



Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

The Collect.

O ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, of thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things which thou commandest; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Saint Matthew 22:1-14

1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, 2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, 3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. 7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

Jesus so often spoke in Parables that those whose hearts are open and humble might understand where those whose hearts were arrogant, proud and hardened would not so understand. Jesus relates this parable of marriage that has a double application. It relates to the first institution of God in the Garden at Eden, as well as the relationship between Christ and His Bride. Marriage is viewed with such profound meaning that the very first commandment God gave man involved this sacred institution that exists only

between ONE man and ONE woman.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Gen 1:28)

Marriage is so important to Christ that He performed His first miracle at Cana of Galilee (which just happened to be a marriage feast.)

Since being the first institution of God in the Garden at Eden, marriage has been sacred and Holy to God – and it must be to us as well. It is an earthly model for the Kingdom of God and the great marriage between Christ and His Bride, the Church.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,"

This certain king is God the Father. Do I need tell you who the son represents? None other than Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God.

"And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come." The great prophets were these servants who called those who were bidden to come, but Israel would not hear them and did not come. They even stoned many of these prophet messengers, and others they sawed in half.

"Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." The Great King leaves nothing to chance. He prepares ALL we need for our comfort and nourishment and joy. The sacrifice has been made for us – all we must do is come. He desires to honor us by allowing us to honor His Beloved Son.

"But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:" Here we see the dreadful preoccupation of the world, and even the church, with our own devices – money, trade and barter, etc. The service to God seems a light thing to them. We today are sorrowfully no different. We 'do our duty' in attending service once on Sunday, go back to our troughs and mud, and live as if God were not watching.

"And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." You will recall how wrongly they treated Samuel, Moses, Jeremiah and all the prophets. Even Abel was slain by his brother for living and teaching righteousness. The Apostles, most of whom died brutal deaths, were no less dishonored by those who knew no honor.

"But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." If you have been living under the delusion that God will always show mercy and kindness, you are wrong. Christ Himself shall return to claim His own, and the remainder shall be put to the sword and cast into Hell without mercy! They will have sealed their own fate through the neglect of the things of God. If you have not loved God in this life, you cannot love Him in the next. The tares (unbelievers) shall be gathered by the Holy Angels and burned. Even the details of this prophecy were fulfilled when the armies of Rome came and destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Many of those same doubtful hearers suffered in that destruction!

"Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." Most of the people of Israel depended upon their pedigree as sons of Abraham; however, they did not rightfully belong to the Old Testament Church of Abraham who looked to the coming of Christ.

The noble Stephen proclaimed:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham
(Gal 3:8-9)

This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us
(Acts 7:38)

Abraham was a Christian: Jesus said - ***Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*** (John 8:56)

And we are the Children of Abraham through faith.

Now back to those who refuse to attend the things of God: These being rejected through their own complacency, God turns to all who will come. All who love Christ are adopted into that great Church and are Israel indeed. None are to go without invitation!

"So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." This is like the great dragnet of souls mentioned in Matthew 13:47-48. It drew every kind of fish, both good and bad, and the fisherman (angels) sat down and separated them. Or the fields of wheat and tares growing together picture this same truth.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: " And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. " Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Do we desire to be properly attired at this great and distinguished feast? If so, we must take on the White Robe of Righteousness which Christ offers to cover our rags and filth. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) received that Robe from His Father on his return from feeding the pigs in a far country. He was covered with the filth of his disobedience, but His Father covered His unsightly sins with love and His Robe of Righteousness.

There is an interesting prophecy in Isaiah 4:1. When women are referred to in prophecy, they represent a religious power.

Isaiah 4:1 – ***"And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach."*** To me, these may represent the seven churches, I humbly believe, who wish to be nominal Christians only. They will eat their own bread, and not the Bread of Heaven He offers, and will wear their own filthy rags of sin instead of His

Robe of Righteousness. But they desire the dignity of being called, only, by His name.

In the end of all things, Christ concludes His message to the seven churches in Revelations 3:20, and particularly to the Church at Laodicea - *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

Does Christ stand in the midst of us at Saint Bede's this morning, or does He stand without the door and knock? I believe He stands in the midst of all faithful worshippers, but we must insure that we carry our faith home with us today as well.

"For many are called, but few are chosen." Friend, it is quite possible that you have been called and invited, but never accepted the invitation. A gift may be offered, but it is not fully a gift until it has been received. Have you accepted, with serious heart and intent, the Redemption made available through the blood of Christ?