

THE 20th SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

October 14 2018 • D.M. Kerns

Isaiah 55:1-9
Eph. 5:15-21
Matt. 22:1-14

Standing...

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

Our Gospel text is the classic "reversal story," as marginalized outsiders, the fringe of society are invited to fill the wedding hall and enjoy the King's favor.

Let us pray: Dear Father in heaven, You have promised that Your Holy Word, which goes forth from Your mouth, will not return to You empty, but it will accomplish what You desire, and it will succeed in the matter for which You sent it. May Your Word have its way in every heart, we pray this day. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, Amen.

Sitting...

Jesus has told this parable before. However, this time, He tells it during Holy Week.

It's interesting to note that just beforehand, we're told...

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet (Matthew 21:45-46).

Then after this parable, we find out—

... the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words (Matthew 22:15).

So, whatever our Lord says in this parable—which clearly is directed at the Pharisees—intensifies the hatred,
whereby murderous plots are put into place.

The parable goes like this:

A King throws a wedding party for His son, with the King sparing no expense.

There's no need to bring a gift—or a dessert—
not even a bottle of wine. Everything is taken care of.

Those invited are the kingdom's A-list.

The upper-crust. The ones worthy to be there.

People salivate to get an invitation like this, and they do.

However, no one RSVPs.

No one's talking about it.

The King is patient. He sends His servants door-to-door to remind the guests that the food is ready—the wine is poured, everything is waiting, so come—come to the party.

You would think those invited would say,
 “I wouldn’t miss this for the world.”
 Or, “This party will be the highlight of the year!”
 But no, they make light of it.
 They flat out refuse...
 Invitations go into the trash,
 and the servants are given excuses.

O sure, the excuses seem legitimate,
 someone bought a piece of property they need to check out,
 another is heavily involved with his business,
 but truth be told, the excuses are nothing more than lies.

The real reason those invited to the King’s party do not want to attend,
 is because they want nothing to do with the King,
 and they absolutely detest the King’s Son.

The King sees through their excuses, yet He’s determined.
 He sends more servants, who compel the guests to come to the feast.
 However, this time they vent their spite—
 they vent their rage on the messengers themselves—
 laying hold of them—
 Treating them disgracefully—killing them.
 The guests are outraged by the King’s insistence upon throwing a
 party and inviting them.

Can you believe this? These people had place cards above their plate at the table...
 But they have made it crystal clear they are not interested.
 They want nothing to do with this King,
 nothing to do with His grand once-in-a-lifetime party,
 and absolutely nothing to do with His Son.

These are acts of open rebellion.
 Which now make the invited guests the King’s enemy,
 who thereby sends His armies to destroy them—
 and burn their cities to the ground.
 See, in refusing the King’s goodness,
 by rejecting all of the King’s gifts,
 they get the King’s wrath.
 And it’s their own fault.

Now reading between the lines...
 this beloved is a recapitulation of the entire Old Testament.
 It’s the bulk of your Bible summed up in a handful of verses.

For you see Israel—the chosen people of God were summoned to a wedding feast.
 It's the blessedness and joy of knowing Jesus, the Messiah.
 Those originally invited were the A-listers, the worthy ones—
 but they flat out refused.

Was God patient? Sure, He was. He sent Prophets,
 calling them to repentance when they started getting out of line.
 Did the people listen to the prophets? No...

Then came the forerunner, John the Baptist,
 with His urgent call of repentance and salvation.
 "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand", he said.
 But Israel's answer to him was
 indifference,
 hatred,
 blasphemy,
 and murder.
 And when Jesus arrived, the Biblical record is,
He came unto His own and His own received Him not.

At that, God's patience is exhausted.
 Now look, in times past,
 God sent the Assyrians to wipe out the N. Kingdom of Israel. That was in 722
 BC. Then, in 586 BC God sent the Babylonians against the S. Kingdom of Judah.

Those previous judgements foreshadowed what was to come,
 for ultimately God's judgement was executed upon the Jewish nation
 by the Romans, who, in 70 AD laid siege to their capital city and tore apart the
 Temple stone by stone. This is the history of Israel.

