Sermon Pent. 19 Oct. 10 & 11, 2020

Title: “All are welcome…”

Texts: Isa. 25: 6-9, Matt. 22:1-14

Prayer

Salutation

“Go to the street corners and invite anyone you can find”.

**Bridge**

 **I am a commoner. I have never been invited to a royal banquet. If any of you have, I wonder if you were able to attend. It is rare that the doors are opened to the king’s hall in order for a peon like me to enter and dine with the king or queen of any nation. Or the President for that matter. I’m just not royal enough, or rich enough, or powerful enough. I am not worthy. I suspect you may feel the same way.**

 **Last week I ended my message saying that the feast and royal banquet was to come and today in our church calendar, here it is. Today the Messianic Banquet is prepared. And all are welcome, and all are invited. As you heard, Isaiah talked about it. He describes it fully: It takes place on a mountaintop and people from every nation of the earth are invited. It’s a banquet where God Himself is the Chef and the Host. Verse 26 says, “On this mountain the Lord of Hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine.”**

 **The food is going to be the best you’ve ever had. As good as it is, the health benefits of it are incredible! It’s the divine meal! You eat the food, and “he will swallow upon the covering (of sin) that is cast over you”. You eat the food, and “He will swallow up the veil (of unrighteousness) that is spread over you”. You eat this food and “he will swallow up death forever”. You eat this food, and “he will wipe away the tears from your face.” You eat this food, “and he will take away the reproach of your guilt.” And think about this, the confidence upon which you may believe this is not based on your feelings, reason, or faith! It is based solely on the Word of God! “For the Lord has spoken!”**

 **This my brothers and sisters in the Lord, is the feast I spoke of last week and the one Isaiah described as the “Messianic Banquet”. On the last day of this thing we call “time”, Christ will come, and the call will go out, the angels will blow their trumpets and gather His guests to the hall. And I have prayed selfishly and asked the Lord each day for 40 years that this be soon. Come Lord Jesus quickly is my prayer every time I walk into this pulpit!**

**Law**

 **In the Gospel for today, Jesus picks up right where Isaiah left off. “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for His Son.” This is the same banquet. The King of heaven is the host, and the occasion is the wedding of His Son. This is the same Father and the same Son as in the parable from last week where the Father planted the vineyard and sent His son to collect the harvest of grapes. The grapes were to provide the wine for the wedding banquet. Remember what happened? The tenants threw the Son out and killed him.**

 **Strange isn’t it? Because here’s the Son, alive again, and not only alive, but married. Do you think Jesus realized the inconsistencies in these two stories? Or do you think that maybe Matthew recorded them in the wrong sequence? Or do you think that as Jesus tells these parables on Tuesday of Holy week before Good Friday, He’s already got Easter Sunday on His mind? Already, Jesus is anticipating the celebration and the festivities and the joy of the “Messianic banquet”.**

 **Even without the variable of Covid, just think about the planning and preparations that go into a successful wedding reception! Maybe you remember your own wedding or the wedding of your son or daughter? There’s the hall which must be reserved with a deposit. Then there’s the band or DJ that had to be reserved with a deposit. A guest list prepared and the invitations sent, all paid for. Then a menu prepared, and the meal all paid for in advance! And then, the day finally comes. So then, how would you feel if those that sent back the RSVP card you mailed them, just never showed up? And when you ask them later why they never came they said, “I was busy.” Or “something else came up”. Or “I had a meeting I couldn’t miss.” Can you imagine that?**

 **In Jesus’ day, there were two separate announcements that a banquet was to be held. The first was the invitation. Th amount of food and wine needed was based on how many invitations were delivered. Back then, without refrigeration, you slaughtered what you needed and then got the rest of the food necessary for that many people. Then, a second invitation was sent out to tell everyone that the banquet was ready. Finally, the King called on all those that were invited. He invited *the invited ones*! No one comes who had not received an invitation. The king says, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast!”**

 **But can you believe it, when the time for the banquet is to begin, the invited didn’t come. “But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized the king’s servants, treated them shamefully and killed them.” Some said they were just too busy, and they simply didn’t have time to come, because other things were more important. And others, well, they despised the king so much that just the very thought of attending a wedding banquet for the king’s son made them furious and, in their anger, they killed the messengers. The fact was, they would not come. They were not *willing.***

