

20th Sunday After Pentecost

Philippians 4

Matthew 22.1-14

Rev'd Lauren Martin

Come, for Everything Is Ready

There is a table waiting in the heart of Jesus' parable.

Lamps burn softly against the evening. Bread is broken and ready. Cups catch the light. Every place has been prepared, every detail attended to, every door opened wide.

"Come," says the king. "Everything is ready."

But the chairs remain empty.

One guest turns towards a field. Another disappears into the noise of business. Others answer invitation with violence. The music has begun, the feast is waiting, yet those first invited cannot—or will not—hear the call.

Perhaps their hands are too full. Perhaps their lives are too crowded. Perhaps the familiar road to the farm feels safer than the open door of grace.

And perhaps we understand them more than we would like.

We also know how to say, "Not yet." Not yet, Lord—there is work to finish. Not yet—there are worries to solve. Not yet—let me become wiser, kinder, more faithful, more worthy. We wait for a better hour, while grace stands at the door in the present tense.

"Come. Everything is ready."

Still the king will not allow the feast to remain empty. The servants are sent beyond the familiar streets, out to the crossroads where dust rises beneath tired feet and travellers arrive from every direction. "Invite everyone you find."

And everyone means everyone: the good and the bad, the hopeful and the hesitant, those who know the road and those who have lost their way. People who woke that morning expecting nothing more than another ordinary day suddenly find themselves welcomed into a royal banquet.

Now the hall fills with sound. Chairs scrape across the floor. New neighbours make room for one another. The fragrance of bread drifts through the room. Faces once hidden at the roadside glow in the lamplight.

This is the wild generosity of God: the invitation travels farther than we imagine, and grace gathers people we might have passed by.

HOLY HERMITS ONLINE

There is a place here for the one who is weary. A place for the one who doubts. A place for the one carrying grief like a stone, and for the one carrying hope like a small flame sheltered from the wind. There is a place for you.

Not because you have earned it. Not because you arrived without dust upon your clothes or regret within your heart. There is a place because the host is generous, the table is prepared, and the invitation is gift.

And then Matthew leads us to the wedding garment—that difficult moment when welcome becomes searching and grace asks something of us.

The garment is not the price of admission. The invitation came first. But perhaps it is the sign of a heart willing to be changed by the feast. To sit at the table of mercy is to learn mercy. To receive welcome is to become welcoming. To be gathered from the crossroads is to notice those still waiting there.

Grace meets us as we are, but it does not leave us wrapped in the old cloth of resentment, indifference, or fear. Grace clothes us in compassion. In patience. In justice. In love.

Paul gives that garment a simple name: gentleness. “Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.” Gentleness is the feast carried into the world: a patient word, a generous pause, a place made for someone at the edge, forgiveness slowly loosening what has long been bound.

Friends, the table is not a distant promise. The lamps are burning now. The bread is ready now. Christ calls us now.

Come with your hunger and your hope. Come with your questions and your unfinished faith. Come with the dust of the road still upon you. Take the place that grace has opened.

Then rise from the table wearing its welcome. Carry its light into shadowed places. Make room. Speak gently. Seek the forgotten. Let the life of the feast be seen in the life you offer others.

For down every road, at every crossroads, the voice of Christ is still calling:

“Come. Everything is ready.”

Amen.