

Oct.13, 2002

21st Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 22: 1-14

Goal – Grow in gratitude, appreciation, hospitality

Malady – Ingratitude, dullness of spirit, taking for granted

Means – God's gracious invitation

Last week we were “sent.” This week we are “invited.” The invitation comes directly from God. We not only received it sometime in the past, we receive that invitation today and every day.

I've never been invited to an inaugural ball or the Academy Awards, but I have been invited to weddings and graduations. The common denominator of invitations is that they are not in my honor, but in honor of the person who invited me. Our invitation is to glorify and honor God. It is God's banquet, in honor of God's Son, Jesus Christ. God invites us to trust in Jesus Christ, to believe, live, die and rise again in Jesus Christ. We accept the invitation in his honor.

The kingdom of heaven is like a wedding banquet to which the king invites many people. But some are arrogant and ungrateful. “I'm not religious,” says one. Another says, “I'm busy that day.” Others just don't pay attention to the invitation, and perhaps have grown calloused to the offer. Still others go to their farms and places of business. Some abuse the messengers who brought the invitations. The king is furious, of course, and he cancels the offer, calls for their lives and burns down their cities. It is not a small thing to be ungrateful to the king.

This is an invitation to respond at once, not drop in any time or come over when you have time. This invitation calls for a response today. We are invited to worship today. We are invited to come to the Lord's Table for Holy Communion today. We are invited to give today. It is for this that we have been created and redeemed and sustained. It is for this that we have been called to be God's witnesses for Jesus Christ.

This is a parable about gratitude. To be an ingrate for the blessings of God is an insult to the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all. It is a violation of our relationship with God to take our invitation for granted or to neglect to be grateful to God.

Two key verbs in this lesson are “come” and “go.” Come in response to God's invitation. It all begins with accepting the gracious invitation of God. It is all a gift of God's grace. To refuse it is unthinkable.

There is also a call for us to go and invite others to God's banquet. It is not only for us. Go in gratitude for what God has given us and give it to someone else. God looks forward to our being grateful recipients of this invitation by seeing us invite others to come to the feast, to grow in gratitude.

Ed Kruse
Stewardship Specialist
ELCA Central States Synod