**Sermon – Trinity 11 Yr C - 31st August 2025 (St Basil’s)**

“Welcome to our service today. Jesus tells us that God’s kingdom is like a banquet, where everyone has a place at the table. So whoever you are, whatever you bring with you today, know that you are welcome here.”

Our readings this morning give us plenty to chew on—advice about compassion, marriage, hospitality, even finances! But I want to focus with you on the gospel from Luke, where Jesus is once again in the spotlight at a dinner party, in the house of a Pharisee.

Now, when Jesus speaks about meals, it’s never just about food. In his culture, eating together carried deep significance. To share a meal in the East was not simply to fill your stomach. It was an act of covenant—an expression of peace, fidelity, even protection. Meals were rich in meaning in a way we can hardly imagine today, in our culture of fast food and “grab and go.”

And of course, that’s why meals have become such a model for our worship. Every time we gather at the Eucharist, we are not simply eating bread and drinking wine. We are being welcomed into God’s covenant meal—a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, God’s own party.

In this story, Jesus does something very striking. He first speaks to us as guests, and then as hosts of God’s party. As guests, he warns us against pride—against scrambling for the best seat, against pushing our way up the social ladder. Status and hierarchy are how the world organises itself, but they have no place in God’s kingdom. You cannot hustle your way into God’s favour. You cannot earn a better seat by power or prestige. In God’s party, everyone is equal.

But then Jesus flips it, and speaks to us as hosts. He tells us not to invite our friends, our family, or those who can repay us—but to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And here’s the truly radical part: in Jesus’ world, inviting someone to a meal wasn’t just an act of kindness—it was a covenant of friendship and loyalty. To offer hospitality was to bind yourself in peace and alliance with your guest.

So when Jesus says, “Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,” he’s not simply telling us to do a nice charitable deed. He is telling us to form bonds of love, peace, and solidarity with those who are most on the margins.

Can you imagine it? It’s hard enough sometimes to welcome people we like, let alone those we find difficult. But Jesus says: this is the shape of the kingdom. In God’s banquet, the guest list is not ours to control. We don’t get to choose who is in and who is out. God’s invitation is wide, generous, and deeply inclusive.

So here’s the challenge for us. When we come to church, we come as both guests and hosts. We are guests at God’s table, receiving what we could never earn. But we are also called to be hosts—to extend welcome to others. Not just to those like us, not just to those we naturally get along with, but to those who might otherwise be overlooked, ignored, or excluded.

Later this morning, when we share the peace, I encourage you to move around, to truly extend peace to someone you don’t know well, someone who may be different from you. And as you go into your week, hold onto Jesus’ words. Who are the people at the edges of your life, your community, your workplace, who might never expect an invitation—from you, or from God? I challenge you: extend that invitation.

Because in the kingdom of God, it will be like this. A great banquet, where the poor, the stranger, the overlooked, and the broken all have a seat of honour. And if the church is meant to be a foretaste of that banquet, then we’d better start getting used to it now.

**Closing Prayer**

God of welcome and grace,
you have given us a place at your table.
Send us out to invite others in,
especially those the world overlooks.
May our lives reflect your kingdom banquet. Amen.

**Takeaway Points**
- We are guests at God’s table – we don’t earn our place; it’s a gift of grace.
- We are also called to be hosts – to extend God’s welcome to others.
- God’s banquet is radically inclusive – the guest list is not ours to control.
- True hospitality is costly – it means welcoming those who cannot repay us.
- The church is a foretaste of the kingdom – so let’s practice that welcome now.

**Welcome:**

“Welcome to our service today. Jesus tells us that God’s kingdom is like a banquet, where everyone has a place at the table. So whoever you are, whatever you bring with you today, know that you are welcome here.”

**Invitation to the Peace**

We have been welcomed to God’s table as guests of grace. In the spirit of the gospel, we are also called to be hosts—to extend Christ’s welcome to one another.

Let us now share the sign of Christ’s peace, remembering that God’s banquet is open to all. Move beyond those you know well, and reach out to those you may not know so well. Offer a handshake, a hug, a smile, or a kind word, and share the peace that God gives freely to all.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

**Blessing:**

“May the God who welcomes all to the banquet
fill your hearts with peace,
your homes with hospitality,
and your lives with joy.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.”