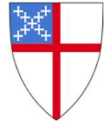




**Twenty-first Sunday After Pentecost,
Feast of St. Luke**

October 18, 2026

Rev. David Owren



Exodus 33:12-23

Psalms 99

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Matthew 22:15-22

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

“Babette’s Feast” is a film set in 19th century Denmark, in a remote village on the coast of Jutland. It’s about two sisters, daughters of a widowed father, who is a Lutheran pastor. Their father is the founder of an austere, puritanical Lutheran. He raises his daughters to renounce worldly pleasures and dedicate themselves to his pastoral work. The sisters never marry and become completely devoted to their father and his strict religious mission.

Fast forward thirty-five years. The father of the sisters has died and these two elderly daughters have become the spiritual leaders of the little pietistic sect. During a fierce storm, they hear a knock on the door. It is a woman, half dead from exposure. Her name is Babette and she carries a letter of introduction. Babette’s husband and son have been killed in a political uprising in Paris and she has fled for her life. She begs to be hired as a servant, and when the sisters reply that they have no money to pay her, Babette offers to work for only room and board. The sisters are suspicious. Maybe Babette is a papist—a Roman Catholic trying to subvert their little Lutheran congregation. But they decide to let Babette stay on.

For twelve years Babette cleans and cooks for the sisters. The sisters teach Babette how to prepare a simple cod ale-and-bread soup. The parishioners meet regularly at the sisters’ home for prayer and a plain meal of soup. But now, after they say prayers and sing hymns, they always grumble and bicker amongst themselves. Their bickering stops, however, whenever Babette, the outsider, enters the room to serve them.

One day Babette receives a letter from France. She has won 10,000 francs in the French lottery. The sisters are delighted at Babette’s good fortune but are sad to think that she will now be leaving. Babette surprises them, however, when she offers to prepare a French meal for the congregation in honor of their father’s one-hundredth birthday.

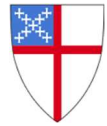
The sisters have always served simple meals of soup. But they reluctantly concede to Babette’s wishes. Babette travels to France to buy the food. When she returns, she leads a caravan of wagons filled with crates of wine and champagne, all kinds of vegetables, small quail, and even a large turtle. The sisters are aghast. Babette’s



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French meal has clearly gotten out of hand. It's way too extravagant! They talk with their congregation. They all agree that when the meal is served, they will eat it, but they will **NOT** enjoy it.

The night of the feast the sisters remove their father's portrait from the room to save him the disgrace of such lavish elegance. Babette is working hard in the kitchen. A kettle of turtle soup simmers on the fire; trays of baked goods are in the oven; succulent fruit is on the platters. The table is set with a glittering array of crystal glasses and goblets, fine China, and gleaming silver. The crude cottage is transformed into a bright, luxurious banquet fit for a king.

The guests arrive. They remind each other of their vow **NOT** to enjoy the food and drink. But, as the meal progresses, with one delicious course after another, the reluctant group abandons their promise. They begin to enjoy the exotic flavors and fine wine. Slowly, one by one, the demeanor of the parishioners begins to change. Good will fills the air. Those who held grudges for years now ask for forgiveness. Those who had been wronged now offer pardon.

When the magnificent main course arrives, a guest shouts that he knows only one person in the world who could have made this delicious fare. She is a famous Parisian chef...a chef so gifted that her meals were called "a love affair of the romantic and noble category in which one could no longer distinguish between bodily and spiritual appetite." Then he raised his glass and said, "Grace, my friends, demands nothing from us but that we shall await it with confidence and acknowledge it in gratitude. Grace, ... makes no conditions and singles out none of us in particular; grace takes us all to its bosom and proclaims general amnesty....For mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and bliss have kissed one another!"

The sisters congratulate and thank Babette. They say "Goodbye" expecting Babette to move on and enjoy her new fortune. But Babette tells them that she has spent all her lottery winnings on this feast. She can't afford to go anywhere and will be staying. The sisters are astonished. The feast cost that much? Babette spent her whole fortune on them? When the sisters try to comfort Babette about her loss, Babette declares, "An artist is never poor."

