

Lessons for The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 15, 2023

Psalm 23 ~ *David expressed his trust in God's care with the pastoral image of sheep to shepherd.*

Isaiah 25:6-9 ~ *On the mountain of God, a feast of rich food will replace sorrow of death with great joy.*

Philippians 4:4-13 ~ *Whether well-fed or hungry, Paul was content to know the joy of God's peace.*

Matthew 22:1-14 ~ *When the king's guests did not rejoice over his son's wedding, he invited others.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: A Feast of Rich Food

The Psalmist wrote: "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Isaiah could point to the last great day and a banquet of eschatological proportions. This divine food will be the defeat of sin and death and the triumph of God for his people. Jesus' parable tells of the same celebration in a different setting: a wedding banquet that is spurned by the invited guests. St. Paul contrasted great plenty with severe need but added that the good gift of God in Christ Jesus is abundance enough for all circumstances.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Gracious God, every good gift comes from your generous hand. You have supplied all my need in Christ my Savior, and still in many ways I want more. Help me learn to be content with your gifts and to be generous in sharing not only material things, but especially the spiritual blessings of your love and forgiveness in Christ. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God supplies us with more than we could ever need or deserve, so much that in our joy over His plenty we are eager to share with neighbors and friends, and yes, even our enemies.

OFFERING PRAYER: With humble joy we celebrate Your blessings in the past;
With confidence we look to You for mercies that will last.
We sing our thanks for all Your gifts to meet our daily need,
And joyfully we share Your grace in loving word and deed. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: We are given so much by God's mercy and grace, but still we long for more. Usually mistaking the material blessings for the greater good, we risk losing the spiritual gift of forgiveness and eternal life in God's presence. It is God's invitation, not our preparation, that prompts our response to Kingdom grace.

Questions to Consider: Abundant Blessings, Seen and Unseen

- What two kinds of feasting are described in Isaiah 25:6-9?
- Why do people throw parties, for example, as in Jesus' parable?
- When we are "counting our blessings," what often gets in the way of our joy?
- Name some unseen blessings that bring you joy.

Bonus on next page: Thank You, Lord!

Thank You, Lord!

. . . for little things that make a big difference,
and big things I don't have to control;

. . . for subtle things that mold me,
and tough things that challenge me;

. . . for my family and times we share,
both good and bad;

. . . for the family I have in Christ,
and Your grace that keeps me going
from day to day
and from now to eternity;

Thank You, Lord!

–Gilbert A Franke, 10/27/08