

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 22:1-14
October 13th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
All Saints Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

They Would Not Come

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“And Jesus answered and spake again in parables unto them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast: and they would not come.’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank Thee that, all things being prepared for our salvation, Thou didst call us to the marriage-feast of Thy dear Son, the Bridegroom of our souls; and we beseech Thee, cleanse and direct our hearts, that we may not reject Thy gracious invitation, but willingly follow Thy Word and, being clothed by faith with the garment of righteousness, obtain eternal life with all Thy elect; through the same Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, the servants are sent out into the partings of the highways to invite as many as they shall find, both bad and good. No respect is paid to rank, class, or privilege. Everyone, apart from works or genealogy, gets the same invitation. In a world with no free lunches the offer of an endless banquet in Paradise seems too good to be true. But it is true. All things have been paid for; all things necessary have been sacrificed. The water, the wine, the meat, the bread, all the best parts are on the table. It is prepared for us: no cost, no price. It is pure gift.

But the many reject the invitation. Some, are actually hardcore rebels. They know the invitation is from the King, but they do not care. They hate the King. They want to be their own lords and in so doing they embrace Hell with enthusiasm. They treat the servants sent by the King shamefully and even kill them. They have no use for the Word of God. On the other hand, some, are indifferent to the King. They go about their business as if there was no invitation; no feast to attend. They are more concerned with their business and conduct in this life than attending the feast and giving thanks to the King. But most, simply do not believe the invitation is valid, that it actually is from the King, or even that there is a King. They have lived in delusion for so long that it has become comfortable; it is the only thing they know. They are afraid of change, afraid to risk anything, afraid to come out of the darkness and be exposed. They do not want to be noticed. They want to hide, keep their blemishes secret and pretend they are better than they are. Despite their constant speaking of what they believe is wisdom, they do not have enough intellectual honesty to face the Word of God.

That is because the Word of God is a threat—to us all. For the Word of God wields spiritual and

heavenly power. It changes things. It kills and it makes alive. It threatens to break our hearts and change our minds. What the rejecters of the Word of God have always thought, is wrong. What is comfortable, what makes sense, what they know from experience and reason, is wrong. What they think about the Lord God—that He is the grandfatherly eternal gift-giver, Who does not punish any wrong-doing—is wrong. What they think about man—that he has no need for the Lord God, because he is basically a good person—is wrong. What they expect from life—that they deserve only good things, and all their works are righteous apart from faith—is wrong.

That the world thinks this way, and sometimes we also get trapped into thinking this way, too, is pretty scary. The Lord God beckons them to a position of weakness and vulnerability, of faith in things that they cannot see, of a life under the cross of the Christ. But what they can see, a man hanging on a cross, His followers persecuted and martyred and enduring poverty and hunger, and a list of commandments they do not want to keep, they do not like. So, like roaches, they, the many, scurry back into the darkness, back into the cold embrace of the devil in ignorance. Sadly, the many think they made the wise choice, and from the world's perspective they did, for the world teaches us to seek only what is good for ourselves and those close to us; to avoid that which is scary. But the wisdom of men is folly, and the foolishness of the cross is the only true Wisdom.

Thanks be to God, that a few are so desperate, so lonely, so tired, so hurt that they come despite the foolishness. They are the meek. But they inherit a Kingdom. They are brought into the wedding hall, clothed with the wedding-garments, which are the righteousness of Christ, and embraced as long-lost children. All this is accomplished through Holy Baptism. The Holy Ghost creates faith in them through the waters of Holy Baptism and they are clothed with the righteousness of the Christ through the faith created in them. The baptized are now home at last. We are now home at last in the wedding hall of the Church. The loneliness and heartbreak, the weariness and fear, the frustration and pain of our time in the kingdoms of men is removed. For we look forward to another Kingdom—a Kingdom in Heaven. We have a citizenship promised to us; a citizenship in which we now enjoy membership, and will enjoy for all eternity, on account of the righteousness of the Christ that we wear like wedding-garments through faith in the holy Christian and Apostolic Church.

Our Lord, the King, sent out His servants to invite us to come to the wedding by His Word, and we listened to that Word, we heard that Word, and believed that Word, and now we cling to that Word in faith. For it is our hope and salvation. It is our wisdom and strength. He has invited us by His servants. We have been found and restored and gifted with new wedding-garments. We have been forgiven and cleansed by Holy Baptism. We are now filled with joy which can sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs making melody with our heart to the Lord.

But, my dear friends, let us not be found without a wedding-garment. Let us not be found without the righteousness of the Christ, which can only be obtained through the faith which the Holy Ghost creates in us through the means of grace. This is why we must never forsake our coming to this house of worship—we must always be ready to heed the King's invitation to come to the wedding and enjoy His feast. Therefore, let us come to the wedding feast whenever we are invited to gather together for worship. Let us hear His Word that our soul may live. For our doubts will be removed, we will believe and cling to Him Who will give us life eternal. Let us be meek and humble. Let His Word have its way with us.

