

October 12, 2008
Messiah
Pentecost 22 - A

Matthew 22:1-14
"Come to the Wedding Feast"

- I. Let's get right to the parable Jesus tells about the kingdom of heaven**
- A. Weddings in the days of Jesus were a BIG THING
- The people's lives were mundane, and routine –
 - But when a wedding came along – this was celebration for the whole community –
 - EVERYONE was invited – and the wedding would go on for DAYS!
- B. And so the parable goes that a certain man's son was going to get married – and in the tradition of the day – he would plan a great, giant FEAST
- Jewish people were very proud – and did not want to be disgraced by not having a feast as wonderful as the last wedding in the community
 - They would plan a feast that would go on for days – much planning and preparation would go on
 - Cooking would be going on to keep the food coming, and keeping it fresh
 - In this case – it would seem the main course was beef: oxen and fattened calves (or tender veal)
 - I mean – who wouldn't want to go to an "all-you-can-eat" choice steak buffet?
- C. So the wedding is all planned out, the community would have been well aware that this feast is coming – and they would have been talking about it, and looking forward to it for weeks prior to the feast
- In the custom of the day – as a part of the great joy and expectation and fun of the whole celebration – the groom would decide when all the festivities would begin
 - The bride and her bridesmaids would be waiting for the bridegroom to come to the bride's house and pick her up for the wedding
 - And at that time – when the bridegroom started the wedding celebration; the host (the groom's father) would send his servants out and announce that the wedding feast was now to begin
 - In normal circumstances – the people, who were anticipating this day, would drop everything – and they would go and celebrate
- D. But in Jesus' parable – when it was announced that the steaks were on the grill, and that they should all come and eat and rejoice... (long pause)... no one came
- One invited guest paid no attention to the invitation, ignored the invitation, and just went off doing his own business
 - Another invited guest heard the announcement that would have otherwise been terrific news – and just went back to his business
 - As St. Luke recounts the parable – one person said, "I've just bought some cattle – I have to attend to it"

- d. Another invited guest said, “I just got married, I have no time for another man’s celebration”
 - e. And still other invited guest even got angry at the invitation – mocked those messengers, and even killed some of the them
 - f. All this would have been utterly unheard of in Jesus’ day – NO ONE WOULD HAVE RESPONDED TO A WEDDING INVITATION LIKE THIS
 - g. And on top of all this – this was a royal wedding – this is the king of the community inviting the people to this wedding feast –
 - i. This would be no pauper’s wedding
 - ii. This would be an occasion of the century!
 - iii. No one would have missed it! And Everyone was invited!
 - iv. And yet – no one came...
- E. And so – as Jesus continues the parable – the father of the groom, the host of the wedding becomes very angry at the rejection of his invitation
- a. To those who murdered the messengers – the king had killed
 - b. And then, you will notice – that nothing is going to stand in the way of the wedding feast to take place – once set in motion, there is no stopping the feast
 - c. The King sends his messengers to go invite people outside the community – strangers, people who in no way were worthy to attend such a feast...
 - d. The servant went to the roads and gathered everyone they found – both bad and good people
 - e. And one other thing that is known of weddings in Jesus day is that the master would provide a wedding garment for his guests
 - f. And now – with all these newly invited guests – the hall was filled and the wedding feast goes on with joy and feasting!
- F. One more thing Jesus mentions as He tells this parable – there was ONE MAN at the feast who was not wearing the wedding garment given him in order to enter the feast
- a. This one man thought he could get into the feast on his own, refusing the garment of the host, this gracious gift given to him – he did not want
 - b. And so – the king sees this man refused his gift, this garment – and has him thrown out of the wedding banquet
- G. NOW – IS THIS JUST A PARABLE DESCRIBING WEDDINGS IN JESUS’ DAY?

II. Let me tell you another parable – JUST LIKE THIS ONE OF JESUS – but in our day and time

- A. It’s 46 until Thanksgiving – and already in telephone conversations, everyone knows Grandma is inviting everyone to her house this year for the Thanksgiving dinner
 - a. Now – Thanksgiving at Grandma’s is much more than just a dinner – it’s a weekend of everything wonderful and fun

