

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 11, 2020

Worship Leader: Gary

Psalms 23:1-6 (NIV) ¹The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Isaiah 25:6-9 (NIV) ⁶On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines. ⁷On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; ⁸he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. ⁹In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

Philippians 4:4-13 (NIV) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. ⁹Whatever you

have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. ¹⁰I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Matthew 22:1-14 (NIV) ¹Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. ⁴"Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' ⁵"But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. ⁶The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. ¹³"Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴"For many are invited, but few are chosen."

The Banquet of the Kingdom

Matthew 22:1-14

Intro: Dressing for a wedding

- ❖ **The joy of the King** (verses 1-3a; Philippians 4:4; John 15:11; Psalm 16:11)
- ❖ **The patience of the King**
(verses 3-4; 2 Peter 3:9,15; 1 Corinthians 13:4)
- ❖ **The grace of the King** (verses 8-10; John 1:11)
- ❖ **The judgment of the King** (verses 5-6, 11-14; Isaiah 61:10; 64:6)

Truths to live by

- Jesus wants us to experience His joy (John 15:11)
- Do not presume upon God's patience, nor receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)
- We can only come the banquet clothed in Christ's righteousness. (Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27)

Benediction: Revelation 22:21 *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.* (NIV)

The Banquet of the Kingdom

Matthew 22:1-14

As we saw in the children's message this morning, my granddaughters are excited about getting dressed up for their aunt's wedding in November.

Weddings are, of course, a joyous occasion—one to be shared with family and friends.

We should be equally excited about the wedding feast God has prepared for those who respond to his invitation of grace.

In our Gospel lesson today, we heard Jesus parable of a royal wedding banquet.

¹Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come.

We need to understand that this was an invitation to share in

- ❖ **The joy of the King** (verses 1-3a)

As soon as Jesus spoke of a royal wedding banquet certain images would have immediately filled the minds of those who heard him.

A Jewish wedding was a joyous, week-long celebration where the whole community would share in the joy of the newly united couple! A *royal* wedding meant "a feast to end all feasts" according to the late R.C. Sproul, and would mean weeks of joyous celebration.

An invitation to a royal wedding was a call to enter into the King's joy in the wedding of his son.

Again, and again in Scripture, God invites us to share in His joy. We heard that invitation in our Epistle lesson this morning from Philippians 4:4.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

We need to recognize that our rejoicing is *in the Lord*. It's not about our circumstances or trying to put a happy face on our troubles.

Joy is a gift which flows from the joy of God. We rejoice *in the Lord* for *in the Lord* is fullness of joy.

In John 15:11 Jesus said, *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete* [or full]. (NIV)

Psalms 16:11 declares of God: . . . In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (NKJV)

Joy is an essential attribute of God that we often overlook. Scripture is replete with references of the joy of God, the joy of the Lord!

Martin Luther wrote: "The heart overflows with gladness, and leaps and dances for the joy it has found in God. . . . You will have as much joy and laughter in life as you have faith in God."

Joy is the great delight and pleasure we experience as the fulfillment of a deeply felt longing or desire.

That longing, that ache in our heart, to experience joy is built into us by our Creator, so that we will long for something that all the joys of this world cannot fulfill, yet continually tugs at our hearts. Something that is to be found only in God himself.

God is the source of all joy. It is the emotion of great delight and pleasure—that wells up from deep within—and gives you the sense that you've experienced a little bit of heaven

If you are looking for joy—deep joy, lasting joy—in-describable joy—you must find it in Jesus.

We do chance upon joy in this life—even apart from Jesus. We find joy in the beauty and God-given pleasures of this world and in relationships.

And God wants us to experience these joys, because God hides himself there, waiting to be discovered.

But such joy is always fleeting, vanishing, leaving you longing for something more—something richer, fuller, deeper, more satisfying and meaningful and certainly more lasting.

We find crumbs of joy in the beauty and pleasures and relationships of this world, but we don't always recognize the *extravagant* banquet table of God's joy from which those crumbs have fallen.

In the Bible, the ubiquitous metaphors of banquets and feasts are nearly synonymous with joy—as we heard this morning in Psalm 23 and Isaiah 25.

Now, I've spent a disproportionate time in this sermon emphasizing an attribute of God that is only hinted at in this passage, but understanding that characteristic of God is key to understanding the rest of the parable.

The Bible is filled with stories and word-pictures of banquets and feasts because they foreshadow the immense joy of the wedding banquet in heaven for God's Son—the wedding feast of the lamb.

Now, the persistence of the king, in inviting others to share in his joy, also reveals

❖ **The patience of the King** (verses 3-4)

³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. ⁴"Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

The people who heard Jesus' parable would have been incredulous that anyone would spurn an invitation to a royal wedding. Jesus' hearers would have begun to think, "Who would do such a thing? The very idea is preposterous."

