Second Presbyterian Church
October 11, 2026 || Year A – Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 22:1-14

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

‘Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying:
“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.
He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet,
but they would not come.
Again 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.’
But they made light of it and went away,
one to his farm, another to his business,
while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.
The king was enraged.
He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.
Then he said to his slaves,
‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.
Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’
Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found,
both good and bad,
so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to see the guests,
he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe,
and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’
And he was speechless.
Then 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.’
For many are called, but few are chosen.”’

For the word of God in scripture,
for the word of God among us,
for the word of God within us.
Thanks be to God.

Our Gospel reading this morning orients us to a party – a feast – a wedding banquet – to which we all – both good and bad – have been invited.

And not just invited – but summoned, called by name.

When we are called to this wedding banquet, will we turn and follow and never be the same?[1]

Feasting upon joy feels disingenuous these days –

how can we possibly attend a wedding banquet when the blast of the ruthless rains upon us and sings to us – when traumatic wars and violence ruin cities and nations – when government leaders disappoint – when all feels shot to hell?

[1] *Glory to God*, Hymn #726

The audience of Matthew's Gospel knew hell on earth.

Our Jewish siblings lived in a Jerusalem razed by the Roman Empire – a razing that left their temple destroyed.

Our faith ancestors lived in a city that oppressors left in a heap.

And "in the very midst of the smoldering ruins of [their] pillaged city,"[2] the author of Matthew calls the people to a wedding banquet – to a feast of rich foods and well-aged wines.

Wonder of wonders!

The dinner – prepared.

Oxen and fat claves – slaughtered.

Everything – ready – for us.

Come – come now! – to the wedding banquet.

[2] Richard E. Spalding, *Feasting on the Word*, Year A, Volume 4, p. 166.

But we do not come.

We make light of the invitation and neglect the summons.

We go away and become lost in the pains and anxieties of our days – in the shadows of death that haunt us.

We become fully concerned about ruin and fully unconcerned about joy.

When the song of the ruthless bogs us down to the point where we neglect God's invitation to the wedding banquet, God becomes enraged.

When we choose to remain in the pain caused by the Roman Empire's razing instead of choosing to recline at the table – to dine – to joyfully feast upon the kingdom of heaven's banquet of hope, God becomes enraged.

An enraged God is a God we prefer to ignore.

Jesus' anger – God's anger – feels uncomfortable.

The violent God portrayed in this parable does not sit well with us.

Troops sent. Murderers destroyed. City burnt.

Poetic images that unsettle and unnerve us.

Images that challenge and confront us.

Images that refuse to be made light of – that refuse to be neglected.

Images that the Gospel's author uses to cut through the shroud that has been cast over us.

Images that point to something else – to something deeper.

Images that point to a God who swarms upon us, destroys the ways in which we kill those who invite us to the feast of hope, and burns the places to which we run in our attempts to hide from the God who calls us by name.

God's fiery, intense love will not let us go.

And when we still reject the invitation of the One who quiets the song of the ruthless – the One who wipes away our tears – God's summons expands.

God's summons travels along the roads that cut through our city's boundaries and move into the open country.

God's summons meets us at the crossroads of city and country – of desolation and consolation.[3]

[3] https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/consolation-and-desolation-2/

God's summons meets us at the point where underground streams suddenly break through and begin to freely flow – washing over us – clothing us.

Gathered and found at the baptismal crossroads, we – in our goodness and badness – fill the wedding hall.

But what are we wearing when we enter that hall?

Are we clothed with Christ?

Are we robed with "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience"?[4]

Are we robed with forbearance and forgiveness – with love that binds everything together – with peace that rules our hearts?[5]

Are we robed with gratitude?

Gratitude for God's faithful and sure plans – for the wonderful things that God does.

Gratitude for the God who swallows up death forever.

Gratitude for the God who saves us.

Do we enter the wedding hall transformed by God's summons – by God's invitation?

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[4] Colossians 3:12
[5] Colossians 3:13-15

Or do we enter clothed in hopelessness and self-reliance?

Do we enter doubting that everything is ready – that a joyful feast awaits us?

Gathered and found at the baptismal crossroads, God offers us wedding robes.

Robes that shelter us from rainstorms and provide shade from heat.

Robes that proclaim joy in despair – resurrection in death.

Robes that remove our disgrace.

God offers us wedding robes, and we choose whether to wear them – we choose whether to put on Christ – to live in Christ – to clothe ourselves in the mysterious hope of our faith.

God offers us wedding robes, and we choose to wear them or we choose to continue wearing the shroud that is cast over us and our nations.

At the crossroads where underground baptismal springs break through, we choose either the robe of life or the shroud of death.

And when we enter the wedding hall still wearing the shroud of death, our God notices and asks us, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?”

Yet another invitation – another summons – to living, moving, and having our being in Christ.

And when we remain silent – still refusing to boldly say yes to God's invitation to come to a joyful feast of hope – we are left to the shroud's claim on our lives – to our gloom, weeping, and teeth grinding.

We are invited. We are summoned. We are called by name.

What will we choose?