

**On the words of the Gospel of Luke:
"A certain man made a great banquet" etc,
Chapter 14:16-24**

By Augustine, Bishop of Hippo
Translated by Rev. Theodore Mayes
Sermon 112 PL 38:643ff.

Given in the basilica Revived

Chapter 1 - 1. *Jews were invited to the dinner, we are led and compelled.* The holy readings have been given, and what we hear, and about which we bring forward some words, helped by God. In the apostolic lesson thanks are given to the Lord about the faith of the Gentiles, certainly therefore, because he himself did it. In the Psalms we read: *God of strengths, turn us, and show your face, and we will have been saved (Psalm 79:8, 20 [80:7, 19]).* In the Gospel, we are called to the dinner: no, rather, others are called; we are not called, but led; not only led, but even compelled. For thus we hear, that *a certain man made a great banquet.* Who is that man, if not the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5)? He sent so that those invited would come, because now the hour had come, that they might come. Who are the invited, if not those called by the prophets who had been sent before? When? Formerly the Prophets were sent out from him, and they invited to the banquet of Christ. Therefore they were sent to the people of Israel. Often they were sent, often they called, that they had come to the hour of the banquet. However, those accepted being invited, but they rejected the banquet. What is, 'they accepted being invited, but they rejected the banquet'? They read the prophets, and they killed Christ. But when they killed him, then they prepared the banquet for us ignorant ones. Now the banquet is prepared, the sacrifice of Christ, after the resurrection of Christ, is commended as the faithful know, in the Lord's Supper, supported by his hands and mouth, the Apostles were sent, to whom they were sent before the prophets. Come to the banquet.

Chapter 2 - 2. *Three excuses for not wishing to come.* [644] *A villa purchased, a pride-filled domination.* Those who did not wish to come excused themselves. And they excused themselves in what way? There were three excuses: *One said, I bought a villa, I go to see it: have me excused. Another said, I bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to test them: I ask you to have me excused. The third said, I have taken a wife, have me excused: I am not able to come.* Do we not consider as excuses only those things which hinder all people who do not wish to come to that supper? We may search for it, we shatter it, we discover it: but so that we might be on guard. In buying a villa, a desire to dominate is seen, therefore pride is reprov'd. For to have a villa, to hold it, to possess it, to place humans under yourself in that villa, this is to take delight in dominating others. This is an evil fault, the first fault. For the first man wanted to dominate; he did not wish to have a lord. What is 'to dominate' unless it is to rejoice on account of power. It is a greater power to which we might be subjected, so that we are strong enough to be secured. *I bought a villa, have me excused.* Pride having been discovered, he did not wish to come.

Chapter 3 - 3. *Five yoke of oxen, the curiosity of the five senses. Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen.* Wasn't it enough to say, I bought oxen? Since serious doubt is far away, he challenges us to seeking and understanding by his obscurity: and because it is obscure, it encourages us that we might touch upon it. Five yoke of oxen, the senses of this flesh. The senses of this flesh are numbered five, and they are known by all; even if they do not perceive anything strongly, they recognize without doubt those things they are reminded of. Therefore the senses of this body are discovered to be five. In the eyes is sight, hearing in the ears, smelling in the nose, taste in the throat, touch in all the members. White and black and whatever kind of color, light and darkness we sense by seeing. Harsh sounds and sweet sounds, we sense by hearing. Sweet smells and harsh smells, we sense by smelling. Sweet and bitter, we sense by tasting. Hard and soft, smooth and rough, hot and cold, heavy and light, we sense by touching. They are five, and they are pairs. But because they are pairs, in the three prior senses it is more easily apparent. There are two eyes, two ears, a double nose: behold, three pairs. In the throat, that is, in the sense of tasting, a certain doubling is found, because nothing tastes by tasting, unless it is touched by tongue and palate. The pleasure of the flesh pertains in some way to touch, and it is doubled by hidden things. For it is both outwardly and inwardly. Therefore also by itself it is double. Why are yokes of oxen spoken of? Because they are required through those senses of earthly flesh. For an ox turns the ground. However humans are removed from faith, given to the ground, occupied by carnal things: they do not want to believe something, unless it pertains to the five-part sense of the body. In the five senses they place the whole will as a rule to themselves. He says, I will not believe unless I see that. Behold what I knew, behold that I understand. It is white, it is black, it is round, it is square, it is uncolored or colored: I knew, I experience, I hold to it: nature itself teaches me. I am not compelled to believe because you are not able to show me. It is a voice: I experience it, because it is a voice; it sings well, it sings badly, it is sweet, it is harsh; I knew, I perceive, it shows itself to me. It smells well, it smells badly: I perceive, I know. That is sweet, that bitter; that salty, that foolish. What more you might say to me I do not know. By touching I knew what is hard, what might be soft; what might be smooth, what might be rough; what might be hot, what might be cold. What else have you demonstrated to me?

