

Pentecost #19

10/11/2020

J.V. Trautwein

Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“In Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Oh, Worship the King”](#)

Psalm 23

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 fear no evil;

for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff,

they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

thou anointest 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

for ever.[Ⓜ]

Hymn of Praise: [“Give To Our God Immortal Praise”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, Amen.”

1st Reading: [Isaiah 25:1-9](#)

2nd Reading: [Philippians 4:1-9](#)

The Gospel: [Matthew 22:1-14](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“The King of Love My Shepherd Is”](#)

The Message: Vicar Karen Pugatch ([Video Link](#))

In the overarching narrative of Matthew, this parable is the third in a series Jesus tells after turning over tables, healing the unclean (in the temple where those unclean did not belong), and inspiring children to praise. After a good night’s rest and a bit of “angry” fig tree cursing, he returns to Jerusalem the scene of the crime and begins to teach in the temple. Only to be interrupted by the chief priests and elders who question his authority yet are unable to claim their own in answer to Jesus’ questions about John the Baptizer because they are afraid of how the crowds will react.

So, Jesus treats us to this series of three parables about sons who say one thing and do another, wicked murderous tenant farmers, and this most confusing parable often called the parable of the Wedding Banquet or the King’s Son’s Wedding. All three of these are seen as parables of judgement, but remember as theologian Robert Capon says, “Jesus is careful to make grace sovereign overall.” (Kingdom, Grace, Judgement. Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002. p456).

Biblical scholars and most everyone, read these stories through the lens of allegory. The messengers representing first the Prophets of Israel and then the early Jesus followers who announce the great feast that we are all invited to attend. The invited guests make their excuses and seem to think reliance on their own work is the way to go-turning as it were to other gods. They are annoyed by the King’s instance and kill the messengers to keep them quiet. The king’s angry response represents the destruction of Jerusalem. Seems like a crazy thing to do-destroy a city in your own kingdom while dinner is getting cold-but it is a parable so we should not expect the story to make perfect sense. Then the final gathering in of those who are on the street-both bad and good and the casting out of the improperly dressed guest. Who refuses to defend his clothing -could this be Jesus?

I don’t know about you, but I have always found the last little bit disturbing-this casting out of the guest. Why would this king who has gone to such great lengths to prepare a lavish feast and

welcomed so many to attend kick this guy out because of his clothing? I struggled with this little bit until I read an essay about this parable which really got me thinking about it from a different perspective.

The essay points out that that the king likely would have provided the proper attire for those who came in off the streets-think party hats. In his essay Reading the Parable of the Great Banquet in Prison, Chris Hokes tells of the response of an inmate to the story.

At first there is excitement at the prospect of finally being invited-and he is ready to share his excitement with others. But then...there is the ending. This incarcerated man, is outraged by the actions of the king. Why invite people like us to this party -the king should have known people like us are not going to wear stupid hats-the king really didn't want us there after all! "Better to stay in the streets with the bad people than be told you're wanted and then find out you're really not!" he cries as he turns to leave the study.

Richard, the wise and angry inmate, has assumed, as we often do, that this guest is one who has been pulled in off the street-one of the "bad" people, someone he can identify with. He sees himself in this unwanted guest. In his heart and mind he feels the hurt and shame that has been heaped on him his entire life by his mother, and by systems in our country that oppress people like him. Unwanted from birth, rejected every step of the way, blamed for not pulling himself up by bootstraps that he does not have, forced into making poor choices, someone who has been made to live on the streets because of poor education, lack of living wage-someone driven to crime because it was the only place he was able to find community. Excluded from the "American dream" by the color of his skin and the circumstances of his birth.

What if we, people of power and privilege, who might be quick to see the unwanted guest as one of the "bad", like Richard has done, are also wrong about the guest who is thrown out? What if this guest is not a person who has been pulled in from the streets. What if this is one of the first who was invited and refused to come, but, like the first son in our other parable has changed their mind. So maybe this guest who refuses to put on that garment does not want their fine clothing to be covered, maybe this is a power play by a person of privilege.

Assume then, this guest wants to stand out because of the wealth they have amassed that allows such opulent attire. Assume then, this guest believes they are at the party because they deserve to be there because of what they have done to amass the power and privilege they flaunt. Assume then, this guest is judging all the other guests.

Thus, clothed in what they understand to be garments of their own making, this person struts their stuff around the dance floor, turning their nose up at all of these others.

In this scenario this guest is forgetting the fact that this party is invitation only, and everyone else has also been invited, not just themselves; this guest does not understand that nobody really deserves to be at the party.-Don't we often wonder about who else has been invited to the party-don't we turn our noses up at those we see as undeserving of an invitation, don't we

look down our noses at the person in the scruffy outfit sitting right there in church?