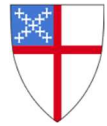
There are many themes in Babette's Feast, but in one main theme Babette is a Christ figure who gives everything to save a group of people from their dark, lifeless, religion. She invites those who have chosen to live in the dark, to a feast of incredible light. She transforms a group of people who bicker and gripe into a fellowship of grace and



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forgiveness. Babette incarnates Christ Who loves and, like an Artist Who creates, woos them out of the darkness and into the light of the God's ever present grace.¹ The real gift of Babette's feast was not the exquisite food, wine and China. It was Babette giving herself totally to those people. She was the gift of grace! And such a person is never poor!

Babette brought Good News to those people. She released them from their restrictive view of Christianity. She helped them see the beauty around them. She freed them to experience the extravagance of God's feast of love. She proclaimed the favor of the Lord. Babette was the anointed one, the incarnation of the incarnated One, the Christ!

Today we celebrate the Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist and beloved physician. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus proclaims that He is God's grace, the anointed One prophesied by Isaiah. He brings Good News to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. Today we feast on Him and are anointed too, to be grace—to be the Good News of God's unstoppable love.

The Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard once said, "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." The people invited to Babette's feast were afraid to live forward. But Babette showed with her generosity that there's another way to live. Accept the gift of grace and then share it with others. Live forward!

Be awake! See how God works in your life and the lives of others.

Keep learning! Devote yourself to prayer and study.

Love people! You don't have to agree with everyone nor condone what others do. But you are called to love them no matter what.

Build God's kingdom! Empower and edify people, one heart at a time.

Have courage! You have gifts no one else has. Share them.

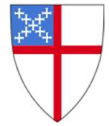
¹ Babette's Feast (1987), Visual Parables, Ed McNulty, April 8, 2013. *More than a review, this essay entitled "Babette's Extravagant Love" originally appeared in the Spring 1991 issue of Christianity & the Arts, Films and Faith: Forty Discussion Guides, 1999.* Visual Parables, Bellbrook, OH.



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Proclaim life! You are not called to control or manipulate other people. In Christ you have been set free from sin to free others.

Embrace your anointing! You are an original. Declare the Good News in your own way.

Die to selfishness every day! It is not your will, but God's will, that matters.

Be mature! Let go of the past, and look forward to the future with forgiveness.

Be strong! Have faith and purpose even when no one is looking.

Be a beacon of faith, hope, and love! You are a gift of grace. Invite others to the extravagant feast of God's love in Christ.²

We live in a world of change. But there is one thing that never changes. It's the grace of God who created you, who gives you life and is with you in every changing circumstance... in moments of joy and of sorrow, times of reward and challenge, in good times and bad, in strength and in weakness, in sickness and in health, in life and in death. Think of it, every new sunrise, every new day, God gives you grace to begin new life, again, and again, and again.

God's grace is a gift. There is no way to earn or deserve a gift. Grace is something that is always given. Today the one who prepares and serves you grace is Christ Himself. His love for you is total. His sacrifice for you is complete. His resurrected victory over sin and death is finished. And like Babette, Christ is never leaving. Christ is always here with you, always preparing, always giving, always dispelling any darkness in your lives with the brightness of His love.

Babette shared God's grace which changed a community. She sacrificed her time, her talent, and her money so that others might know that "Grace does not abolish nature but perfects it."³

St. Luke healed people, wrote the Good News of Jesus Christ and detailed the workings of the emerging church.

And all of us bear witness to the ongoing gift of grace—the love of God who nourishes us with Word and sacrament to be, as Martin Luther said, "Little Christs" who bring light

² Lee Ann B. Marino, What Being A Modern-Day Apostle Means to Me, Patheos, October 15, 2026.

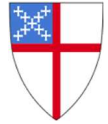
³ Thomas Aquinas.



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to a dark world. Today as we share the peace that passes all understanding, feel the love that "... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."(*1 Corinthians 13:7, English Standard Version*). May we who experience this love and this grace, join together in proclaiming it to all the world, by what we say and what we do. Amen