

Pentecost 20                      10/15/23  
Matthew 22:1-14                  23A

## GOSPEL LESSON, FROM THE 22<sup>ND</sup> CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

What are you yearning for? Are you yearning for heaven to be with Jesus or yearning for something for the here and now? That is the question our Gospel lesson this Sunday forces us to ask.

In the parable, the King is, of course, God the Father. The wedding feast is symbolic of eternal life in heaven. In the Bible, heaven is often compared to a great banquet. The book of Revelation reads, "*Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9).*" The words of our Old Testament lesson describe heaven as *a feast [for all peoples] of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined (Is 25:6).* The invitation to the wedding feast is the Gospel call. Jesus has prepared a place in heaven for you. Are you yearning for it?

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 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."' But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them."

Those invited to the wedding feast were yearning for something else. What are you yearning for?

You know how it is -- your husband has turned out to be more than a disappointment, so you yearn for a new husband. You may be yearning for that lady in the magazine. If she were your wife, that your life would be

perfect. Not to mention your kids. They've turned out to be more than frustrating, so you are yearning for your neighbor's kids, you know, they ones that are good athletes and the police don't bring home.

We all yearn for more money because money means we can satisfy our yearning that new toy – a new pick-up, a new four-wheeler, new furniture, and a new house to put that furniture in. Maybe you are yearning to be your neighbor --- then you would be popular, fun, your marriage would be fantastic, and life would be good. Maybe you are yearning for something less tangible but just as real – health, you're just tired of living with illness and declining health. You yearn for less worry, less fear, less regret.

*"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,"* Jesus said (Mt 6:21). Our hearts are set on the here and now. You only go around once, right! So, you better go for it with gusto, the world says, so we are always trying to find our treasure here.

The Good News of the Gospel is that, even when we yearn for the pleasures and treasures of today and this world, God yearned for us to be in heaven with Him. In fact, He yearned for us to be in heaven so much that He sent His only Son to give you the banquet feast of heaven, that it may be yours.

Our lesson ends with Jesus telling us that man is cast out of the wedding feast because he had no wedding garment to wear. What Jesus is teaching us is that heaven is not ours because we've been good enough or haven't done enough bad to be kept out or that you're better than others so God lets you in. Jesus is teaching us our works are not proper attire to wear in the presence of God. *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment,* Isaiah teaches us

(Is 64:6). Our sinful, selfish, self-serving yearnings have left us unclean before God.

Rejoice and be glad, Dear Child of God, you have a place at the marriage feast of the Lamb because of Jesus. God loves you so much that God gave His Son to the death of the cross to die the death of your sin, so that you would be forgiven. He raised His Son to life again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day and Jesus ascended into heaven to prepare a place for you there.

He has a place for you at the wedding feast and you have the right wedding garment, for you wear the righteousness of Christ as your very own. St. Paul says it this way, *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ* (Ga 3:27, NIV). God looks at you and sees only the righteousness of Christ – and with that, He is well-pleased.

We yearn for heaven for that is where our treasure is. As we live, we live as strangers here, hearing Paul's words, *Do not be anxious about anything* (Ph 4:6). God's message to you is simple: "There's no reason for you to worry or be anxious. Nothing is lacking in your life. Even if people would take your money, your home, your land, all that you have – they cannot take your faith in Jesus Christ and the inheritance of heaven He has for you." My Dear Friends in Christ, even if we lost everything in this world, even our physical life, we have lost nothing. For we have everything in Christ.

Through His means of grace -- Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, Holy Communion -- the Lord God says to you personally: "I have given all you need." This is the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. *ILL: Old Guard at Tomb of Unknown Soldier*. Paul tells us in our Epistle that the peace of God -- that forgiveness won for us by Jesus -- literally stands guard over our hearts. God's peace will guard us against the worries and

the anxieties of this world.

Jesus has died for you, rose for you, and made ready your home of heaven for you so that you have no reason to worry. Jesus has given you peace now, today, and for all eternity.

What does that mean for us during the week until we gather again to hear the Lord's Words? Apply the peace of Christ in all situations: Are you living under the burdensome cross of illness? Do you worry about living on a fixed income when groceries and food and medicine continue to rise? Does your heart have little peace because of conflict with a spouse or child?

We can try the mantra, "Don't worry, be happy." We can try to drown your sorrows. We can try to find joy in earthly things – but that boyfriend/girlfriend you so yearn for will disappoint you just as much as your husband or wife, if not more. That new toy will break down and rust and decay; and besides, the new and improved model will be out before you know it.

But, you can rejoice that you are God's child, you are forgiven and that Christ with you. God has given you life, redeemed you in Jesus Christ, and made you His child in Holy Baptism. He has provided for you, physically and spiritually.

God promises to help you and He will not forsake you. Paul knew the secret of being content was that God gives us everything we need to support our bodies and souls, now and for eternity. We can say with him

*I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content...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 (Ph 4:11-13).*

The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh cannot prevent us from

rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Admiral Horatio Nelson was Britain's most decorated naval hero. One seaman who sailed with Nelson after a bitter campaign in the West Indies wrote in his journal: "We are half-starved, and otherwise inconvenienced by being so long [at sea]. But our reward is -- we are with Nelson!"

My Dear Friends in Christ, life may have its tears. Who knows what tests and trials may await us in the future? But we have our reward. We can say, "I am with Christ, and with God through Christ." He is our Rock, He gives us the eternal security of heaven, and He gives His peace which stands guards over our hearts in the storms of earthly life. We have within our hearts and minds the very peace of heaven, that peace won for us by Christ and given to us through the hearing of His Word.

In Christ, we yearn for heaven, knowing that His peace attends us for today.