Chapter IV. - 4. *Impediment to faith. The Supper consecrated by the hand of the Lord.* By such an impediment our apostle Thomas was held, who wanted to believe about the Lord Christ, that is, about the resurrection of Christ, and not only by the eye alone. *Unless I have placed, he said, my finger in the places of the nails, and wounds, and unless I have placed my hand in his side, I will not believe.* And the Lord, who is able to rise without any trace of a wound, he kept the scars, which without doubt were touched, and the wounds of the heart were healed. And [I] have been called to the meal against the excuse of the five yoke of oxen: *Blessed, he said, are those who do not see and who believe.* (John 20:25-29) We, my brothers, are called to the supper, and we are not hindered by those five yokes. For we did not eagerly desire to see the shape of the flesh of the Lord in this time, nor did we desire to admit to the ears a voice proceeding from the flesh of that one: we sought no smell in that time. A certain woman poured over him a most precious perfume, and the house was filled by that smell (John 12:3): but we were not there; behold, we did not smell, and we believe. He gave the table consecrated by his hands to his disciples: but we did not recline in that feast; however we consume that meal daily by faith. Nor do you think that a great thing is in that supper, which he gave by his hands, that it is present without faith: it is better for faith to stand afterwards, rather than faithlessness now. Paul was not there and yet believed: Judas was there and betrayed. How many there are in that supper, who then will not

have seen the table, nor the bread which the Lord carried in the hand, nor did they see these things with the eye, nor did they taste that food; however, because the same food is that which is now prepared, many now also in that meal eat and drink judgment to themselves? (1 Corinthians 12:29)

Chapter V. - 5 *By the curiosity of the senses nothing is a work towards salvation.* However when was the occasion that these things are said about that supper by the Lord? He said one thing about those reclining at the table (for he was at a feast, to which he was invited): *Blessed is the one who eats bread in the kingdom of heaven.* It was as if he were longing for that bread from a distance, and the same bread was before him as he reclined. What is that bread from the kingdom of God, unless it is the one who said, *I am the bread of life, which came down from heaven* (John 6:41)? Don't prepare the mouth, prepare the heart. From that point that table is established. Behold, we believe in Christ, we accept with faith. In accepting we know what we might consider. We accept a moderate amount, and in the heart we are filled. Therefore, it is not seen, but it is believed, that it feeds us. Therefore we do not still seek to inquire that external sense; nor did we say, 'they believed that God himself rose, if it is true that it is said, they saw by the eye, they touched by the hand: we do not touch, how do we believe? If we were to consider such a thing, those five yokes of oxen might impede us from the supper. So that you will renew, brothers, those five senses, not a temptation [646] which strokes and pours on pleasure, but a certain curiosity is noted, that it does not say, *I have bought five yoke of oxen*, I go to feed them, but *I go to test them*. They wanted to test, although the yokes of oxen did not wish to doubt, in the same way that holy Saint Thomas did not wish to doubt through these yokes. I see, I touch, I place the finger. *Behold*, he said, *place your finger in my side, and do not wish to be unbelieving.* I am beaten down on account of you: at the place you wish to touch, I poured out blood, so that I could buy you back; and besides [all this] you doubt me, unless you might touch me. Behold also this I perform, behold also this I show; touch and believe; find in the place of wounds a healed wound of doubt.

