

Sermon for Trinity XX- Matthew 22:1-14

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

The Book of Revelation is one that is shrouded in mystery. The Lord encodes future prophecies in the visions of St. John for all Christians to hear. Some prophecies warn, while others give comfort. The vision of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb gives you and all the faithful comfort. The words of St. John: "Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure' – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."

Through the Revelation of St. John, you see a glimpse of heaven. You see the glory of Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain. You see the Marriage Feast of the Lord to His Bride the Church. You see all the saints who have died in the faith gathered together and clothed in the Lamb's righteousness. There are no more divisions. There are no more tears. There's no more death. There's no more sin. All the faithful who have gone before you live in the perfect Glory of the Lord in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Lord tells us the parable of wedding feast. We are more familiar with this feast. We call it The Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of the Altar. In this feast, we see the visible Church on earth. The majesty is clouded. The saints seem fewer. The feast just isn't as glorious. Nonetheless, we pay heed to the Lord's Word: "Do this in remembrance of Me." The Lord still prepares His feast. He instituted that we take bread and give thanks. He instituted that we receive the one cup of His Blood. Christ sends forth his servants and stewards of the mysteries of God. He sends them out with the Word and Baptism. The Lord still gathers together His guests: "'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." Many are called, both good and bad. The Lord wants all men to be saved.

The Heavenly Father calls all men to His Feast, both good and bad, knowing full well that much of His effort will be in vain. Allow me to give you an earthly example. A kind earthly father will continue to love his children and do everything for them, even if they are resentful or incorrigible. Most dads can't help but love their children. Their commitment is unwavering and resolute. How much more does the Lord, who is perfect, love everyone and do everything for all good and bad people, even those who trample on His love?

So you've been invited by God to his Wedding Feast. You've come to the Lord's house to receive His Love. In the Lord's parable of the Wedding Feast, the story takes a disturbing, perhaps even a terrifying, turn. "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.'"

A man came without his wedding garment and the consequences were agonizing. Couldn't this example put a hint of doubt in the heart of even the most devoted Christian? Is it I who doesn't have the wedding garment on? Is it I who goes to Church and to the communion rail, but doesn't belong there? When I come and sit down in this place, do I regard it as an obvious right? When the Lord looks at me, what does He see? Does He see the shredded rags I wear? Does God see my Old Adam through all the holes? Does He see my old soiled, everyday clothes and the sins I fall into regularly?

Don't be afraid to beg the Lord for mercy. The church does at every worship service: "Lord, have mercy upon us; Christ, have mercy upon us; Lord, have mercy upon us." Even the prodigal son left his wicked life to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Don't be ashamed to be the prodigal son. Don't be afraid to come home in rags. The Father places again his own precious clothes on you. Through baptism, you are clothed with Christ and His righteousness. That's your wedding garment. That's a garment that can't be dirtied or destroyed. That's a garment that makes you worthy to appear before the Lord in His house.

This house is the King's hall for His wedding feast. But let's not imagine that this feast is all that different from the spectacular scene in the book of Revelation. The Lord's Supper is a premonition, yes, an anticipation of glory to come. A little feast before the Great Feast. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." You can already sing the song of triumph about the death of the Lord, the one that echoes before the throne of God and the Lamb: "For You were slain, and by Your Blood You ransomed people for God." When you sing it, you know that He will come, and you profess this fact before the world every time you take Communion.

At the Feast, the wedding garment is already provided for you. This is a garment of great cost, even the bloody death of Christ. His righteousness is at no cost to you. Your heavenly Father provides this and all good gifts for you. He will never forsake you. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in
Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