Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

March 24, 2019

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 55: 1-9

Responsive Reading; Psalm 63: 1-8

Epistle Reading; 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13

Gospel Reading; Luke 13: 1-9

Sermon Title: NO RSVP NEEDED

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: The door is open. All are welcome. Everyone sits at the head table.

Did you ever get an invite to a wedding or other event with RSVP printed at the end? In French that is respondez s’il vous plait. Or respond if you please. Yep, you are right. I got Google.

You send it off and then worry that maybe it got lost in the mail. It kind of bothers you right up the point where the receptionist says, “I have a place for you right over here.” Or you see your name at a place setting.

For so many things in our lives we need a reservation or a ticket to get in. No ticket or no reservation and you are SOL. That means Sorta Outa Luck, or something like that. Any who!

God is a different sort of host. He has a whole new standard of adequate as who comes to his party.

In our Old Testament Lesson Isaiah says on behalf of the Lord, “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.”

As a youngster I usually had a pretty good feel for the symbolism of the Bible but this passage left me somewhere out in left field. How could I get food and drink without money unless I was a thief?

It took me a while but I came to realize that just as when Jesus was talking to the woman at the well, and said that the water he would give would cause her to never thirst again, that in neither case did God or Jesus refer to satisfying the stomach but rather satisfying the soul.

This is really a pretty effective comparison. Just as when we are hungry, we feel empty so do we feel empty when it seems that God is not in our lives.

The responsive reading from the Psalms echoes this thought when it says, “Early I will seek You; My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So, I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory.”

We need more than food and drink, we need the security of dining on real soul food in the presence and under the protection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We need to sit at his table.

One problem is that we become distracted and worried that somehow events or circumstances might prevent us from being invited to His table.

In the Gospel we see that people are upset with world situations like blood of martyrs mingled with sacrifice and unexpected tower collapse prematurely ending the lives of 18 non-suspecting victims. Jesus says that we should not worry about those things but just do the best we can within our own lives. The parable associated with it says that even if we fall short the gardener i.e. Jesus, will get us a second chance, just like he did for the fig tree.

How often have you heard others, or yourself say how much worse the world is now than ever before? Surprise! People have been saying that for thousands of years. In our Epistle lesson Paul reminds us that even in the days of Moses, when all the followers had the same experiences there were thousands of incidents of Idolatry, lust, complaining, tempting each other, and so on. All of these things did not end well but the one good thing is that they all became examples that we can learn from.

Paul goes on to say that God never gives temptation that we can not resist, and never does not give an alternative to turn to.

Hey, if you are drunk call a cab. Swallow your pride and do the right thing. God is watching. God does not care if you are really important, God cares that you are really real.

In another parable, a King is holding a banquet and invites all the important people in town. When he is snubbed by his guests, he invites the commoners and the only thing he requires that the guests show respect.

God is inviting us to dine with Him and His Son at His table in heaven. The door is wide open. We are all welcome, and we are all given name tags at the head table. No RSVP necessary. We all have reservations that Jesus paid for with his precious blood on the cross. All that is asked of us is that we bring the gift of a loving heart and wear the wedding robe supplied for us that is sparkling clean of sin being washed in the purifying blood of our savior. Just as we are, just as God made us, we come, we come. Hallelujah and Amen