As with the previous parable of the wicked vine-growers, it is shockingly extreme and unthinkable that the king would exhibit such patience.

It would be unheard of for a king's summons, once rejected, to be offered again. And so here we discover, as we did last week, the forbearing patience of God.

2 Peter 3:9 and 15 tells us that . . . *[God] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance, and to Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation*

Patience is perhaps the greatest attribute of love—not quick to blame or scold or put down. 1 Corinthians 13:4 tells us “Love is [first of all] patient . . .”

Even though spurned by those who refused the king's invitation, the king is intent on sharing his joy, and in doing so we see

❖ **The grace of the King** (verses 8-10)

8"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 10So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

The invitation is now given to all. It doesn't matter what their social standing is, or even their moral goodness. Everyone is called to come. This exemplifies the grace of God—who calls us, not based on merit, not on our goodness, but on His goodness.

The first group invited showed themselves not to be worthy—as they refused the kings' call. These are the people of Israel who are spoken of in

John 1:11 *11He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

The invitation then went out to all the world, including us!

The grace of the king is also seen in his preparing everything so that others could share in his joy. Besides the food for the feast, those preparations included wedding garments for his guests.

God, like the king in Jesus' parable, wants us to share in his joy. And like the story Jesus told, those who refuse His invitation or reject the wedding garment provided will experience

❖ **The judgment of the King** (verses 5-6)

Going back to verse 5, we see first the judgment upon those who refused to come and even mistreated the king's representatives—acts that would have been considered outright treason!

5"But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. 6The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. 7The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

The king's anger here is righteous. Such utter disrespect and rebellion, especially in the face of such patient persistence, could not be tolerated by an earthly monarch.

In an even greater way, God's anger is always just. His judgment is always deserved. It is not that the Lord responds in a fit of emotional rage, but in perfect justice.

Though God is patient and gracious, those qualities cannot be presumed upon—as if God was a pushover or a softie.

Second, we see those who accept the invitation, but under their own terms—who spurn the king's wedding garment—that is who come in their own righteousness, instead of the righteousness of Christ.

11"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13"Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14"For many are invited, but few are chosen."

This can be a troubling passage. In our age of casual dress, it seems inconceivable that someone would be tied *hand and foot, and thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, just for not wearing a wedding garment.

It sounds unreasonably harsh to us—and it probably sounded that way even to those who heard it from Jesus—but the point is, that it is a warning for us, and Jesus does not want us to miss it.

Now, none of the guests deserved to be invited to the wedding—it was purely by grace that they were called to come; and it would be a further act of grace—that, according to custom, which would have been understood by those listening to Jesus' parable—upon entering the banquet, the guests would be met by servants who would wash their hands and feet, and by attendants who would dress them in a garment made for the occasion.

The closest modern equivalent I can think of, is if a bride had purchased expensive dresses and shoes for her bridesmaids, only to have one of them come down the aisle in a tank top, cutoffs and flipflops.

The clothing God has provided us is the righteousness of Christ.

Isaiah 61:10 says, I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom . . . and as a bride . . . (NIV)

The late Bible expositor R.C. Sproul wrote: "If we are not clothed in that righteousness, we will not be welcome at the wedding feast of the Lamb in heaven, because all of our righteousness, the Bible says, is like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). We can enter the kingdom of heaven only if we are dressed in the righteousness of Jesus, which is imputed to all who believe (see Zech. 3:3-4)." *St. Andrew's Expository Commentary - Matthew*.

And so, we see God's judgment fall on two groups of people: Those who refuse God's gracious invitation to participate in His joy, and those who spurn the righteousness of Christ.

But to those who heed the warning given in this parable, and receive Christ and his righteousness, joy unspeakable and full of glory awaits in heaven:

Revelation 19:6-9 *6Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."*

So, how do we apply this parable to our lives? Here are

Truths to live by

- Jesus wants us to experience His joy (John 15:11)

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (NIV)

Bible Commentator, William Barclay notes: [God's] invitation is to joy. . . . It is to joy that the Christian

is invited; and it is joy one misses, if they refuse the invitation. *Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT)*.

- Do not presume upon God's patience, nor receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)

In 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 the apostle Paul pleaded: ¹*As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. ²For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.* (NIV)

- We can only come to the banquet clothed in Christ's righteousness. (Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27)

We are told in Romans 13:14 to *clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Galatians 3:27 reminds us: *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* (ESV)

In closing, let us reflect on the promised banquet spoken of in our old Testament lesson from Isaiah 25:6-9.

⁶*On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. ⁷On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; ⁸he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. ⁹In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."* (NIV)

Let us pray . . .

The Bible ends with this benediction from Revelation 22:21 *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.* (NIV)