

October 15, 2023: Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

Main Idea: All are invited, but God expects those who show up to act appropriately.

This is clearly a story about insiders and outsiders. The original insiders—the king’s invited guests—quickly became outsiders when they ignored the king’s invitation, and even killed the king’s slaves. Probably not the best way to get invited back again. The king had them all killed and their cities burned.

But then the original outsiders—“everyone you find” (who are left after the king annihilated the rude ones)—quickly became insiders. Interestingly, the king didn’t distinguish here between the “good and bad”—all were invited.

Previously, people could only attend the wedding if they had been invited. Now, everyone was invited. Everyone. All by itself, this was a radical shift in tone for Jews who believed they were God’s chosen. They were the only insiders. They were the only ones invited to God’s kingdom. But now, Jesus was saying that everyone was invited. It kind of takes away from the specialness of being God’s when everyone is given the same ticket to ride.

But not everyone invited was allowed to attend. One friend showed up to the wedding unattired for the event. The consequence was dire—he was thrown “into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

So, here’s an interesting takeaway. God’s generosity is abundant. God invites everyone—good and bad—to the wedding. But the wedding isn’t a free-for-all experience. Those invited (everyone) can’t just do whatever they want and reap the benefits of the banquet. The invitation is wide open. But those who choose to attend have some responsibility to regard the invitation with respect. They must come to the wedding adorned in wedding attire.

We might read it like this. We are all invited to participate fully in God’s kingdom. But we do have a responsibility to regard the invitation to participate with the honor and respect the invitation deserves. We can’t show up in the world in a way that is contrary to the intention of the inviter. We can’t show up to God’s kingdom of peace, justice, and equity, and also walk through the world with contempt, hatred, and jealousy. If we do, we come unadorned. God’s invitation raises the level of expectation that we show up ready to honor the kingdom God has invited us into.

Scripture Summary

When a king’s invited wedding guests disrespected the king and his slaves, the king opened the invitation to all—good and bad. But who would he let in?



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*Invite everyone you find
to the wedding banquet.*



October 15, 2023
Twentieth Sunday
after Pentecost

GOD'S WORD for Today

First Reading: Exodus 32:1-14

32 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”² Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”³ So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. ⁴He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord.”⁶ They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel. ⁷The Lord said to Moses, “Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’”⁹ The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. ¹⁰Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation.”¹¹ But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?’ Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’”¹⁴ And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Psalm: Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23

Second Reading: Philippians 4:1-9

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. ²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, 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. ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, 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. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again 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.’ ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then 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.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”