- b. Grandma has a big hill by her house – and everyone bundles up and goes sledding and tubing for the day
 - c. Grandma has a big living room with a log fireplace – and everyone comes inside and Grandma makes hot chocolate for everyone
- B. Already now – Grandmas is planning the big Thanksgiving Feast, 46 days out
- a. No one makes turkey and mashed potatoes and stuffing like Grandma
 - b. She makes the best pies: there's pumpkin, and apple, and cherry, and pecan
 - c. She makes homemade rolls and you can smell the baking yeast when you arrive at Grandmas
 - d. Grandma lets no one bring anything – she pays for it all, she prepares it all
 - e. This is all Grandma's gift to her family – all of it is done in her deep, wonderful love for her family
- C. It's Thanksgiving Day – the turkey is browning in the oven, the pies are glistening on the counter, the aroma fills the house, the fireplace is stoked, and Grandma's black lab waits at the door for the first guest to arrive
- a. No one comes – and soon Grandma gets on the phone
 - b. She calls her daughter, Lisa – and Lisa says, "Oh, Mom, I got your invitation, but I have so much to do – we're not going to make it"
 - c. Grandma calls her other daughter, Jane – and Jane says, "Mom, we just bought a new plasma TV, and we're going to stay home and watch a movie together"
 - d. Grandma calls her son, Bob – and Bob says, "Mom, Tina and I are going through the advertisements in the paper – and we're getting ready to hit the mall at 5 tomorrow morning, we cannot come"
 - e. And Grandma calls her other son, John – and John gets mad at his mom, tells her she's always putting her nose where it doesn't belong, and slams the phone down
- D. This loving Grandma is both hurt and angry – she is determined the next day to meet with her attorney and cut them all out of her will
- a. Grandma has much food – and the feast will go on!
 - b. Grandma gets in her minivan, goes down to the part of town where people are homeless and hungry; she goes to the pregnancy crisis center; she goes to the home of troubled children – and she invites them all to dinner
 - c. Grandma is so generous – she first takes them Kmart – because that's the only store open on Thanksgiving Day – and says, "I will buy you all new clothes, and with your new outfit – you come to my Thanksgiving Feast"
 - d. Everyone came – Grandma had a packed house – everyone was humbled and happy to be at Grandma's – sledding, enjoying the fireplace, the black lab, and the delicious food
 - e. There was one, however, who refused Grandma's gift of a new outfit – he was too proud, he was not humble, but proudly impenitent – and Grandma

told him he was not welcome, and that he must leave – and he missed out on everything Grandma was willing to offer

III. Do we understand these identical parables? And do we see how they intersect our everyday, common, ordinary lives?

- A. Grandma, like the King – is likened to God who puts on a marvelous feast for his people
- a. But Jesus is talking about more than a made-up parable with a make-believe feast
 - b. Jesus is talking about more than a Thanksgiving Dinner prepared with love and much labor by Grandma
 - c. Jesus is talking about the FEAST OF HEAVEN, the eternal banquet of God for His people
 - d. And this Feast of heaven is celebrated every week at this Table – THIS IS THE FEAST OF HEAVEN – and here! – God invites His people
- B. And this Feast of God is in honor of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Bridegroom of the Church, the Savior of the world
- a. This is not just a made-up King in a story;
 - b. This is not just Grandma – whom we love and cherish
 - c. This is GOD in the FLESH → He IS the Feast
 - i. He is not the oxen or fattened calf
 - ii. He is not the Thanksgiving Turkey
 - iii. Jesus is the LAMB OF GOD – who takes on the sins of the entire world – He has taken on your sins and mine – and goes to the cross as the sacrifice and offering for our sins
 - iv. This is an invitation is come and eat - NOT A FREE MEAL, but a MEAL THAT MAKES US FREE! – of all sin, of all guilt, of all death!
- C. And like Grandma, who gets on the phone to call her family, and like the Servants in Jesus' parable inviting the townspeople to the Feast – so the PROPHETS through ages, and PASTORS in God's Holy Church are the ones who invite God's people to Christ, and the Feast of Christ!
- a. Grandma's family was rude to her – and our emotions can feel the pain of Grandma, even though this story is just made up
 - b. But Jesus' point is this: God's servants, prophets and pastors, have been mocked, ignored, made fun of, ridiculed, and even killed for inviting God's people to God's feast
 - c. Pastors and prophets are not inviting God's people to a free pot-luck meal, or a night out at Jack's Steakhouse, or to a New Year's Eve Gala Event...
 - d. Pastors and prophets are inviting God's people to the Feast of Jesus Christ – to forgiveness of sins for their salvation!
- D. Grandma's family paid her no attention, and the people in Jesus' parable – had better things to do than to go to heaven, the banquet feast of Christ

