

Rev. Danny Mackey  
Trinity 20  
October 14, 2018  
Matthew 22:1-14  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

*A king...gave a wedding feast for his son...*

The invitations were sent long ago—engraved by the hand of God, addressed by name to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to all God’s people. God’s invitation was written on stone at Sinai from the King to His chosen people Israel: “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” At Sinai the 70 elders of Israel ate and drank in the presence of God.

Israel was a people bound and bidden by God’s promises, ancient promises that reached back through the centuries to that first Promise God spoke in a Paradise shattered by Adam and Eve’s rebellion: “I will put enmity between you and the woman.” God promised a Savior, a Deliverer, One who would defeat death and the devil.

God made a people of His promise. He promised Abraham a homeland and descendants as numerous as grains of sand on the beach. He repeated his promise to Isaac and, as we heard last Sunday, to Jacob. He swore an oath on His name that He would do it. He conceived His people in Egypt and gave them birth through the water of the Red Sea. He raised them in the wilderness and brought them to the promised land of Canaan where they grew and prospered. They were His chosen people—chosen for the sole purpose of bringing forth His Son.

Time after time, God recalled His promises. He dusted them off and read them regularly to His Israel through the prophets. “On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make a feast for all peoples.” God promised a feast of salvation, an eating and drinking that would take away death forever. The Passover lamb and the sacrifice meals were foretastes of the feast to come. God and man in communion, table fellowship, eating and drinking together. Salvation is pictured in the Old Testament as a lavish dinner party with God as host and you as honored guest.

Jesus called people to table fellowship with Him. In Jesus, God had come to eat and drink with His people. Eating and drinking were so much the mark of Jesus’ ministry that His detractors said He was a glutton and a drunkard. He broke bread with the Pharisee and

the prostitute and the tax collector, with the religious and the unreligious, with the Republicans of his day and with the Democrats, with liberals and with conservatives, with the “in” crowd, and with those who were “out.” He fed 5,000 in the wilderness, and on another occasion 4,000.

Jesus came to be our Bread, life-giving food for the world. He said, “I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

The King was a gracious host; His table was rich, filled with His lavish love. No expense was spared in preparing this feast for His Son’s wedding day. Finest marbled meats and rare, vintage wines—“a feast of fat things full of marrow, with wine on the lees, well refined,” said Isaiah. Maybe that description doesn’t sound terribly appetizing. Before we became obsessed with fat grams and calories and cholesterol, we might have thought of premium prime rib, with all the trimmings, accompanied by a fine Cabernet Sauvignon. Who could say “no” to such a meal as that? Maybe a vegetarian, or maybe those of us who’d rather settle for McDonald’s than Vera Mae’s. Who would say “no” to eating and drinking such a meal in the presence of the King and His Son? Maybe an unbeliever.

Incredibly, many of the first invited guests in the parable did say “no.” Some were indifferent to the invitation. Others were too busy, too preoccupied with their own cares and concerns to take the time off. One went to work on his farm. The fields needed tending, chores needing doing. How about a rain check? Another went off to take care of his business. Those in business for themselves know that there’s never an end to your work when you have your own business. Their cares were too great to take the time to relax at the King’s table. Maybe another time. Still others were more hostile in their rejection. They killed the King’s servants for bothering them with such invitations.

Incredibly, many still say “no” to God’s feast of fat things today—filling the time for worship with work or play. We have our excuses, but they ring hollow compared with the richness of God. Think of the excitement when a new food fad hits, especially one that promises health benefits. Sparkling water, Tahini everything, gluten-free, frozen meals that are actually good for you. Once the word gets out, they can’t keep it on the shelves. Imagine if there was a food that would cure cancer, heart disease, anything. Think of the commotion that would happen if there was a food and drink that promised to cure death.

Such a food and drink exist, and they're here for us! Jesus said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." How loud would the clamoring be for that food and drink if people believed that?

The King is persistent, driven to fill his banquet hall. He sends His servants into the town to invite everyone, "as many as you find, the good and the bad." When the respectable refuse, He invites the disreputable and despised. When religious Israel rejected Christ, God went to the Gentiles. The King sent His servants into the highways and byways, into the alleyways and darkened doorways, the boarded-up tenement buildings and meth houses. He invites those who had never been invited to His house before!

Notice that by the end of the parable, no one is not invited to the Son's wedding feast. That's the point of the parable. When God throws a party, it's the biggest bash in town, and not a single person is left off the invitation list. When Jesus died on the cross and was made sin for us, no one was left out of His death. Only our own indifference to that death, only our own stubborn refusal to be fed, only our hard-hearted rejection of God's gifts leaves us out of the feast. And then it's entirely our own fault. God's will is to fill His banquet hall with guests. If they wind up weeping and gnashing their teeth in hell, it's entirely against God's will to save them. God wants to throw a party, and He's invited the world.

When the King entered the hall, packed with guests, He spied a man who wasn't properly dressed for the occasion. Remember that the King had been pulling people off the streets to come to this party. Imagine what all these street urchins looked like. I know we've become more laid back and informal over the years, but I still remember a time when some restaurants required a coat and tie. And if you didn't have a coat and tie, the restaurant might supply something, though not necessarily matching or in style.

Let's suppose for a moment that the King decided that He wanted a well-dressed crowd at His Son's wedding. But instead of handing out used coats and ties, He started handing out Armani suits and Versace dresses at the door to everyone who came to the party. Now you understand His disgust when He sees some guy lurking at the corner table wearing a dirty t-shirt and ripped-up jeans.

I suppose the scenario sounds a bit foolish. But it's no more foolish than appearing before God in the resurrection clothed in the filthy rags of our own righteousness, boasting of our "good works" which are never quite good enough, and bragging about all the good

things we've done for God all our lives. The result is the same. Those who despise God and show their contempt for Him by clothing themselves in their own works will find themselves bounced into outer darkness where there is eternal weeping and grinding of teeth. Not a pleasant thought, but the outcome is entirely unnecessary.

God supplies the clothing. The wedding garment is faith itself. It is by faith that you receive Christ's righteousness, His gifts, His salvation. Having faith, you are given to feast at His table, partaking of all His benefits. Jesus' death is yours. Jesus' life is yours. His perfect keeping of the Law is yours. God gives it all for free through faith. Better than an Armani or a Versace, we have Christ by faith. And we dare not come to the Lord's party dressed in anything less than Christ. We come to the feast God's way, or no way at all.

We've come to the end of the parable. It is a parable of God's kingly love, that keeps His promises. Of His lavish love, that prepares a rich feast of salvation. Of His seeking love, that goes into the highways and alleyways, inviting the good, the bad, and the ugly to come and be fed. Of His ruthlessly holy love, that does not look upon our sin but covers it with Jesus.

At the end of the parable, everyone was invited to the party, but only a bunch of riffraff from the streets end up in the King's banquet hall wearing Armani suits and Versace dresses eating prime rib and sipping Cabernet Sauvignon. Salvation was won for all by Jesus' dying and rising, but only broken-hearted beggars take Him up on the invitation to be clothed and fed by Christ. "Many are called but few are chosen." That's not an explanation; it's an observation. Another way of saying it is "All are invited, but few wind up at the table." Why? It wasn't the King's fault. And it certainly isn't God's fault if we refuse to be fed. His feast of salvation is for all, but He forces no one to eat and to drink. If you miss out on the party and go hungry, you have only yourself to blame.

Jesus Christ died for you. He rose for you. He reigns for you. He clothes you through faith in Him. He feeds you with His body and blood in His Supper. The banquet hall is here, and you are the honored guests.

In Jesus' name.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in + Christ Jesus.