 **Like I asked last week, why? Why didn’t they come? What else could it possibly mean except this: they lost interest. They got busy with life, and the farm, and the job and these things and *more* became more important to them. The call went out to come to the feast, but they were neither hungry nor thirsty. They thought that they had done a good job balancing out “God and Mammon”, but when the time had fully come, they realized that Mammon had more control over them than they thought.**

 **This is a lesson directed to the ‘invited ones’. How did they know they were one of the ‘invited ones’? In the OT, the sign that they were one of these was circumcision. In the NT, it’s the sign of the cross, both upon the forehead and upon the heart that you received in your baptism. You want to know if you have been invited to this banquet? Don’t check your feelings or your reason or even your faith. Are you baptized? “For the Word of the Lord has spoken.” It is the only royal banquet I have ever and will ever be invited to! The point is, this parable is directed to the baptized. But even the baptized can be overcome by the cares of the world and choked by false teaching and reject the invitation we have received. I can’t imagine. God forbid! Remember your baptism every single day! Don’t let anything in your life become any more important than this one single invitation!**

 **All of this rejection sounds incredibly rude. Inconsiderate at worst. That is until we are reminded that this is not merely an invitation from a relative, friend or classmate, but it is an invitation from a King. The very King of the universe and that it is He and His son that are being rejected. Imagine saying to Him, “I’m sorry Lord but I had to get that work done or I’d be fired.” Or “My daughter had a ball game and she just had to pitch!” Are you kidding?**

 **This is the King of Kings. The King of Heaven and of Earth, who is God, the Father Almighty! And this is the wedding of Jesus Christ our Lord. And YOU are the BRIDE! This is more than rude and insensitive. This is the rejection of God the Father and His Son, your husband, Jesus Christ! It is the refusal to show up at your own wedding reception.**

 **And the King was angry. He sent His troops and destroyed those that murdered His servants and burned their city. The wrath of God is real and is to be feared. The Father honors those that honor the Son. Likewise, He dishonors those who dishonor His Son.**

**Gospel**

 **Then the Father sends out more servants and says, “Invite the good and the bad, invite everyone, for all are welcome.” There is food to be eaten, the best wine to be drunk and for the sake of His preparations, He wanted to fill the hall. And we should not be surprised that there were plenty of men and women, girls, and boys, who were both good and bad, who were thrilled to receive an invitation to the banquet. ‘So, the wedding hall was filled with guests.’ But then, there is this one guest.**

 **There was a problem with one guest. ‘When the King came in to look at the guests, He saw a man who had o wedding garment.’ Here’s someone who had received an invitation to come to the banquet. He was probably glad to have been invited and glad to be there. But there is something very wrong and there’s no hiding it. He’s wearing the wrong clothes and he has no wedding garment. He’s wearing the same old dirty clothes he had on at work. He didn’t change. He never repented. He relied on his hard work to get him there. And the King asked him, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?” The man was speechless. He didn’t know how to respond. It was almost like he had waited until the last minute and then decided to go, dirty clothes and all. And he had no excuse. But as he was invited, one of the baptized, he should have known that the Host was merciful and said, ‘Forgive me Lord. I never thought you’d notice me. I am a fool and I have no excuse. Forgive me all my sin.”**

**If he had done that, do you think the King would have had a different response? I think so. I think that if he’d have made that confession and repented, took off his old dirty clothes and put on the righteousness of Christ he received at his baptism, then God would have allowed him to stay at the banquet clothed in his new wedding garment. But the man stayed silent. Because he really had no faith. And the King said, ‘Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness.’**

**Conclusion**

 **An older hymnal includes this ancient prayer in preparation for Holy Communion: ‘Strip off from us the spotted garments of our flesh and of our own righteousness, and adorn us with the garments of the righteousness that thou hast purchased with thy blood.’**

**We are invited and we are welcome. We are ready. Our white garments await us. The day will come when we will hear the King announce, ‘Everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ The angels will blow their horns. Listen for them! And we will come out of our graves or be taken up to heaven and be seated at the messianic banquet on the mountain of the Lord. But until that day comes, the King has sent His Son down from heaven to us, and the announcement is heard, ‘Everything is ready. Take and eat; Take and drink.’ It is a foretaste of the feast to come. It is for us, the invited ones.**

**May the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**