

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON**

**Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost**

**October 11, 2020**

**Psalm 23:1–6 (ESV):**

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

4 Even 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.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

forever.

**Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 25:6–9 (ESV):**

6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples

a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,

of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

7 And he will swallow up on this mountain

the covering that is cast over all peoples,

the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death forever;

and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,

and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,

for the LORD has spoken.

9 It will be said on that day,

“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.

This is the LORD; we have waited for him;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

### **EPISTLE: Philippians 4:4–13 (ESV):**

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

### **God’s Provision**

10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

### **THE GOSPEL Matthew 22:1–14 (ESV):**

#### **The Parable of the Wedding Feast**

**22** 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 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** **B**ut 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.”

### **Sermon 39 – Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost**

#### **“Called, Covered”**

#### **Matthew 22:1-14**

Dear friends,

Jesus is speaking in parables again, and this one has some particulars to it that should caution us as to the seriousness of what we have to do here. There are questions to ask Jesus about what the heck He's actually trying to say, and what we should take from it. The questions here are who is called, and why, who is chosen, why are they chosen, and what separates them. We could ask about this king. It's hard to deal with parables sometimes because there's always the temptation to take them too far, dissect them too

closely, like what does this little bit mean, what does this bit mean. Sometimes, even when Jesus speaks, things are the way they are, and they don't have some kind of hidden meaning. That said, this is a parable, and that means not everything can be taken at face value. It's complicated. Let's do this.

**“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 to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.”** I'm going to try to keep the explanations to a minimum here, but this one stood out at me. Today, if we invited someone to a wedding and they didn't come, this is not such a big deal. Sometimes you can't show up at things. But in this day and age, when a king invites you to a wedding feast, you go. You drop everything and you go. When His Majesty wants to celebrate, honor him. It's free food. So this is considered in extremely poor taste. **“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.”**

This is where the sparks started to fly with me. I started nodding and going, okay, I see where Jesus is going here. I'm going to try to stay away from the Jew-Gentile angle here because I feel like I have preached and taught that to death, so let's just say this. The

king invites people, and they reject Him, even to the point of killing His servants. This has always been the greeting that God receives from human hearts. Never underestimate that. It is easy to be raised in the church, to remain in the church, and to forget what it is like to be a human in this world without a God. When humans are left to themselves, every fibre of their being, every instinct programmed into their flesh, is to resist God. To push Him away, ignore Him, or to defend yourself against Him with violence. This makes no sense to Christians, it often confuses them, because Christian hearts have been changed by God. But that has to happen before God gets any welcome. Nowadays what we mostly get is awkward silences, abrupt subject changes, and hand-waving, but if you push, you start to get accused of things. It can turn ugly. So Jesus outlines this in parabolic form. The first thing you need to know about God is that human beings don't want Him around, even when He's inviting them to something nice. The kingdom is something God has to expand by taking the first step Himself. If we wait for human beings to choose Jesus for themselves, we will be waiting in vain. That never happens. As Jesus notes, this resistance has consequences. **"7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."** Fight God at your peril.

**"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."** You have a

distinction being made here. The king invited these folks but they weren't worthy. Why not? They didn't show up. They didn't accept the invitation. To the point, they didn't believe. If they had believed the king, if they had valued what the king had to offer, they would have done so. They didn't value it because they didn't believe it. It's a wedding feast held by royalty. It's a free meal of the best possible food. In this day and age you don't turn that down. This could be your only chance all year to eat something that isn't mutton stew. You go eat the guy's food and drink as much as you can hold. It's stupid to refuse. But they don't believe it, they don't go, so the king says they're not worthy.

How does this translate to Christians? Our faith is what makes us worthy, and the Scriptures tell us that our faith is given to us by God. If the kingdom of heaven is something we need to be invited to, we were all invited through the waters of Baptism and the invitation is still good. It ain't just about heaven, either, for the Lord's Supper we have a foretaste of the feast to come. Jesus is the feast, because what Jesus gives is a thing you cannot get anywhere else: The promise of something better than all this. The promise of release from the sins that we have to deal with day after day after day. The promise that He has taken care of it and we don't have to be afraid of what happens when we die, we don't have to be afraid when life throws out its curveballs. Our faith is the entry ticket to all of this, and as you can see from the parable, our king doesn't care who comes to His feast. It is fascinating that Jesus takes time to note that the king invites both bad and good. The Christian church is not an elitist social club for the semi-wealthy white working man.

The church is a halfway house for the scum of the earth, humanity, in all its colors, in all its ugliness. Looters, shooters, sexual deviants, thieves, all are welcome in the feast, because it's not whether we're good people or bad, it's not dependant on our response or our resistance. The entry ticket is faith. Believe the message. There is a wedding feast, there is a Savior, we are sinners, God has fixed it. We all hang on the same rope, and it's the rope that kills our sin and makes us alive. God kicks open His doors and sends His servants to every corner. He sends His servants to the wrong side of the tracks, to the bad side of town. He visits the indigent, the unwanted, the ignored. He gives them the same invitation to the same feast. He visits you.

It doesn't sound like it when you look at the next section, but this next bit is just a reiteration of what Jesus has just said. **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.”** Oooo so I'm called, how do I get chosen, right? There's something else. There's a catch, pastor! The guy didn't have the wedding garment! That means Jesus wants something more. He wants us to be more.

No, it doesn't. It doesn't because Jesus is repeating Himself. He is the covering that we wear, He is our garment. Throughout the Old Testament, the people who wanted to

enter into God's presence had to cover up. The high priest had to put on a whole new set of clothes just to do His job to represent that he was a sinner, and that sin had to be covered up. Covering sin is part of how the Scriptures describe our problem, and so when Jesus makes this big point about the guy who didn't have the covering, He's just talking about how we need to be presentable if we want the feast. We are made presentable by putting on Jesus. That's the two-for-one deal that God gives us. He gives us our meal ticket, and he even cleans up all the dirt so that we're nice and shiny when we finally get to the feast.

Amen.