

WORSHIP October 11, 2020

(To watch the videotaped version of the worship service, click the link below)

<https://youtu.be/Lf4PMZoURXA>

(To read the service, continue on from here)

GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP

Worship is a time to learn the ways of God.

As God's love is genuine, may our love toward one another be authentic.

Worship is a time to be caught up in the Spirit of God.

We call upon God to instill within us a spirit of generosity, hospitality, and hope.

Worship is a time to nurture peacefulness within and among ourselves.

We pray for a humbleness of heart and a willingness to forgive and receive forgiveness.

May this time of worship nurture us in the ways of God.

A BRIEF CONFESSION

If we say we have no sin, if we believe we are not broken; we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

God of forgiveness, God of healing ... fill us with your truth, your grace.

We trust that your mercy is our forgiveness, your compassion our healing.

God of forgiveness, God of healing ... fill us with your truth, your grace.

We live in the power of a forgiving God.

We live in the presence of Jesus the Christ ... we are forgiven, thanks be to God. Amen.

GREETING

The Lord be with you

Be filled with the spirit of God today.

We worship to open our hearts for God's blessing.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1st Reading –Philippians 4:1-9

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this my beloved.

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to of the same in in the Lord. 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.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving bet 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, 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. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace be with you.

2nd Reading – Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I shall fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff—they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Gospel reading – Matthew 22:1-14

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who have been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 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.’ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murders, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ 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.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ and the man was speechless. 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.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

SERMON – Pastor Joseph Dillion

19th Sunday After Pentecost, Oct. 11, 2020. “One More Confrontation.” Bethany

This morning's lesson is almost like Dejavu All over again, for once again we have a parable about the Kingdom of God, and someone isn't prepared for the invitation! Last week we heard about the tenants in the vineyard and how terrible they were. Jesus of course is setting up the elders and the Pharisees as the fall guys in that one as they thought they were going to be an important part of the Kingdom of God, and well they really missed the whole message about what was important in receiving the invitation, while others heard and went about the work of the vineyard owner, and became part of the Kingdom.

Today's lesson is similar, yet a little different. Here we hear of a King giving a wedding feast and those who at first invited didn't want to come and others then were. But one who came didn't pick up his wedding garment and got kicked out into darkness and all sorts of nasty stuff. Hardly seems fair to the poor guy so what is being said here by Jesus?

Clearly this parable is some kind of warning about something by Jesus and we will pick that up in minute, but first what is it about the wedding garment? Why would someone be kicked out for not having one, and what is this parable trying to tell us using an example we have no experience with? Here is one of those situations in Scripture that we need to know the background—the history so we can better understand the Parable. In the 1st Century, wedding celebrations were often a week long. Travel was by foot or horseback or cart and the expectation was that the one who issued the invitation, especially a king, would provide not only food for the feast—every day—but a special wedding garment as well and you were expected to honor the host by wearing it during the celebration. Not to wear it was an insult to the host. Thus, when the king sees this man not wearing a wedding garment, he is naturally insulted and out the man goes.

When the elders and the Pharisees heard this parable, they knew right away what Jesus was saying: **JUST BECAUSE YOU WERE INVITED BY THE DOESN'T MEAN YOU GET TO STAY IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW THE RULES!** You can't feel like you got it made in the Kingdom just because you are part of the invited group. Jesus is warning us today, not to be complacent with our faith. This parable is really a double warning about our faith. We are all invited, some from the beginning and some later. But remember those at the beginning were too busy, took the invitation for granted and decided not to come to the wedding feast. They played loose with their faith; with their servanthood as the people of God. We cannot be complacent with our faith—with that precious gift that God has bestowed upon us. Our Lord gives us tools throughout our lives with which we can strengthen our faith. Our Lord gives us talents and abilities that He gives so that we can share and build up God's kingdom. He gives us His word so that we remember whose we are even in the darkest hours of our lives. We are called to put on that garment of faith that is given to us at our baptism so that we can be about the work of Christ in this world: the work of compassion, true concern for all in need no matter who they may be.

I hope you remember another part of this parable. The one where the King tells his servants to go and invite both the bad and the good to the wedding feast from the highways and byways. This follows what Isaiah had proclaimed: that all people would be invited—that all people are desired by God to part of his kingdom and part of the great wedding feast that is part of the joy of the kingdom of God. No one is excluded from the possibility of being part of this great celebration. All are invited. All that is necessary is to accept the invitation.

