**Matthew 22:1-14**

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

**“Come To The Wedding Feast”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Protestant is a label from the Reformation times that tended to lump together any who opposed the Roman Catholic Church. However, Lutherans went of their way to distinguish their worship from other Protestants. Since works do not save or justify, then God’s Word and Sacrament were to be the primary and ultimate focus of worship. This translates now today to the title we have at any service of Word and Sacrament calling it, “The Divine Service” or “God’s Service.” Certainly, there is to be a response of hymns, prayers, and thanksgiving, but the true joy is in what the Lord brings by His grace and goodness.

Jesus in our Gospel reading was at the temple during holy week and His authority was again under attack by those who despised Him. The conversation ends with Jesus focusing on God’s salvation promised by the Gospel as a final parable about a wedding feast. The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom that belongs to Christ, was apart from the world’s evils, the Law’s demands, or even grief over life. Instead, His kingdom came as a wedding feast where the Gospel is a proclamation of unending grace, heavenly peace, and eternal blessings. The Divine Service is more than worship, but a celebration of how God draws close to us with the grace He gives. What greater joy can there be than to come to the wedding feast of Christ.

1. **Many were invited, but who received the king’s word with joy?**
2. Some had joy already in their lives acting as if they were kings.

* They were invited, but when the message arose to come. It got ignored as a cheap advertisement.
* So again, another invite came from other servants, but this time with words from the king that said, “Everything is ready, come!”
* Throughout the Old Testament, few among the Jews held upon God’s salvation very long and it became evident finally at the time of Christ.
* How do we fair now that the Gospel has come to the Gentiles? Joy in Christ gets buried under busyness, pleasure, and every kind of glory.

1. Others found joy with having murderous actions against the king’s servants.

* This would be those rather than ignoring the message became more and more aggravated by it.
* In other words, they hated the king’s word, servants, and kingdom proving it by their hostility.
* Stephen made this clear to the Jews saying, “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered…” (Acts 7:52-53).
* How do we fair as Gentiles now that the Gospel has come to us? Joy in Christ falls silent whenever the Word finds rejection or perversion by other demands.

1. Still others have joy clothing themselves and denying what the king provides.

* Unlike the others, this person receives the invite, but is more like a wedding crasher than a guest.
* Nobody else notices the hypocrisy, but it stands out as an eyesore to the king.
* This Christian likes the spirit of the Gospel, but underneath their own standard fixed on self and not the righteousness God gives alone in His Son.
* It should turn us to examine our hearts and ask if my life, works, and choices justify me more than Jesus who dares to cover all my sins.

*Whether refusing to come or not respecting the wedding attire, both bring judgment. The king destroys false peace and powers just as He binds the self-righteous to disgrace in darkness.*

1. **The king’s word invites for the purpose is to celebrate the wedding feast.**
2. This is the feast where the Father has joyfully given His Son to be the Savior.

* Salvation by the Gospel is simple compared to our full, complicated, and demanding lives, but the message by the king of creation is, “Come.”
* St. Paul says God, “chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him” (Ephesians 1:4).
* God has ignored no one for Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing” in the Triune God and “…teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20a)
* Everything is ready so the wedding feast is going to happen with Christ’s kingdom busy with forgiveness, heaven pleased over any who repents, and the glory of God present by His Word and sacrament.

1. This is the feast where Christ is joyfully the servant silencing the hostility.

* During Holy Week, Jesus turns increasing hostility to the wedding vows He will offer up by the cross for His bride the Church.
* Enemies of the Gospel cling to their dying ways, while Christ by His way of sacrifice opens heaven on earth for all to receive salvation through Him.
* All the grief, all the fears, all the doubting are to enter a wedding feast where Christ does not cling, but freely cares to give you His kingdom.
* The unchanging and faithful Word is a refuge against hostility, because the peace of God is to keep hearts and minds fixed upon Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. This is the feast where being clothed by God joyfully is the gift of His grace.

* Since everything is ready, none needs to be a wedding crasher for that standard of selfishness will not stand.
* Instead, the king sent out His servants to gather us by a gracious Word from the highways, the street corners, and distant places both good and bad.
* He found us, saved us, loved us, and at this wedding feast clothed us by baptism into Christ exchanging our filthy rags for His righteousness.
* And so, the celebration is now Christ at His Supper sustaining us by His grace that remains forever.

Since the Divine Service is all about God inviting us to His service, Luther asks this question to those intending to go to the sacrament. “What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?” The answer, “First, both the command and the promise of Christ the Lord. Second, his own pressing need, because of which the command, encouragement, and promise are given.” Today’s parable reveals how the king keeps inviting all. How strange that so many in different way to trust what His Word. What greater joy can there be than to come to the wedding feast of Christ. This Divine Service even brings depths to our service having vocations given by the king to honor Him in the world. God grant us grace to hear His call as that reason always to rejoice. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds to life everlasting. Amen.