- a. We are told that many teenagers and the 20's culture are a people of "I love Jesus, but I hate the church"
 - b. But the Gospel is this: Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world, and the gift of Christ is given in Holy Baptism, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and in the preaching of the Word
 - c. Would you say Grandma's daughter Lisa, who got the invitation, and "dissed Grandma" LOVES GRANDMA?
 - d. Would you say Grandma's daughter, Jane, who thinks her plasma TV is more important than Grandma LOVES GRANDMA?
 - e. Would you say Bob, who thinks the things of the world, and at the mall, are of more benefit than Grandma's love LOVES GRANDMA?
 - f. Would you say John, who yells at Grandma, is rude to her, and mocks here LOVES GRANDMA?
 - g. In the parable – Jesus is talking about the Jewish people, the Israelite nation – He called them by name, God did nothing but love Israel, He guided and led them through the wilderness, He fought for them, He gave them a land flowing with milk and honey – and yet now in the person of Christ – this same people disses, ignores, rejects, and mocks this very same God
 - h. We have been called by this VERY SAME GOD, who pours out His love on us in Jesus Christ – by our actions, attitude, and words – as we examine our hearts – do we diss, ignore, reject, and mock God too?
- E. You and I have been invited to the Wedding Feast of Christ...
- a. We are the unworthy ones – and the King invites us
 - b. I have done nothing of myself that makes God to love me
 - c. In my life, and in yours, we have done things for which we are ashamed
 - d. We try to make ourselves look better than others, but in our very nature we are corrupt, defiled, and dead – broken off from God
 - e. God's invitation to attend His Wedding Feast is not because of our "good", but because of God's infinite mercy and grace
 - f. The Feast is in honor of the One who admits us into the banquet – Jesus Christ
 - g. We may have said and done horrible things in our lives – But the King of heaven inviting to His feast says, "I forgive you"
 - h. We may have done horrific things in our lives; even criminal acts, loveless deeds, and even while we cannot forgive ourselves – the very King who invites us to His feast is the VERY KING who has forgiven us and made us clean
 - i. You and I walk around with guilt and shame and feelings of fear and worthlessness everyday – and yet the Bridegroom of the Church says to us, His bride, "I love you, I shed my blood for you, I forgive you, I hold nothing against you, I raise you up from ashes and death, and I crown you with the crown of eternal life and I give you heaven"
 - j. For all the times we have rejected the feast, for all the times we have dissed God, for all the times we thought the world was more important

than God – the King inviting us to His marvelous feast is the King saying, “I love you, repent of your sins, and come, yes, come to my feast”

- F. This whole “garment thing” – of the one thrown out of the feast is very simple
- a. In Jesus’ parable, like with Grandma buying the garments for her newly invited guests...
 - b. some tried to enter the feast by way of their own goodness, their own righteousness, thinking they were suitable to be a part of the feast by way of their own merits
 - c. But we cannot enter the feast of heaven this way, nor can we come to the THIS FEAST (HC) by way of our own merits or good...
 - d. We enter the Feast of Heaven CLOTHED WITH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST
 - i. He becomes naked on the cross in order to clothe us with His holiness
 - ii. He is dressed with the stripes of a whip in order to clothe us with His holy precious blood, and His innocent suffering and death
 - iii. He is clothed with the sweat of shock and torture in order to clothe us with the cleansing, healing water of Holy Baptism
 - e. In the end – does not everyone want to enter the feast of heaven?
 - i. When there are two ways: the path to damnation, or the path to eternal life...
 - ii. Do we not desire life?
 - iii. Our desire does not save us, our merits do not save us – CHRIST SAVES US!
 - iv. And the feast of His salvation, the banquet of forgiveness – He says to you and me, “Come... come to the Wedding Feast”

Conclusion

1. Look around – look at each other... think of how we look every day
2. We don’t see each other dressed in business suits or doctor’s coats, we don’t see each other dressed in medical uniforms or construction hardhats, we don’t see each other dressed in teenager’s holey jeans or the carpenter’s workclothes...
3. Look around – look at each other... and we see each other dressed in our wedding clothes – it is the garment of Christ –
4. If we took the garment off – we would see only sin; but with the garment on – we see forgiveness and eternal life
5. Come to the Wedding Feast today in this meal; come to the Wedding Feast of Heaven – for the invitation and its benefits are YOURS
6. Jesus says, “My holy bride, Come to the Wedding Feast” ... and we say, “I wouldn’t miss it for the world, and I will enjoy it for all eternity!” Amen.

