

October 12, 2014
 Sermon for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Matthew 22:1-14, Philippians 4:4-13

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 22:1–14 (ESV)

¹ And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ² “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴ 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.”’ ⁵ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷ The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³ 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.’ ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Philippians 4:4–13 (ESV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ 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. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² 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. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Too easily and too often, God's peace in Christ becomes a slogan on our lips, not the joy of our hearts. That's a problem that afflicted the Church in Philippi too. Anxiety, need, persecution, anger over grievances—problems like this seek to invade and destroy the peace sinners have been given in Christ.

Today, the Master of the Feast (Mt 22:1–14) sends a servant named Paul into our lives, to invite us to His feast of peace. The feast is ready, the banquet hall prepared, and the Master determined to fill it with guests.

God's forgiving love in Christ calls us, to food and fellowship in His feast of peace, where we find shelter from life's storms, refuge from peace's enemies, and rejoice in that rich food and fellowship the Lord of the feast provides.

“Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, Rejoice!” This is the Master's urgent invitation, Come to the feast! “ And what an invitation it is.

Snatched from off the streets, muddied and sometimes bloodied from life's battles, we are dirty, tired, and grumpy—hardly the best “guest list” material.

But the Master warmly invites us, dirty clothes and all. He dies for our sins, washes us clean in Baptism, and wraps us in the festive robe of righteousness that qualifies us for the feast.

With such a generous Master, we can *“let [our] reasonableness be known to everyone”* (v 5a). No need to hold on to grievances or assert our rights. *“The Lord is at hand”* (v 5b).

He sees our sufferings; He is present in Word and Sacrament to dress our wounds; and soon He will return and restore to us a hundredfold (cf. Mt 19:29). Therefore, we need *“not be anxious about anything”* (v 6a).

Hard to believe for we of little faith, even harder to practice, but that’s no surprise when we try to “go it alone.” But as He tells us in His Word, we are not alone! *“The Lord is at hand,”* and He invites us, *“in everything by prayer and supplication”* always tempered *“with thanksgiving, [to] let [our] requests be made known to God”* (v 6b). He will provide. *“And [so] the peace of God,”* peace restored by Jesus’ death, *“which surpasses all understanding,”—even our worry—will stand guard over “[our] hearts and [our] minds in Christ Jesus”* (v 7).

Within His banquet hall, our enemies and life’s storms shut out, clothed in Christ’s righteousness, it’s time to be nourished and strengthened.

If it’s true for your body that “you are what you eat,” this is no less true for your soul.

So why, WHY, instead of feasting on God’s promises, do we stuff ourselves with spiritual junk food, flattering, yet empty, words, that the world feeds us?

Like cotton candy, they’re sweet to the taste, but without nourishment. Here in the Master’s banquet hall, this won’t be a problem.

Our hunger grows as we smell the aromas of grace as Paul tells us: *“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”* (v 8a).

These things are good for body and soul, a goodness that flows from the One whose Word is truth. *“Think about (upon) these things”* (v 8b). Ponder them. Smell their wholesome aroma; for they are promises of good things to come. After all, you are dining as the guest of the King. *“Think about these things.”*

But don't stop there. *“Take! Eat! Drink of it, all of you!”* *“Delight yourselves in rich food”* of the Gospel (Is 55:2).

Who is satisfied to smell the feast but not eat? So Paul asks the Philippians: *“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you”* (v 9).

This is not the pointed finger of the Law but rather the hand of grace, beckoning you: *“Come to the feast.”* The Master's Word and Sacrament will nourish your famished soul.

But that's not all! Yes, the heart of the feast is the rich abundant food, but a feast is no feast without the sharing and the fellowship. Again, we are not disappointed. The Master has called us into the fellowship of His feast. In love, He binds us to one another and, even better, to Himself.

God's love binds us together in Christ. I am grateful to God that I do not walk it alone. God put you here for me and me for you. He put us (together) for others. It's the fellowship of the feast.

Yes, we are weary, muddied and bloodied by the journey and its trials. We long to be safe in the banquet hall. Our hearts hunger for the feast. But we walk and ache and hunger together, each one of us invited by God's forgiving grace in the cross of Christ, a fellowship of believers.

Most of all, we rejoice together in our fellowship with Christ. Paul drew strength from that fellowship constantly, and it carried him above the anxieties of earthly life—anxieties he had experienced often and severely, as we hear from these words: *“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”* (vv 11b–13).

Too easily and too often, we find ourselves far outside the banquet hall, consumed by anxiety, irritated by grievances, disqualified from the feast by our sin. Take heart, fellow Christian. God’s forgiving love in Christ calls you into the fellowship of the feast; and to you I say, by the Master’s command:

In the name of Christ Jesus, your sins are forgiven. Come to the feast!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria
To God alone be glory

“God’s Calls Us to Food, Fellowship and His Peace”
Matthew 22:1-14, Philippians 13:4–13

1. Rejoice! You are invited to His peace feast!
2. In the banquet hall your soul is nourished.
3. And here God binds us together in fellowship.