Chapter VI - 6 *A wife, the desires of the flesh. The third said, I have taken a wife.* That desire is for the flesh which entangles many: would that [it was] outside, and not inside. There are humans who say: It isn't good for people, unless the delights of the flesh are present. They are the ones whom the Apostles notes, saying, "*We might eat and we might drink; for tomorrow we die* (I Cor. 15:32). What comes from this, what is it to us, what is happening, he said. This is left with us, that in this time it is good for us. What did he say here - he takes a wife, he embraces the flesh, he takes delight in the desires of the flesh, he is excused from the meal: he is delayed by observing an inner hunger. Pay attention to John, the holy apostle and evangelist: *Do not want to love the world, nor the things which are in the world.* O you who come to the Lord's Table, *do not want to love the world, nor the things which are in the world.* He did not say, do not want to have; but *Do not want to love.* You had, you possessed, you loved. The love of earthly things, the flesh is spiritual flight. Behold you desired, you lingered. Who gives to you feathers just like doves? When you want to, where might you truly rest (Psalm 54:7)? Where is this, where you wrongly lingered, where you perversely wished to rest? *Do not love the world*, is the divine trumpet. The continuation of this trumpet is said in words to the circle of the earth and to the whole world, *Do not love the world, nor the things which are in the world. Whoever loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Since all things are in the world, they are desires of the flesh, and desires of the eyes, and the ambitions of the world* (I John 2:15-16). From where the contrary began, there the Gospel ended. There that began; there the end of the Gospel was

able to be placed. The desires of the flesh, *I have taken a wife*. The desires of the eyes, *I have bought five yoke of oxen*. The ambitions of the world, *I bought a house*.

Chapter VII - 7 *The name of 'eyes' signified a certain sense*. However these senses as a whole are commemorated by a part through the eyes alone, because the first place in the five senses belongs to the eyes. Therefore when a sight properly falls on the eyes, we are accustomed to call that 'to see' through all five senses. In what way? First what falls on the eyes themselves, you say, See what is white, reach out and see what is white: this falls upon the eyes. Hear and see what is sung. Is there anything I might be able to deal with that you are able to say this: hear and see what is white? This indeed is said: see what runs through all the senses: however a property of the other senses doesn't run back through itself. Reach out and see what is sung: smell and see what is pleasant: taste and see what is sweet: touch and see what is soft. However, since the senses are [there], we might say it better: Hear and sense what is sung: smell and sense what is pleasant: taste and sense what is sweet: touch and sense what is hot: stroke and sense what is smooth: stoke and sense what is soft. Nothing of those [is heard]. For also God himself after the resurrection when he appeared to his disciples, and when he discerned that they were wavering in faith at this, thinking to see him a spirit: *What*, he said, *are you doubting? Also why are thoughts arising in your hearts? See my hands and my feet*. And a little [later] is: *See: Touch*, he said, *both touch and see* (Luke 24:38 & 39). Reach out and see, touch and see: you see in the eyes alone, you see in all the senses. Because he sought the inward sense of faith, he was connected to the exterior senses of the body. We do not choose anything in the Lord from those exterior senses, by hearing we heard, in the heart we believed: and itself heard not from that mouth, but from the mouth of his proclamation, to the mouth of those who are now feasting, and pouring forth [words] they invited us.

Chapter VIII - 8 *No one is delayed to come to the meal*. Therefore we might remove from the middle the bad and empty excuses, and we come to the supper, by which we are fattened inwardly. An insolence of pride does not impede us, does not make us proud, or an illegal curiosity does not frighten us, and it [is] turned away by God: the desire of the flesh does not impede us from the desire of the heart. We come, and we are filled. And who comes except beggars, the weak, the lame, the blind? However the rich do not come there, he heals those who are walking as if well, and [heals] intelligently those who are discerning; presuming much about themselves, and therefore more desperate, how much more proud [are the rich]. The beggar might come, because he invited those because of whom he was made poor, when he was rich, so that by our poverty we beggars are made rich (2 Cor. 8:9). The weak come: because the healthy are not the task of the doctor, but those who have illnesses (Matthew 9:12). The lame come who say: *Arrange my steps in your path* (Psalm 16:5 [17:5]). The blind come who say: *Illumine my eyes, may I never sleep in death* (Psalm 12:4 [13:4]). Such come to the house: those you first invited, you blame by their own excuses: they came to the house, they entered the wide places and corners of the city. *And the servant responded*, who had been sent, *Lord, it is done as you ordered, and there is still room. Go out*, he said, *into the roads and hedges, and those you find compel to enter*. Those you will find, as if they were worthy, not expecting, compel them to enter. The great feast, the great house, has been prepared; I will not allow a place there to be empty. The Gentiles come from the wide places and the streets: they might come from the hedges of the heretics, here they find peace. For those who construct hedges, they are seeking divisions. They are drawn from the hedges; they are plucked out from the thorns. They were stuck in the hedges;

they did not want to be brought together. By our will, they say, we might enter. The Lord does not command this: *Compel*, he says, *to enter*. Outside necessity is found, inside the will is born.