

10.11.20 L28P19 Christ's Wedding Banquet

- Throughout the four gospels, it's surprising that Jesus really did not teach very much about marriage... but Jesus sure seemed to like wedding receptions!
- In the Bible, Jesus seemed to talk about wedding receptions all the time
 - Jesus' first miracle, turning water into wine, took place at a wedding reception
 - Jesus told a parable about foolish bridesmaids who didn't take enough oil for their lamps and when they ran out of oil leaving them in the dark they missed the wedding. Meanwhile the wise bridesmaids took extra oil, had enough, and enjoyed the wedding banquet
 - In other places in the gospels, Jesus even called himself the bridegroom – someone waiting for his bride who would be his disciples and followers in the world and in the kingdom of God
 - And finally, Jesus told today's parable from both Luke and Matthew that is about what the king did when those who had been invited to the wedding did not show up
- In the parable, the king threw a huge wedding banquet, but those who were invited did not come.
 - The invitees had all kinds of excuses, the king very angry, and those who did not come were judged to be not worthy
 - So then the king ordered his servants to go and invite anyone that they could find in the streets... and those ordinary people off the streets showed up
 - The bottom line is that the first people who were invited did not come, but then the streets were emptied and the banquet was filled with new guests!
- It seems that once again Jesus was in a conflict situation
 - The religious and government leaders of his day were rejecting him and his teaching, and they were even plotting to kill him
 - So Jesus did not try to win them over, instead he preached in the streets and told anyone who would listen to him about the coming Kingdom of God
 - The leaders eventually put Jesus to death on the cross, but that cross became an even bigger invitation to anyone

else who would listen to take up their cross and follow Jesus – to follow Jesus who invited and called them into the kingdom of God, where forgiveness and life was promised, and where the Lord’s Supper from the night of his betrayal, continues to be celebrated throughout the church by his followers, and becomes the appetizer of the great wedding banquet that is still yet to come!

- So what will the great wedding banquet of Christ the bridegroom look like, when we as part of the folks invited off the streets finally sit at the Lord’s table?
 - We will be surprised by who else is there, because God has invited anyone and everyone from the streets who will listen
 - That means that we will not doubt be surprised at who ends up sitting at the same table with us!
 - We might find ourselves seated between Tom Brady and Nick Foles
 - That might be fun, but we could be far more uncomfortable with the people at our assigned table at the banquet
 - We might find ourselves seated with someone wearing a Black Lives Matter tee shirt, and another wearing a shirt with the Confederate flag
 - We might be seated between Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Mitch McConnell
 - And we might even find ourselves at the same table with Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton
 - We don’t know who will be there, but if Jesus is willing to empty the streets to fill the banquet hall, there will be all kinds of surprising people there, and we better get used to that idea NOW, in this life
- That future vision of the wedding banquet, needs to shape the way we live our lives and witness today, because we need to treat people now, like someday they may be at the same table with us at Christ’s banquet
 - We live in a bitter time in this country
 - And frankly, the bitter polarization of this election is just the symptom of the divisions that have been sharpened and deepened between people over the last several decades

- Poor and rich people have been played off against each other, supposed respectability has been used to shame folks who don't look, act, or sound like us, and even the language of faith has been weaponized by some believers, which has chased away and hardened the attitudes of people outside the community of faith against Christ's church
- But if we admit that the seats at the great wedding banquet will be filled with all kinds of people whom God, and God alone calls off the streets, then until then – until then, we will seek to be a church of welcome, we will seek to be a people of God who will share the invitation of Christ's gracious love with ALL kinds of people, poor and rich, scorned and respected, and even right-wing Republicans and left-wing Democrats.