

The 20th Sunday after Trinity – Vicar Anderson sermon
Matthew 22:1-14: “The Feast of Salvation is Prepared”
October 9/10, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Heavenly Father, let us never forsake the feast you have prepared before us, help us to always hunger and thirst and to desire to recline at your heavenly feast, feed us with your rich food of Word and Sacrament bestowing upon us your divine righteousness cleansing us from all sin. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the 22nd chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants[a] to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. 12 And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.”

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who by His life and death prepared for you the Feast of Salvation and by the power of His Word invites you to partake of it freely, both now and forever, dear fellow redeemed:

In our text today we see Jesus teaching those around Him during Holy Week. Just a few days later He would go to the cross and lay down His life for the entire world. He is teaching believers and unbelievers alike the chief doctrine of salvation, which points directly to Himself. He is showing the people how they can be saved. He describes for them a king who is preparing a wedding feast for His Son, a very exciting celebration and many people would be invited.

The king in this parable is a picture of God the Father and his son is a picture of Jesus the eternal Son of God. This is the Son's wedding feast and He is eagerly awaiting the invited

guests, His bride the church. The king has prepared a great meal for this celebration and His Son sits in the place of honor because He has accomplished everything. All things are ready because the Son offered what was necessary.

The Son of God was given as a sacrifice for all sin and the Father in heaven accepted the sacrifice and granted forgiveness to the whole world. It is an open invitation; salvation is accomplished and offered to all people. The call to the Feast of Salvation is for everyone, but not everyone will be a guest.

Throughout history many have ignored the invitation to this feast, the invitation of the gospel. God sent prophets throughout the Old Testament and many people were too preoccupied with their businesses and their daily tasks turning away not wanting to listen.

So God sent His one and only Son and still many persecuted, ignored and eventually nailed Him to a cross. Then God sent apostles and other messengers throughout the New Testament and again many people ignored, persecuted and even killed them. The same things happen to faithful preachers and missionaries throughout the world today.

Despite all this sin and blatant disregard for the truth, God never forgot His promises to us. He could have said, "enough is enough these people are unworthy of my Word," but on account of His undeserved love God continues to send His Word to us. No matter what kind of person you have been in your life forgiveness is yours by faith through the working of the Holy Spirit.

God's Word invites you, it calls out to you exposing your sin and convinces you of the truth that you cannot do anything apart from Jesus and must trust in Him and in Him alone for salvation. He calls all people into the feast, offered to us by the Father in heaven prepared by the Work of His Son Jesus. He sends out His servants to go to the busy streets and roads, where there would be lots of traffic to find as many people as they can. He wants them to fill this feast with as many guests as possible both good and bad.

Now "bad and good" does not mean sinners and non-sinners, it means that some of these people may have appeared good on the outside and some appeared bad on the outside. This is how people perceive others and judge them by what they see on the outside, but no matter how we see them all people are sinners. We know then that this feast of salvation is prepared for, and filled with, sinners.

In St. Paul's letter to the Romans it tells us that, "while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). This is how he demonstrates His love for us, by coming to save sinners like you and me. He did not come for the self-righteous people who think they are just fine on their own. Jesus says, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

These sinners are like people struck with hunger so badly they can no longer stand and are wasting away, like someone nearing death due to starvation. Where can they receive the food and nourishment to give them strength to stand firm again, what food can satisfy the hunger of a sinner? God's Word is life-giving food to those hear it, and His Sacraments bring this food

directly to them. "For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things" (Psalm 107:9). God's Word truly satisfies those who are hungry.

This Feast of Salvation was prepared for you by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, and it is served to you right here and right now. Jesus is served to you directly, on a plate and in a cup. His righteousness and forgiveness are poured out upon you. His body and blood are given here for you and me; we receive the blessings of salvation now upon our lips and in our stomachs. We consume his very body and blood and the righteousness received from it, fuels our soul.

On account of this reality it is necessary to take the presence of Christ's body and blood seriously. We do this each time we hear the exhortation in the Service of Holy Communion. Those who do not examine themselves properly, who do not believe they truly feast on the body and blood of Jesus eat to their judgment. Christ's body and blood is no longer a benefit to them but instead causes spiritual harm. This is the reason our churches practice closed communion.

St. Paul taught the Corinthian church and all hearers of his letter that the Lord's Supper must be approached seriously and soberly. He wrote: "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (1 Cor. 11:29-30). Out of concern for our neighbors and ourselves we want to make sure that people correctly believe what the Lord's Supper is.

It should also concern us how we do not always approach the gifts of God's Word and Sacraments in the right way. Sometimes we neglect coming to hear His Word and fail to truly recognize the importance of what He is giving us, taking them for granted. We think we are doing just fine on our own, that the clothes of our own self-righteousness look pretty good. We think our seat at the Feast of Salvation will be there for us whether God's Word is a priority right now or not.

We become so preoccupied with the things of this life that coming to receive the Lord's Word and Sacraments becomes less important. When we do come it's tempting and easy to appear at the feast but have no regard for the garment that God requires, the very thing the host of the feast has provided for us.

It can be tempting for us to come in and go through the motions of a church service. It's easy to think that just by walking in the door, and half-heartedly participating we have done what God expects of us and that He is now pleased with us. It's because of our own sinful nature that we fall into the habit of doing the bare minimum; naively thinking God expects just the bare minimum from us.

Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah saying, "these people honor God with their lips but their hearts are far from Him" (Matt. 15:8-9). These people do lip service to God but lack in their heart true repentance and faith. Repentance is needed before the king comes and finds them speechless, "binding them hand and foot and casting them out into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13).

You cannot stand before the Father in your ragged torn up clothes of self-righteousness and sin. But you can stand before Him in the wedding garment that Jesus provides, the garment of His righteousness.

Christ purchased and won salvation for each and every one of you by living sinless under the law and laying down His perfect life in death. Jesus has prepared the Feast of Salvation for you and by His powerful Word and Sacraments has called you into it and clothed you with His righteousness forever.

You have been offered this beautiful wedding garment and are now dressed in it by faith receiving it by the power of the Holy Spirit. This ornate attire could not have been provided by you but has been graciously provided by your Savior.

The prophet Isaiah knew this well, he wrote, "My soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Is. 61:10).

This righteousness is not only on the outside; this garment of salvation covers all your sins on the inside as well. It covers all the sins of your heart and mind, your secret sins, sins of laziness and discontentment, the sin of putting other things before God and taking His grace for granted.

The Son of God's righteous blood has blotted out each one of them. The perfect life and the sacrificial death of your Lord won righteousness and salvation for you; they are yours by faith, covering you completely and erasing your sin forever.

God the Father sees you entirely righteous and pure in His sight. Everything is prepared, the celebration has begun and you are an honored guest of the Son. You are joined with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and you will recline at the Feast of Salvation forever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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