

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost – 2026

Isaiah 25:6-9

Philippians 4:4-13

Matthew 22:1-14

Your momma wears Army boots. As far as insults go, that one is timeless. It's not particularly effectual, but it's a classic and can be useful in the right situation. I'm not big on insults but I got a kick out of Don Rickles. Don Rickles once looked at a guy and asked him who picked out his clothes, Stevie Wonder? In the entertainment industry, Rickles described his life as a guy who could go to the Christmas party on Friday night, dish out an assortment of insults directed at those in authority and still have his job on Monday morning. Have you ever tried that? I don't recommend it.

I suspect that a good many of you have thrown a party. It takes a lot of preparation to throw a good party. Planning the menu, food and drink, is only part of it. There're the decorations, the manner in which the food will be served, the timing of various parts of the celebration, the cleaning beforehand, the trouble one goes through to make sure that your guests will be comfortable, the cooking itself, the music, the lighting, the repartee that you intend to foster between your guests, establishing the budget for such an enterprise, purchasing all the accoutrements, having the necessary flatware, the crockery, the glassware, the in-party cleaning – a big celebration is a pretty involved exercise.

Has God thrown a party? Jesus implies that that is exactly what God has done. No, no, no – God *is* throwing a party. God wants to celebrate! His Son has won a bride. It's a wedding banquet. God the Father is pulling out all the stops and the invitation list is expansive, all inclusive. The Father is proud of His Son – busting His buttons – and joy is to fill the land. God is throwing a party! The effort! The preparations! The expense! God has put all that He has into this party! And some are going to insult Him. Some will insult Him by dissing His Son *and* the marriage banquet and the consequence for those folks is going to be grim. The party is happening in real time. The insults are happening in real time. Look around and see it. Look around this life that you're living and see it. Look around and see the real time division between Christianity and unbelief and you will see this parable just exactly for what it is.

There's a wedding banquet here. You've been invited and you come knowing what God provides. Salvation is here – that's why you come. What did it cost? How did God prepare? What plans went into this feast, this marriage supper of the Lamb? Well, long had God planned this event wherein you sit. Through prophetic ages and the celestial movement of time, God prophesied the coming Messiah. He established His people Israel, a chosen nation, and the line from which the Savior would come was established. Through Noah, and Abraham, and David – the preparations were enacted. Temple and priesthood and sacrificial system foreshadowed the Son's arrival, announced His coming. The blood of the lamb, the protection from death, the food of the Passover – God prepared the banquet in exquisite detail, always focused on His Son, always focused on His transcendent Son. Grace and mercy and forgiveness were God's accoutrements. Sacrifice and triumph and dominion were the lighting, the music, the tableware. A banquet of salvation was being prepared, a banquet rich in love, abundant in love.

And it comes with a price. Boy Howdy, does it come with a price, a heavy price. Sin is a dark empire, a death loving empire. Sin must be paid for; vanquished. Real sin like lies and murder and rape and theft and adultery. Sin is a tyrant, a villain disguised as pleasure, disguised as relief, disguised as self-esteem. Sin is all over us. Death is all over us. And the Messiah is our Redeemer. That's the cost. The Redeemer must pay for the party. Suffering and death – that's the price. The wages of sin is death and the Messiah is humanity reduced to one. He came to pay. That's the price of the party. A cross is the price for the wedding banquet. Our filthy rags must be replaced. In your heart and out of your heart come evil things. You and I are sinners. Evil things are present in our actions and in our thoughts and someone must pay. God is just. God is also supremely loving. The Son of God was sent to pay. And in the most glorious way – the Lord Jesus paid in full! The King is proud! And He throws a party!

Personally, I love this party! I love the camaraderie at the party. The people at this party are loving and grateful and upbeat and sweet and active and giving and devout and I love it! Those who are here know what they've been given and that makes them rich in heart and soul. And we face adversity. We still face adversity. We get sad. We grieve for our brothers and sisters who lose a husband, a wife. We stand lock-armed with those who endure health trauma. And we pray! We pray for one another. Those of us at the party pray to the King for help, we pray to the King for mercy, for strength. And we invite more to the party, the Divine Service, the foretaste of the feast to come. Heaven! This party is predicated on an empty tomb and the kingdom of heaven.

Aunt Suzie is invited. Do you know who has invited Aunt Suzie to the party? Aunt Suzie is invited to the wedding banquet by the One who gave her life. The One who gives her house and home, food and drink, rain and harvest, healthcare and police – He's the One who invites Aunt Suzie, the One who gave her her body and soul, eyes, ears and all her members. And Aunt Suzie tells the King that His mother wears Army boots. Aunt Suzie tells those who invite her to the banquet that she doesn't much care for the King, that the King's Son is most definitely not her cup of tea, and she's got much better things to do. Yep, Aunt Suzie insults the King. It's a deadly insult. Aunt Suzie is going to meet an end that won't be all that wonderful. Judgment. God will judge unbelief. God will bring the force of hell on those who reject His Son. Christ's blood is our reprieve. Apart from Christ's blood there is no reprieve and sin will consume us, God will judge us, and hell is all that is left. It isn't just Aunt Suzie. It's Billy Bob Johnson and Thornton Randolph III and Ramiro Gonzalez and Florence Jacobs. They all say that they cannot come to the banquet, don't bother them now, they have fields and commitments that cost a pretty cow. It's an insult. It isn't a small insult. It's an unthinkable act of shaming the King and His Son.

I'm a beggar and the King wants me at His feast. I'm a dirtbag loser, an unworthy invitee, and the King went to great trouble to extend to me an invitation. Why? Because He loves me. The King loves me. He forgives me and blesses me and turns me away from sin, away from death and brings me into His kingdom. He gave me a wedding garment. He gave you a wedding garment. His Son's blood washed you, and you were clothed in Christ's righteousness. Your filthy rags were transformed by a sacrifice, by baptism, by blood and a cross and an empty tomb and water and the Word. Christ's holiness is your garment, a garment of salvation, and we wear it proudly. You'll be wearing this white robe in heaven. We don't trot our good deeds in front of

the King. We confess Christ. Wearing filthy rags is to promote self-righteousness and we will not do that. We will honor the Son. We rejoice that the Son has won for Himself a bride and we gladly come to the banquet. We are honored to come to the banquet. Life itself, eternal life, is at the banquet. The banquet is here at Christ the King Lutheran Church. The banquet is consummated at our altar. And Life promises more. More awaits every one of you. Heaven is the banquet in full. Heaven is near. Taste it in Christ's body and blood and savor every aspect of the wedding feast.