

The Reading is from Luke 14:16-24

The Lord said this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.'

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still 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. For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

Resurrectional Apolytikion in the Second Tone

When Thou didst descend unto death, O Life Immortal, then didst Thou slay Hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity. And when Thou didst also raise the dead out of the nethermost depths, all the powers in the Heavens cried out: O Life-giver, Christ our God, glory be to Thee.

Apolytikion in the Second Tone

You justified the forefathers in faith, and through them betrothed yourself, aforetime, to the Church taken from out of the Gentiles. The saints boast in glory. For from their seed, there exists a noble crop, who is she who without seed has given You birth. By their intercessions, O Christ our God, save our souls.

Seasonal Kontakion in the Third Tone

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to * God the Word ineffably, * Who was before all the ages. * Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing * the gladsome tidings; * with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him * Who is willing to be gazed on * as a young Child Who * before the ages is God.

Discussion

Invitation to the Great Feast

In Orthodoxy we read this Gospel on the 2nd Sunday before Christmas. We are reminded in the Nativity season that it is possible to reject the heavenly kingdom for very mundane reasons.

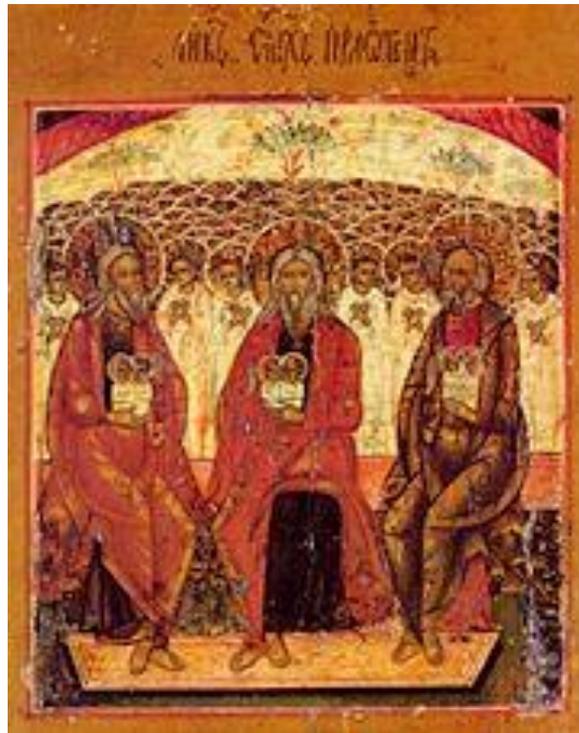
*Clearly, the point of the parable is to question the confidence of those who think that they will be present at Christ's own messianic banquet when he comes again in glory. All those who were assured of a place turned out not really to want it. So, we need to ask ourselves, do we really think that, when we are called, we will act any differently from those in the parable? Why should we think that we will have the conviction and the strength to act differently, when even the disciples of Christ didn't?" (John Behr, *The Cross Stands While the World Turns*, pp 107-108)*

God's plan for the salvation of the world is in no way based upon human merit. God is not controlled by human merit and does not have to respond to it. For God is a sovereign Lord, whose Goodness is not derived from the good behavior of his subjects. Rather God is good, loving and gracious in His own inner being, and He acts according to His nature, not just in response to our good and bad behavior.

Faith + Action = Salvation

We are about to celebrate His birth. **But His birth means nothing if we don't obey His way of life.** His birth doesn't save us; accepting His grace and living in it is what saves us. This supper is a calling to virtue. Not just a calling to be with glory in the end. It's a calling now to change.

This Sunday commemorates the Holy Fathers of the Old Testament:



On the Sunday that occurs on or immediately after the eleventh of this month, we commemorate Christ's forefathers according to the flesh, both those that came before the Law, and those that lived after the giving of the Law.

Special commemoration is made of the Patriarch Abraham, to whom the promise was first given, when God said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). This promise was given some two thousand years before Christ, when Abraham was seventy-five years of age. God called him and commanded him to forsake his country, parents, and kinsmen, and to depart to the land of the Canaanites.

When he arrived there, God told him, "I will give this land to thy seed" (Gen. 12:7); for this cause, that land was called the "Promised Land," which later became the country of the Hebrew people, and which is also called Palestine by the historians. There, after the passage of twenty-four years, Abraham received God's law concerning circumcision. In the one hundredth year of his life, when Sarah was in her ninetieth year, they became the parents of Isaac. Having lived 175 years altogether, he reposed in peace, a venerable elder full of days.