

October 9, 2011
Matthew 22:1-14

Pentecost 17 (Proper 23a)
Discipleship: There is no excuse

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our gospel text for today brought me back to my Camp days and there was a camp song that started out like this:

I cannot come to the banquet, don't trouble me now. I have married a wife; I have bought me a cow. I have fields and commitments that cost a pretty sum. Pray, hold me excused, I cannot come.

A certain man held a feast on his fine estate in town. He laid a festive table and wore a wedding gown. He sent invitations to his neighbors far and wide but when the meal was ready, each of them replied. I cannot come to the banquet, don't trouble me now. I have married a wife; I have bought me a cow. I have fields and commitments that cost a pretty sum. Pray, hold me excused, I cannot come.

It's a fun campfire song but yet it tells the story of the Parable of the Wedding banquet. In this parable we hear how the king threw a wedding banquet for his Son. He sent out invitations but they would not come.

It even reminds me back to my wedding day when we had sent our invitations some responded, and some didn't and we had to ask again. And of course many answered: "I cannot come."

But really this parable it is once again talking about the Kingdom of Heaven it talks about our lives as disciples. For it follows right after our text from last week the Parable of the Tenants.

This parable is again being addressed to the Pharisees. It can be said that this too is a history of Israel, the Jewish people. A people that in the Old Testament continued to reject God, they continued to make excuses to God. Over and over they chose to follow other gods starting from the time that they made the Golden Calf to worshipping the Baal of the day.

Or even in Israel during the time they attacked the messenger just like in last week's parable we here how some that refused to come to the wedding banquet seized the King's servants and shamefully killed them. So what does God do he opens the Kingdom of Heaven to even Gentiles. He opens his Wedding feast to those that will come. He continues to show himself to be a persistent God.

Even this week's parable has much to teach us the song that I started out with ends in this way: Now God has written a lesson for the rest of the mankind; If we're slow a responding, he may leave us behind. He's preparing a banquet for that great and

glorious day when the Lord and Master calls us, be certain not to say: I cannot come to the banquet, don't trouble me now. I have married a wife, I have bought me a cow. I have fields and commitments that cost a pretty sum. Pray, hold me excused, I cannot come.

The parable speaks about the coming reign of God, but we also know that the Kingdom of heaven is coming and is already now here. The Kingdom of God is the Church of God. I have heard time and time again those very words, "I cannot come!" Or may not exactly those words maybe it's these words, "Summer time is vacation." "I rather go camping on the weekends." "I rather spend my time at the Powerlifting meets." "I rather spend my time in the fields and the woods." "I rather spend time with my family." Remember I am preaching on discipleship over the next several weeks. Does a disciple of Christ say "I cannot come, don't trouble me now."

What if God decided well I am going to take a four month vacation from the church? And then you needed him and he wasn't there. My dear family of God you are here as members of St. James Lutheran Church/St. Paul's Lutheran Church, but more importantly Disciples of Christ. I have said over and over how our lives as Christians need to be active. They need to be active in the world living our lives 24/7 for him.

The question I keep asking myself do we care? Do we care for our church? Do we care whether or not we are spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our community? Frankly the question should be do we care for God's Church? Do we care that there are people going to hell every day? If we do care then let's act like that we do but if we don't my question is why we are here? And if you do care are you going to say "I am too busy to give any of my time back to God that really is all his time."

This parable could be about us God wants his banquet table full with his guests that he's going to continue to come after until his table is full. And some of those guests are you. He wants you at his banqueting table. For you are called to be his disciples through your baptisms, through His Word. At one point we were like the man in the parable that didn't have on the wedding clothes. At one point we were destined to be thrown to where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Instead of kicking us out

God lovingly sent His Son to give us a wedding garment. God lovingly sent His Son to this earth to live the perfect life that we can never live. God lovingly sent His Son to the earth to suffer God's wrath so that we don't have to. God lovingly sent His Son to the earth to go to the cross for you. God lovingly sent His Son to the earth so that He could die but also to defeat death. And His Son, our Lord said, I can come I love them.

And I can tell you that God will fill his Wedding Table, for His Son. And God will continually invite as the song says in the middle two verses: "The Master Rose up in anger, called his servant by name, said, "Go into the town, fetch the blind and the lame, fetch the peasant and the pauper, for this I have willed, my banquet seemed so

crowded, and my table must be filled. When all the poor had assembled, there was still room to spare, so the master demanded: "Go search everywhere, to the highways and the byways and force them to come in. My table must be filled before the banquet can begin."

God will Call many people but few will come in. For it has been said the road to the kingdom of heaven is windy and narrow but the road to Hell is straight and wide. Which road will you be traveling on? How many excuses will you say when the Lord asks you to do service in His kingdom?

Will you answer his call of discipleship or will you say, "I cannot come"? Will we be a church that continues to make excuses or will be a church of disciples that acts in ministry? For when it comes to the job of disciple there is no room excuses. And frankly when the end does come and the Lord asks, where were you? What did you do? There will be no room for excuses.

So let's go forward in ministry let's go forward in vision. Let's go forward as disciples of Christ who are invited to the Wedding banquet. Let's go forward with Holy Spirit leading us through the windy and narrow road to the heavenly kingdom.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.