Let us stop trying to harmonize the Word with our ideas and doctrines, apologizing for the stern, jealous God of Abraham and rest in the sure mercies of the Son of David. Let the Lord God speak for Himself. For His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. But His Word is Truth. It does not lie. It is not evil. It is good. It will accomplish that for which it was sent. Let it break our hearts and change our minds. Let it expose us, make us weak and vulnerable. Let us be desperate for the joy found only in this wedding hall—this place of worship—this place where we sing and make music to

the Lord God. Let us be lonely outside of this fellowship. Let us be tired enough, and weary enough, and hurt enough, to give up our will and cling to the will of the Lord God. For then we will be strong and wise. In defeat, we will find victory. In hunger, we will find satisfaction—we will find a meal which will sustain us for all eternity.

That, my dear friends, is the way of the cross, the way our Lord God endured to make us His. It is a way, but we have not yet arrived. We still have things to learn and things to suffer. The Word is still working on us, still breaking and changing us. We learn humility and faith in the exposure of our errors—our sin. For, His immeasurable grace shows to us when we repent of our sin, and sincerely and earnestly purpose by the assistance of the Holy Ghost to henceforth amend our sinful lives, that we do indeed have forgiveness from the Ministers as from the Lord God Himself. Through this confession of our sins the Word made flesh covers us. We are clothed with His righteousness. We are clothed with the wedding-garments He has clothed us with through faith. But, even as the Word of God breaks us, it also binds us together into one community—a community of believers who cling to the Word of God and all of its promises for us. The Word of God restores and refreshes us through faith.

The Father Himself loves us. He shows this by inviting us to the wedding feast. He loves us individually, specifically, personally. He shows this by going into the partings of the highways to invite us into His Church. He first sent the Prophets and Apostles, and now sends to us His holy Ministers to preach into our ears the invitation to enjoy this eternal feast in His Kingdom. But more than that, He has sent His Only-Begotten Son to fulfill the Word of God which we are unable to, and to suffer and die in our place. And now He sends out His Holy Ghost to gather us into His wedding hall. His Spirit has been planted in us through water and the Word. At the font we have been clothed with the Christ. He places us in His Temple—in His own Body—the Church. He feeds us with His real and substantial Body and Blood in bread and wine, which we did not earn and could not buy. He abides in us through the wedding-garment we wear; the faith that is wrapped around us, which is a part of the righteousness of the Christ. He speaks to us in the Holy Absolution, and we are forgiven of the sins of which we confess, and of which we repent, and we are made holy and righteous, through the faith with which we are clothed—which believes the proclamation that our sins are indeed forgiven for the Christ's sake. Even now, He is guiding us home to the place where we belong on account of His Word—His eternal home in Heaven.

We are citizens of His Kingdom by virtue of the invitation. It does not matter if we were bad or good according to the precepts of the world. We are His. He has bought us. He has clothed us with His righteousness through faith. He has even given us the faith to believe in Him through the means of grace. We are now a faithful guest in the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom. That is what matters. What we are supplants what we were. We were outside in the partings of the highways, on account of our sin and unbelief, but now we are in the Kingdom through the faith implanted in us. We have been taken away from the many, and placed among the few.

But we are still in a foreign land. We are sojourners and foreigners traveling home, eager to return for the King's wedding banquet. There is temptation along the way; temptation to doubt and fear. The many of this evil world beckon to us from their dark doorways, like the sirens of Ulysses, to destruction. Some have been seduced into depravity and darkness. They have shed the wedding-garment of righteousness and have been cast back into the darkness where there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Be warned, my friends. Let us be watchful and be vigilant in prayer for ourselves and for those still in the darkness of sin and shame. Let us forsake the ways of men and hold fast to the ways of the Lord God. For the Lord God has placed way stations like this holy house along the way for us, places of His presence, of His Word and Sacrament, of His regenerating love; places for us to be re-broken and rebound, to be recast and recovered, to be reconnected with the saints who have gone before us, and forgiven again and again. The Lord God is here for us, my dear friends. We are in the right place, and we are wearing the correct wedding-garment.

Finally, my dear friends, there is one more surprise of the King's grace for us. For when at last we arrive at the wedding hall we will find that we are not merely a guest, an honored niece or nephew, or even a brother of the Bridegroom. We are the very Bride herself, the one for whom He did it all, the one He loves without measure. The One Who sacrificed His very life for the whole world, especially for all those who believe on His Name. For the many were called, but they would not come, but we few have heard the invitation from the partings of the highways, and have come to this holy house to receive the gift of the Lord's wedding-garment and enjoy the feast prepared for us in celebration of the Son of the Lord God. Let us at this feast join in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and make music to the Lord in our hearts for all that He has done for us. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!