



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost 2017

### *The Feast of God!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

#### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 22, 1-14:

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

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that we will come to Your Feast, clothed with the Righteousness of Christ. Amen.*

#### • **Dear Beloved of God!**

• A wedding feast of cosmic proportions! The feast facilitated by God is ready! Come to the feast! The best food and the best drink in the universe is ready to be enjoyed. Its ready to bring joy! That is what a marriage feast is for! Its all about celebrating a union. In this case its celebrating the union of God's Son, Christ and His bride, the church.

• It is a marriage feast. It is formal. You need to have an invitation. And at the door you receive the wedding garment. You cannot celebrate without the wedding garment. You have to first receive the wedding garment and you need to make use of the garment. You need to put it on. You cannot enjoy the marriage feast refusing the gifted garment of God, namely Christ' righteousness.

• But God gives everything we need to celebrate properly. We need to make use of His gifts. Put on the righteousness of Christ, which you have received in Baptism and teaching of Christ's Word, through Faith and come participate in the feast of the Lord!

• How could anybody not come? God invites to a feast! Yes, there are rules of the feast. But, God provides for everything in absolute abundance. Isaiah 25 fills us in how abundant God provides [6]: *On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.*" Who does not want to come to such a great feast?

• You come and participate. Make use of God's provisions so that you will have a joyous feast with God. All is prepared. Everything is on the house. Sure, its formal, you have to put on the garment, but even that is provided. How could somebody not want to come?

• But, unbelievable, that is what happened. How totally embarrassing? Those who were invited, the A-list, did not come. The hall was not nearly full. How awkward! Just think for a moment if that would happen with the wedding ceremony you planned and hosted? Would you carry on with the feast? God does! Nothing would stop Him. And its worse, those A-list people did not only not come, they treated the messengers shamefully and even killed them in the end. What did the messengers do but invite them to the marriage feast organised and provided for by God?

• Twice God invited them, send new messengers out, but they paid no attention. They had better things to do, so they thought.

• Therefore, those murderers received their judgement! Their city, Jerusalem, was destroyed by the Romans. God spoke the following judgement over them [8]: *"The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy."* They were not worthy, God says. They were not willing, but God says they were not worthy. So, those who are not willing are not worthy. Those who don't want to come don't have the right spirit. They don't have the desire to follow God's invitation. They would rather do something else. This exposes their utter sinfulness. This is furthermore revealed by their action of not repenting, but instead harming the very messengers God sent out.

• Nevertheless, God did *not* stop the marriage feast. The mission work of the messengers was not in vain. It is never in vain. God's mission cannot be stopped. Think

of this, when you feel it is all in vain. It is not. Even when it seems like all is in fact in vain. God can turn things around. And He did. We have a track record of this. It is written down for us to take courage. The very fact that you are attending the feast of God today is a witness of this fact.

• God was not too embarrassed to carry on. He did not get too sulky to carry on. He continued with the mission to fill the wedding hall with people [9-10]: *“Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.” 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.*” This part of the mission is not fulfilled yet. We are part of it. This command is spoken to us. Go, therefore to the main roads and invite all, as many as you can find, good and bad- don't be selective. Invite them to the marriage feast of God!

• Baptise them and teach them all Christ has commanded His disciples. In this way they will receive their wedding garments. And teach them also to put on the righteousness of Christ, which they have received so that they will be found worthy at the table of the Lord.

• We have to see that two groups of people will not be worthy to recline at the table of the Lord, those who did not follow the invitation to come to the feast. They are not worthy, because they didn't want to come. Secondly, we see in the parable that God will inspect His kingdom- this will happen on the Last Day- and He will find a person who will be exposed of not having the righteousness of Christ, of not having faith. This person will be in the Church of Christ, it seemingly followed the invitation to come, it seemingly received all gifts of the Lord, but this person is a hypocrite, someone who fakes it. How did that happen? We don't get an answer, because it remains a mystery how someone can remain a hypocrite.

• But now it is important to see that it is only one person who is exposed as such, but when we come to verse 14 it is clear that there must be many, for it says: *“For many are called, but few are chosen”*. So Jesus is not saying that there is only one person who will be exposed. He wants to tell us: There is only one person we should be concerned about in this regard, and that is I, myself. 'Is it I, is it I, is it I', the disciples asked when Jesus told them that someone reclining with Him will betray Him. We have to be concerned about ourselves in this regard.

• For, Jesus gives the reason, many are called but few are chosen! Many are called but refuse to repent. Many are called, but in their hearts, their desires and minds, they refuse to accept the rejection of their own righteousness and to receive the

righteousness of Christ. In their hearts they think that they, by themselves, are just fine, they continue to justify themselves! They are not thirsting for righteousness. They don't see themselves as the poor in the Spirit. They think, they are OK, quite strong, actually. That they are weak, they will not accept.

• So, we see, what a feast God is facilitating! Everything is on the house. Everything is free. And yet, at the same time, for those who don't want to come and for those who fake repentance and faith it will end in a very serious disaster!

• Why the seriousness? Because the content of the meal is from the sacrificial offering of Christ! God had to forsake His own Son on the cursed pole to pay for this marriage! It was of extremely high cost on God's side, immeasurably high. The Father who is Love forsook His only begotten Son to give us of His Love through this act. You are invited to God's true Love, God's act of Grace. Whoever rejects this either by not even attending or by keeping ones own old desires and mind, in other words faking repentance, and therefore rejecting God's sacrificial Love, rejecting God's crucified Messiah, will be judged and will experience the very opposite of a marriage feast. Such a person will be cast out into darkness, into an existence where there will be a total lack of mercy, light, joy and love.

• So, what are we to do in light of such serious possibilities? Repent, and ask God to give you the righteousness of Christ. And this prayer is always fulfilled by God, because He wants to fill His house. He wants you there! That is why He reveals how its going to be to us now, beforehand, while there is still time to receive what God so freely gives in abundance. He gives forgiveness of sins in abundance. That is what you receive here at the feast of God! Eat and drink of it as much as you need. God is not holding back anything of His mercy. He is not stingy with His forgiveness. That is why you are invited. Make use of it, confess your sins, all of them, don't keep them to yourself and receive the meal of God out of His hand, dispensed through His ordained members.

• Trust Christ, that He will give you what He said. Ask Him to give you the right faith to receive the wonderful gifts of God for your own benefit. Don't rely on your own strength and piety. That is fatal, because God sees right through it. The truth is, we are poor in the Spirit. The good news is, Jesus blesses the poor in the Spirit. He does it right here and now! Don't let this feast go past you. Attend it and let Christ drive out the hypocrite in us and make us truly worthy! **Amen.**

• *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor 13, 14).*