

## **Sunday, October 15, 2023 – Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost**

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### **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.

### **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.**

### **First Reading: Exodus 32:1-14**

<sup>1</sup>When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." <sup>2</sup>Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." <sup>3</sup>So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup>He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" <sup>5</sup>When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD." <sup>6</sup>They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; <sup>8</sup>they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' " <sup>9</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. <sup>10</sup>Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."

<sup>11</sup>But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? <sup>12</sup>Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from

your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. <sup>13</sup>Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' " <sup>14</sup>And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

### **Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23**

<sup>1</sup>Hallelujah! Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good,  
for God's mercy endures forever.

<sup>2</sup>**Who can declare the mighty acts of the LORD  
or proclaim in full God's praise?**

<sup>3</sup>Happy are those who act with justice  
and always do what is right.

<sup>4</sup>**Remember me, O LORD, with the favor you have for your people,  
and visit me with your salvation;**

<sup>5</sup>that I may see the prosperity of your elect and be glad with the gladness of your people,  
that I may glory with your inheritance.

<sup>6</sup>**We have sinned as our forebears did;  
we have done wrong and dealt wickedly.**

<sup>19</sup>They made a bull-calf at Horeb  
and worshiped a molten image;

<sup>20</sup>**thus they exchanged their glory  
for the image of an ox that feeds on grass.**

<sup>21</sup>They forgot God their Savior,  
who had done great things in Egypt,

<sup>22</sup>**wonderful deeds in the land of Ham,  
and fearful things at the Red Sea.**

<sup>23</sup>So you would have destroyed them, had not Moses your chosen stood in the breach,  
to turn away your wrath from consuming them.

### **Second Reading: Philippians 4:1-9**

<sup>1</sup>My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

<sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of

God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

### **Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14**

<sup>1</sup>Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>10</sup>Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup>“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.”

## Prayers of Intercession

Trusting in the transformative power of God's loving Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

For the church of Jesus Christ in this and every land, that all followers of Christ share the mind of Christ and strive to live together in peace, staying firm in the Lord. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

For green pastures and still waters and all the beauty of the natural world (*local natural areas may be named*), that creation flourishes and humankind lives in right relationship with all you have made. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

For the nations of the world and all who hold positions of authority, that they govern in accordance with God's vision of justice, providing shelter and refuge to all in need, striving toward the goal of peace and prosperity for all. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

For all experiencing valleys of illness and grief, that they be healed and comforted and find rest in the presence of the Good Shepherd who walks beside them. (*We pray especially for . . .*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

For this community of believers, that wherever there is conflict or discord, the love of Christ may keep us united and make us mindful of all that is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, and excellent. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

In thanksgiving for the beloved saints who now rest in your mercy (*especially Teresa of Avila, teacher, renewer of the church*), that their faithful witness guides your church until the day we join them at your heavenly feast. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending love and amazing grace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

## A reflection for this Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

### Expensive Wedding. Expensive Grace.

On a recent reality TV show entitled *Wedding Wars*, engaged couples competed for a complete wedding wardrobe. The winning couple received the bride's dress and the groom's tuxedo as well as proper attire for their entire wedding party. The estimated cash value was \$30,000. Getting married is not cheap.

In today's gospel Jesus tells a parable about a wedding invitation, a banquet, and God's grace. Jesus teaches about a king who ultimately invites all people to a wedding banquet. At first this parable seems to portray a wide open and gracious invitation to a wedding celebration. However, by the end it is hard not to feel sorry for the poor guy who gets a last-minute invitation but gets thrown out for not wearing the correct wedding duds! He apparently wasn't a winner on that era's counterpart of that reality TV show! Again, getting married is not cheap—but neither is grace.

Jesus tells this parable as a way of teaching us that receiving God's grace changes people. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught, God's grace is not cheap, it comes at a great cost upon the cross. Once we receive this costly grace, our lives are never the same. This grace compels us to act and calls us to bear fruit with our lives. Ultimately we are led to share this grace with others. To continue to live in the same way after receiving this gracious invitation is not an option. So what are we to do? We simply receive the gracious invitation to the banquet and find a changing room—it's time to live a new life.



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