If that is all that there is too it, why are there so many on the outside looking in? Well, let us that a close look at why, and frankly the "why" may surprise you. It is because they preferred it that way. The original guests remember as otherwise occupied or in anger, fling themselves upon those who bring the invitation. And they discover that the King does not take all of that insult lightly. And among those who are finally invited from the highways, there are those who are put out because they refuse the wedding garment that the king offers, they prefer the garb of the street rather than the 'robe of righteousness' that the King of Kings offers. Still happens today. We are called to live our faith daily. We are called to wear our faith in such a way that the world can see by our actions, whose we are. In these days, we cannot be complacent as the people of God. For it gets very dark and nasty outside the feast of the King. Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

*We believe in God,
Creator of the universe,
Giver of every good gift,
Author of life itself.*

*We believe in Jesus Christ,
who reminded us of the coming of God's kingdom,
who commanded us to care for those in need,
who taught us to store up treasures in heaven, not on earth,
and who gave us the example of self-giving love.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who inspires us to faithful stewardship of God's gifts and
that God has given us gifts to be shared freely and generously, in a spirit of love and joy.
We believe that faithful stewardship is an act of worship,
a means of praising God who has blessed us abundantly.
We believe that God has great things in store for us,
for it is in giving that we receive. AMEN*

(Allen & Sara Ewing-Merrill, 2004)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... bless our lives, lead us in your ways, gives us hearts for gratitude and service. Fill us with your grace, that what we desire is also what you desire. Grant us the understanding that our hearts' true desire is the love of you. May the love of Christ urge us on, may we walk by faith. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... bless those who govern. Bless the leaders of nations, countries, towns, and cities. Bless all those who lead in all manner of ways – social, political, and religious. Fill the hearts of all with your wisdom. Guide us in the way of justice and integrity for all. Guide us to walk by faith. Holy God, tend to those who suffer in mind, body, and spirit. Tend to the tired, the dying, the poor and the hungry. Help us to follow the love of Christ, a love which urges us on to seek and serve Christ in others. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... We pray for Bethany members on our prayer list. Give them the blessing of your presence amid their times of trial. We pray for our congregation in this time of suspended worship that we will still continue to be a committed community of faith seeking to be the light of Jesus in our community and world. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Holy God, giver love and blessing ... We pray for our world in a time of pandemic and societal distress and change. Give our leaders wisdom, compassion, insight, and courage to lead in ways that serve all the people under their charge. We pray for doctors and nurses, EMT's, and all those on the frontline of healthcare amid this COVID-19 pandemic. Give them health, energy, compassion, and the strength to care for those struggling with illness and hospitalization. In your grace and love Lord ... hear our prayer.

Listen to each of us, Lord, as we come to you in a moment of silent prayer

Into your hands, great and compassionate God, we commend all for whom and about which we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFERING *(Please mail your weekly offering to the church - 4300 N 82nd St. Scottsdale, AZ 85251)*

PRAYER OF BLESSING

God of all blessing, giver of all good gifts; day by day you shower us with what we need to live and prosper. With glad and generous hearts and in a response of thanksgiving, we return a portion of our wealth. May what we give be a symbol of our gratitude and a blessing of your love for those who may be helped through our offering. AMEN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

You may say traditional Lord's Prayer or use the Aramaic translation printed below

*O Creator, the one who gave birth to the universe,
You are the sacred source of our being.*

*Focus Your ways, Your light, within us.
Make us useful for Your purposes here on earth so that
Your desire and our lives become one.*

Grant what we need each day in bread and insight.

*Loosen the cords of mistakes binding us,
as we release the strands we hold of other's guilt.*

*Do not let surface things delude us, snare us, and lead us away
from You and Your purpose.*

*But free us from what holds us back, give us power to
live as you intended and created us to live.*

*From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act,
the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age. AMEN*

BENEDICTION

*People of God, look for Jesus!
Seek him as a treasure in this great wide world.
Seek him in the eyes of your loved ones and in the eyes of strangers.
May your heart burn within you as the Lord draws close to you this week.*

DISMISSAL

*Go in Peace ... to live and serve in the way of the cross
Thanks be to God.*