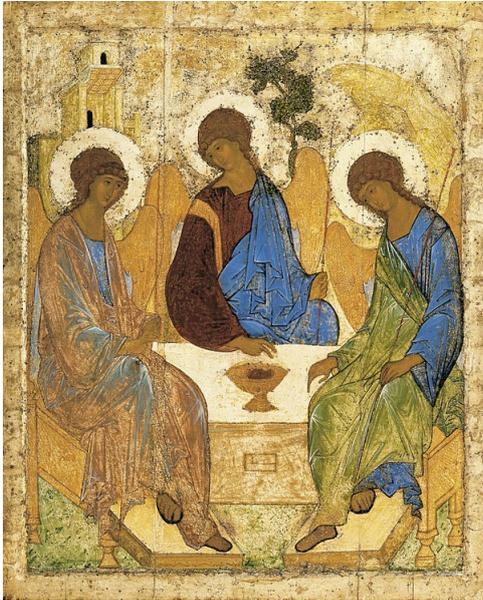


TFTD L5: Invited to the party

Today's TFTD comes from Robin



Luke 14: 15-23

Have you ever been to a party where the host is disappointed about the number of people who turned up? Have you been there as the host runs through all the reasons people gave for not coming and all the while you have wondered whether those people who gave their excuses ever wanted to come at all?

Maybe you yourself have been that host whose party has been a flop and you wondered whether your friends really were friends. Or maybe you hosted a birthday party for a child and only a few children came. And you wondered whether your child was especially unpopular and you blamed yourself for your child's 'unsuccessful' party.

Or maybe you have been invited to a party that you didn't want to go to. Maybe you manufactured an excuse and did not go or maybe you did go but resented being there because you felt you had been manipulated through pity for how the host would feel if nobody came.

I was once invited to a party that I didn't really want to go to. It was in London so attending meant our whole family going to London for the weekend. It was to be a spectacular affair to celebrate an adult's significant birthday. We were on a boat on the Thames and there was going to be karaoke, fireworks and cocktails.

We accepted the invitation and were then asked soon afterwards whether we would

contribute financially to the party – the expensive party I hadn't really wanted to go to in the first place. There was a pretty tense atmosphere when we got there. Where was the party atmosphere? I looked around and wondered how many people were there so that the host would not feel rejected and unloved. And I wondered who had contributed financially. Still, I enjoyed the karaoke.

The Kingdom of God is not like this. The Kingdom of God is a party that everybody can come to if they want to. Or, if they need to. The Kingdom of God satisfies our hunger, our physical hunger and the hunger of our souls. It is open to all. Nobody resents being there. Nobody feels obliged to attend or obligated by attending. Everybody who comes wanted to come and needed to come.

And in the same way when the church points the way to the Kingdom it does not express anxiety about who is in attendance and who is not. The church that points the way to the Kingdom offers unqualified hospitality – hospitality without strings attached – hospitality to all you need it, all who seek it and all who wish to offer it in their turn.

As our perception of the threat of Covid diminishes we are becoming bolder in the way we gather together as community. I expect us soon to re-instate the Wednesday lunches and the community singing sessions. The Wednesday lunches are open to all you want to come and share or share what we have. They are an important part of our life as a church and they are open to all. Please consider joining us. But only if you want to!

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11th March 2022