

Pentecost 20 – October 15, 2023
Text: Matthew 22:1-14
Theme: Just Wear the Suit!

When Noah was about 8 years old, Danya bought him a suit to wear for Easter. It was a little blue suit with a yellow shirt and a blue-striped-clip-on tie. Noah hated it. I didn't blame him. It was an atrocious suit for a boy to have to wear, but I told him, just wear the suit. Just wear the suit for a couple hours and make your mother happy. You have never seen a person wear clothes so grudgingly, but he did it. We even have a picture to commemorate the last time Noah was in a suit.

In our Gospel for today we hear of the story of a wedding feast and the one guy there who did not have on a wedding garment. First the King sent out invitations all over his kingdom to his people but none of them could be bothered. The reason the Jews got so angry with Jesus was that He doesn't pull punches. It is clear to them that, in this parable, the Father is the King and they are the people invited to the banquet who are ignoring the King's invitation. Here He is, the Son for whom they have been waiting, the one foretold by the prophets. He is standing in their midst. He has done signs and wonders just as the prophets had predicted. He is calling for them to believe and they cannot be bothered with Him. He's not what they wanted. They wanted a political Messiah not a spiritual one! They

didn't need any help with their souls! They were children of Abraham! What they needed was for God to kick Rome out of Israel. They wanted God to fulfill their plan and forget His plan.

We still see that just as much today, don't we? So, many people are breaking their connection to the Church and churches are scrambling like mad to figure out what to do to get them back. The constant refrain from Church leadership is "we have to increase attendance!" But no one can agree about what to do. One group says, "We'll do contemporary worship!" The other group says, "No, that's blasphemy! It must be high church liturgy!" Yet another voice is heard. "No, no. What we need are support groups for people struggling with sin!" Yet another, "No, that doesn't matter, people must be affirmed in their life choices no matter what they are doing." Churches are dancing the liturgical soft-shoe all over the chancel and still the numbers of worshippers are shrinking every day. The hard truth is that the 1940s and 1950s were anomalies and they are over. This is real life.

In 30AD people couldn't be bothered with Jesus, unless of course He was pulling fishes and loaves out of His sleeves or healing paralytics. In 2023, most people still cannot be bothered with Jesus. There's other important stuff to which we must attend! Jesus says in the parable,

“But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.” They could not be bothered with the King and His wedding feast. They were busy! What did the king do?

“The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.” The message to us is that God does not mess around. If you’re too busy to be bothered by worshipping Him and learning about Him, eventually you will be destroyed. That’s just the hard truth. He is patient but eventually, He will destroy you if you go up against Him or even just ignore Him.

Because the people ignored the King’s invitation, He invited everyone from the surrounding area. God gave salvation to the whole world and many came. Christianity is still the largest religion in the world. But, in the parable, there was this one guy there with his own clothes on instead of the wedding garment. Wedding garments were provided by the host. Similarly, God wraps us in the robes of salvation at our baptism. Why on earth would you refuse to wear the clothes provided for you to attend a great feast?

“Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Noah was only 8 years old when he tried to refuse to wear his little blue suit with the yellow shirt. Children often set their feet and refuse to do what is good for them, but there are many grown adults who do the same. They will refuse to do what God commands, because it was not their idea, because it doesn’t seem fun, because it limits their sinful choices. Stiff-necked is the word that is used multiple times in Holy Scripture to describe us. People who think that it is somehow noble to refuse God’s gifts, try to work salvation for themselves and, live life only on their terms, may kill their faith and ultimately, go to Hell.

That’s why we pray in the collect today that God would not deal with us in the severity of His judgement but by the greatness of His mercy. We are given the wedding garment in Holy Baptism. It is ours. We are invited to the feast. Everything is accomplished. The feast is ready. Just receive the joyous gift of God and don’t try to tell God how He should give it. Just receive. Don’t argue about who got in and who didn’t. Just receive. Don’t try to change the rules of the feast to appease some friend or some family member who wants the feast to be on his or her terms. Just receive and rejoice.