

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Aitkin, Minnesota**  
**October 15, 2023**  
**Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

P In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

## Introit

I will praise the LORD as long | as I live;\*

I will sing praises to my God while I have my | being.

I will greatly rejoice | in the LORD;\*

my soul shall exult | in my God,

for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;\*

he has covered me with the robe of | righteousness,

as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a

beautiful | headdress,\*

and as a bride adorns herself | with her jewels.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\***

**and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,\***

**is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

I will praise the LORD as long | as I live;\*

I will sing praises to my God while I have my | being.

## Collect of the Day

*Proper 23 (Year A)*

P Let us pray.

Almighty God, You invite us to trust in You for our salvation. Deal with us not in the severity of Your judgment but by the greatness of Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

## Old Testament Reading

*Isaiah 25:6–9*

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.

And he will swallow up on this mountain  
the covering that is cast over all peoples,  
the veil that is spread over all nations.

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.

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.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Epistle**

*Philippians 4:4–13*

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

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. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

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. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

### **Holy Gospel**

*Matthew 22:1–14*

Again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 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.’ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not

worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ 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.

“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 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.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

### **Apostles’ Creed**

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**The third day He rose again from the dead.**

**He ascended into heaven**

**and sits at the right hand of God the Father  
Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living  
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**Sermon Text – Matthew 22:1-14**

**Theme – “Invited to a Wedding Feast”**

Weddings were quite different in Jesus’ day than in our day. Weddings in Bible times were not just a one-day affair; weddings in Bible times could last a whole week. Another difference was in Bible time weddings the focus was not on the bride, but on the groom. Other differences are that you didn’t bring gifts and you didn’t have to go buy special clothes, all those things were provided for you. To be invited to such an occasion was quite an honor and not something to be taken lightly.

So, the parable of Jesus we heard today should perhaps be updated a bit, so that we who hear it today might properly understand it and the shock value it would have had for those who heard it back then. So, allow me to do that for you. Here we go:

A king bought a new cruise ship upon which he could throw his son’s wedding feast. He wanted everything to be just perfect, the food, the entertainment, and the decorations. He wanted lots of people to come.

As the preparations were being made, the king sent out the invitations. If you are a king, you don’t send invitations out in the mail, you send your royal

servants to give a personal invitation. The king invited everyone who was anyone. They were invited to enjoy a ten day and nine night all expenses paid celebration. The guests didn't need to bring any gifts. They didn't even need to pack anything. Everything would be provided. The ship was stocked with everything needed including the clothes guests would need to wear while on the cruise.

When the day comes and all is ready, the king sends his private jets to pick up the guests and bring them to the ship. When the jets return, they all come back empty! Those invited do not come! Why not? One said he had to mow his grass. Another had to go to balance his checkbook. There was the one who didn't want to miss the next episode of *Yellowstone*. Some didn't even give an excuse; all they did was mistreat the servants. Some even killed the servants.

The king is stunned. He would deal with those who had mistreated his servants. There was still a wedding to celebrate. So, the king sends out more servants telling them to grab whomever they could to come and celebrate. That is what they did. Some they invited were good and upstanding people. Some we might consider undesirable. The king did not care! He just wanted to celebrate.

So, you had a retired couple come onboard, followed by a guy who was found standing at the entrance of Walmart's parking lot asking for money. You had carpenter who built homes for people; you had people who were living in a homeless shelter. All kinds of people came. They couldn't believe their good fortune. They went to their

state rooms, showered and changed into the new cruise wear that was waiting for them. The ship cast off and the party started.

The king was overjoyed and the ship was filled with joy. But as he was rejoicing, he passed by one fellow who wasn't wearing his cruise wear. He was wearing his old, stinky clothes. It didn't make sense. So, the king asked him: "Buddy, what's up? Why aren't you wearing the appropriate cruise attire that I provided for you?" The king wasn't mad; he was just curious why this man wouldn't make use of his gifts. A simple "I'm sorry" and a quick dash off to change would have fixed everything.

The man wouldn't even give him an answer. He just gave him one of those looks. You know that look that says, "What? Aren't my clothes good enough for your royal highness? Do you have a problem?"

Once again, the king is stunned. All the king wanted was to give and give and celebrate. The man was removed because the ship was only for those who wanted to receive the free and gracious gifts of the king.

That is what the kingdom of heaven is like, Jesus says. As we consider Jesus' parable here are a few things that stand out:

First thing that stands out is the incredible generosity of the King, who represents our heavenly Father. Second is the fact that some reject God's gifts. They don't accept His invitation; they don't receive the garment of righteousness that He provides. This doesn't stop God from giving. He keeps sending out invitations, so that He can give. All He wants to do is give, give His gifts and give us joy.



Something else that stands out in Jesus' parable is the fact that the celebration is for all. In our Old Testament lesson for today we hear the prophet Isaiah say that five times. This is a feast for ALL people. There is room for everyone; the King wants to give to everyone.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a King who wants to give, a King who loves to give. He created this world and gave it to us to enjoy. He gave us life and He wants to give us the joy of celebrating in His kingdom forever. That way we can do as St. Paul says: **“Rejoice in the Lord, always”** (Philippians 4:4).

To make that happen God gave us His Son. He is the Bridegroom who gave His life for His Bride, that is the church. He died for you; He died for me. He died for all people. He wants everyone to come.

And He provides the clothing we need **“the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness”** that our Introit for today talks about. He puts those on us when we are baptized. Our own clothes, our own righteousness, our own good works are filthy rags.

And He has provided a little feast here for us, what we call the Lord's Supper. It is pointing ahead to the big and never-ending feast that awaits us in heaven. He gives us this meal is to sustain us in His forgiveness and faith until the final call goes out, when the angels are sent at the final harvest.

It doesn't matter who we are, how old or young, how educated or uneducated, whether we are new to the faith or a long-timer, healthy or sick, really good or really bad in the eyes of the world. We are all

invited to come. And all that we need to celebrate is provided for us. We just need to receive it with faith. That is what the kingdom of heaven is like. So, rejoice and come. Come and rejoice. It is for you. AMEN

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Church**

Heavenly King, Your Son, Jesus Christ, purchased the Church with His precious blood. Preserve her in the pure teaching of Your Word, in the right use of the Sacraments and in the unity of the faith.

Heavenly King, You send out Your invitation that all who believe in Your Son should take their seats at His feast. By the proclamation of Your Church, gather many, however evil they may be, to repent and fill Your eternal banquet hall

Heavenly King, bless all families and the homes in which our people dwell. Grant grace to husbands and wives, that they may fulfill their vocations to one another and to their children. Grant also that, as a family, they may faithfully teach and learn the faith.

Heavenly King, keep the coming of Your Son always at the forefront of heart and mind, that subject for His sake to the fleeting powers of this world, we may live in continual godliness and the peace that passes all understanding.

Heavenly King for whom we wait, You promise to wipe away the tears from all faces. Bless

[\_\_\_\_\_ and] all who weep here, that at the last they may be comforted, restored and received into the banquet of heaven.

Heavenly King, You have prepared a table before us in the midst of those who refuse Your invitation. Keep Your Church unstained by the world, that we may partake of our Lord's Supper worthily, clothed in His baptismal grace.

Heavenly King, give us such joy in pursuing what is true, just, pure and worthy of praise that, spurning the temptations of this world, we would suffer no anxiety. Let our trust be placed fully in Christ and let our hope rest in the life of the world to come; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

**C Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.**

## **Benediction**

*LSB 202*

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

**C Amen.**

## **Acknowledgments**

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Created by Lutheran Service Builder © 2023 Concordia Publishing House.