So back to our Lord's parable.
 The feast is still ready...yet the wedding hall remains empty.

The King sends out His servants again, but this time, not to where one would expect.
 He sends them out to the crossroads and alleyways. Their mission is to invite everyone,
 the good, the bad, the ugly, reputable and the disreputable.
 The least, the lost, the lowly, the good as dead.
 The message is the same—
 "Come to the party!"
 Bring nothing but yourselves.
 For the King has taken care of everything
 and wants you there.

Jesus' original hearers
 know exactly who is invited to the party—it's the Gentiles!

It's all the people of the world.
 It's life's losers. Sinners of every stripe.
 The servants sent to invite this fringe of society to come in are
 the apostles
 the evangelists
 the ministers of the New Testament,
 and today, it's pastors—
 who don't invite the good and snub the bad.
 We invite all, because Christ died for all.
 Through Christ the Law has been fulfilled,
 the devil has been defeated
 and the party is already in progress.
 There's nothing left to do but trust the King who
 makes the invitation—and picked up the tab,
 purchasing it, *“not with gold or silver,
 but with His holy, precious blood
 and with His innocent suffering and death.”*

Pastors tell everyone that the King's party for His Son is already in progress
 and outside of His party, there's no life at all.

The ones worthy are found unworthy.
 The ones unworthy are found worthy.
 And this realization causes Jesus' hearers—
 jaws to clench.
 brows to furrow.
 fists to tighten.

These losers, these sinners, they listen to the servants.
 They believe the King!
 And they show up at the party in droves.
 The wedding hall is packed.

The King gets what He wanted all along—
 feasting and celebrating the wedding of His Son.

And just when you thought everything was okay, verse 11 comes along.
 People show up not dressed for the occasion.
 I mean, when they heard the invitation, they came running.
 But that's alright.
 For the King takes care of everything.
 The King goes to His own royal wardrobe,
 grabs everything in it,
 and starts passing out the garments to his guests.

These garments are richly embroidered,
 very expensive,
 a sheer delight to receive them, much less put them on.
 The King does not care how the people smell.
 He does not care that they eat with their hands
 or blow their nose without a handkerchief.
 This King loves to give, and all the people have to do
 is receive the King's gifts and go with the flow.

Beloved, this wedding feast is the Church.
 And these garments given out by the King—they're the righteousness of Christ.
 It's His forgiveness. It's His holiness. His perfection given to you as a gift.
 Given in your baptism—just as Galatians 3:27 says,
*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ
 have put on Christ.* Are you baptized?
 If so, you are clothed in the King's wedding garments.
 So, the King looks out and sees this perfect, spectacular gathering...
 inexplicably marred by one totally out of character.
 He's not wearing a wedding garment.
 He refused it when he came in the door.
 He rejected it, but wanted to stay at the Kings' party.
 This made him a sore thumb to His royal eye.

The King approaches the man.
 "How did you get in here without sufficient clothing?"
 The King gets no response.
 It's not that the man was speechless.
 He was silent—not even acknowledging the King's presence.
 Unbelief will cause you to do asinine things.

This man insisted on being at the King's party on his own terms,
 trusting in his own merits, clothed in the tattered filth of his own good works,
 instead of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

As a result, judgement falls upon him like a thunderclap.
 He's bound hand-and-foot and tossed into outer darkness.

This was so unnecessary.
 For, God the King has provided everything, through His Son, Jesus Christ,
 Moreover, He provides garments for everyone—for you.
 It is the spotless righteousness and purity of Christ
 given to every sinner, washed in His Name.
 It doesn't matter how lousy you are, how infected, how contagious.
 All are gathered in.
 And everyone is clothed with the same gentle hands
 and eats of the same feast,

where joy is never exhausted,
and life goes on forever.

So, hear the words of the preacher O Fringe of Society...

Christ has died. Christ is risen. And as a result, you are invited to His party.
You are clothed. The feast is ready. So come.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

Standing...And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.