'll be met with an open embrace.

My lord will himself bring to you the warm and wonderful-smelling bread, will pour the wine for you that will make your head spin in a pleasant way. He himself bends down to each of you in order to say how welcome you are and how happy he is to see you at his place.

Come, then! There are still places free! My lord awaits you, yes, precisely you! Blessed are you, for blessed are those who have tasted the bread of the Kingdom of God!