This guest is making the others uncomfortable, stepping on their joy and that of their host, judging them because they come from the streets and, of course, should never have been admitted in the first place. In our guest's mind, these others are merely placeholders at the party-and they themselves the only guest who truly belongs with no need to explain the way they are clothed. Maybe the king sees this happening and becomes angry and throws the guest out. Out beyond the warm reach of the light from the party into the darkness.

The thing is that the metaphor of clothing is used often in the bible when the message is about how we must change, about what is expected of us in response to God's gift of grace. The Gerasene demoniac is naked when we first meet him yet once he is healed, he appears clothed. The Israelites are called to wash their garments and stand before God, we sing about putting on the "gospel armor."

We are all invited to the banquet no questions asked, all are welcome and admitted, and we are expected to don the garment that the king desires us to wear. The garment of Christian identity.

We can't do anything to deserve the invite to this great feast, but once we are there, we are expected to change into a garment that covers us in Christian love -something of a superhero's cape that empowers us to action in the world. A new identity modeled after Christ one in which we are inspired to acts of faithful love and justice. This garment is a great equalizer-no matter who we are, or what we have done we are all asked and able to wear it.

This garment covers the nakedness of our own self-aggrandizing pride, covers the nakedness of the sins we have committed, covers the nakedness of our human weakness, covers the naked truth that, without Christ we too are lost to the outer darkness.

Don't get me wrong, God treasures each of us just as God has created us, but we all need to change because we are all, each of us in our infinite uniqueness, beloved, flawed human creatures. Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians," Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another ... And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

As Christians we are accustomed to putting on various garments that cover what we are wearing -choir robes, baptismal gowns-the palls that cover our caskets.

Everyone is invited to God's great wedding feast you don't need any special clothing to get in. In fact, no one comes with a garment that is sufficient. We come to the feast not because we are perfect or worthy, but because we are invited. Everyone is welcome, but this is a party that changes you. In response to this grace filled invitation we are given; we are called to change not our clothing but our hearts-to respond with loving action in the world; to put on Christ and to

live lives that echo his life of loving service.

Sure, sometimes that cape will slip off our shoulders and drop to the floor. But we can shake it out and put it on and continue to respond with acts of love and justice-the invitation is open-God's grace is endless.

At this party, the meal is the thing -a great banquet lovingly prepared and presented by one who swallows up death forever , wipes away all tears and disgrace and rescues us-extending hands to us in welcome -each and every one of us .There is plenty and to spare at God's table of grace.

Make no mistake about it, there will always be those who refuse the invitation and make excuses, thinking the things that they do are more important and even enough to get them through the door when they finally decide the time is right. And God will keep inviting them, inviting us and handing us our party cloths. Sometimes they will be as soft as a cuddly blanket and other times as harsh and scratchy as sackcloth. Because following Christ is no easy walk in the park. It is a complicated dance on a crowded dance floor with lots of obstacles and loud distracting music. We will stumble and we will fall, and we will be lifted up and brought to the table.

Where the meal is given to us for the forgiveness of sins. We feast together and at this table we are changed and saved. From this table we are sent into the world to share that abundance with our neighbor-the good and the bad.

So, have a seat at the table, share in the meal, put on your dancing shoes and grab your party hat, wrap the cape of God's love around your shoulders-go out dancing the dance of justice and love. Following Christ's lead.

Amen

Anthem: ["The Lord is my Shepherd"](#) The Mormon Tabernacle Choir

Offering*

We give thee but thine own, what-e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Most gracious Father, each new day brings new challenges and opportunities to live the message of love which through your grace you constantly show us. Although at times we may fail to live this love, we know the comfort of your forgiveness. In our failures give us the strength and the wisdom to overcome them through putting aside our egos and despair and beginning anew. Uncertainty face all of us, especially as we in the world of today. Open our eyes and minds to see that you have shown us the path of hope through your guiding message of love.

We pray for all those who are suffering from this deadly pandemic no matter their station in life. Help us to realize that it takes little sacrifice on our part in order to help control the spread of this virus. In many ways we are a spoiled people. Give us the willpower needed to get beyond ourselves so that others may live.

Continue to be with all those on the front lines of helping those who have been stricken by the pandemic and the natural disasters. They are giving so much of their lives while placing themselves in danger. We continue to pray for their safety and well-being.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Chad Bittinger, Heidi Brackbill, Danny Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Kirk Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Jesus Shall Reign"](#)

All are welcome to our outdoor Sunday morning service at 9:30 AM weather permitting. Social distancing and face masks are required. Bring a lawn chair.

Bible Study with Vicar Karen Pugatch, Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 PM more information attached below.

*Offering to be sent to:

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