

October 11, 2020
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 23
St. Mary's-in-the-Valley Episcopal Church
Ramona, CA

Opening Hymn: # 304, I Come with Joy
Sung and played by Joshua Charney

1. I come with joy to meet my Lord,
forgiven, loved, and free,
in awe and wonder to recall,
his life laid down for me.

2. I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread.

3. As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends.

4. And thus with joy we meet our Lord.
His presence, always near,
is in such friendship better known,
we see and praise him here.

5. Together met, together bound,
we'll go our different ways
and as his people in the world,
we'll live and speak his praise.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
People And Blessed be God's kingdom now and forever. Amen.

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our
hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may
perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name;
through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One.

Have Mercy on us.
(three times)

The Celebrant then says
 The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Let us pray.

Collect

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Exodus 32:1-14

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD." They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."

But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this

land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.”
And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people
Thanks be to God

Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23

Confitemini Domino, Et fecerunt vitulum

1 Hallelujah!

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, *
for his mercy endures for ever.

2 Who can declare the mighty acts of the LORD *
or show forth all his praise?

3 Happy are those who act with justice *
and always do what is right!

4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favor you have for your people, *
and visit me with your saving help;

5 That I may see the prosperity of your elect
and be glad with the gladness of your people, *
that I may glory with your inheritance.

6 We have sinned as our forebears did; *
we have done wrong and dealt wickedly.

19 Israel made a bull-calf at Horeb *
and worshiped a molten image;

20 And so they exchanged their Glory *
for the image of an ox that feeds on grass.

21 They forgot God their Savior, *
who had done great things in Egypt,

22 Wonderful deeds in the land of Ham, *
and fearful things at the Red Sea.

23 So he would have destroyed them,
had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, *
to turn away his wrath from consuming them.

The Epistle:

Philippians 4:1-9

My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Thanks be to God

Matthew 22:1-14

The holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew:
Glory to you Lord Christ

Once more Jesus spoke to the people in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said

to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Christ

Sermon:

19 Pentecost, Cycle A Proper 23, October 11, 2020

Exodus 32:1-14 Psalm 106

Philippians 4:1-9 Matthew 22:1-14

The presentation of God in the Bible is often frightening. Like when the people of Israel constructed a golden calf on Moses' extended visit on Mt. Sinai. So God said Moses, "This is a worthless, faithless people; let me kill them all off and start a new people with you." And Moses intercedes to placate the wrath of God and reminds God of the divine promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So, God threatened to wipe out the very people chosen by divine promise.

The biblical presentations of God, often seem to make God like a person with feelings, jealousy, anger, love and kindness.

We believe in God because we take the profound conditions in life personally. We project divine personal motivation on the things that happen to us. We project bad and evil on malevolent personal forces. As persons we cannot help but project personality upon everything that happens to us. When people did not understand causation like scientists do today, the mystery of causation was easiest to explain in terms of the cosmic being of God and fallen angels.

And as much as science has helped us to achieve, science cannot give complete precise answers to causation, particularly in how events feel to us when they happen. And because science does not eliminate feeling, we resort to art, spiritual art, inner meaning art to deal with what happens to us. We are not just machine bodies obeying the laws of physics; we are inner spiritual beings

with souls thoroughly endowed with language. And in using language we cannot avoid being seekers of meaning of everything that happens to us.

The favor of God in biblical language is often expressed as being chosen. And sometimes we might regard this to be like the winning of the lottery. But it is not like God drew Israel name out of the big hopper and they won the lottery; to be chosen is to experience being in relationship. To experience a relationship and then violate the vows of the relationship is what characterizes sin. The golden calf event was a rejection of a relationship because of unfaithfulness.

In the Gospel parable of Jesus, God is presented as a unrequited party giver, because the A, B, C list of invitees decide not to come to the wedding feast.

In wedding planning with brides and groom, I often find them very over optimistic about how many people will be present at their weddings. And it can be quite a blow when the schedules or the interest of the invited do not get them to the church. And bridal families can feel quite unrequited to experience a smaller than expected crowd.

God as the one throwing a big wedding party is excited to invite those who would seem to be in an obvious relationship with God. But alas, the RSVP regrets from the A list, B list and C list of guests indicate the obvious people who were supposed to be friends of God, turn out not to be interested in the big event. They have lost their relationship with God to the point of not being able to value what is important to God, namely celebrating relationship, friendship, love and union. When the seeming preferred lists of guests sent their regrets, then agents are sent to extend a invitation to those people who seemed to be unchosen.

What is the insight of this riddle parable? It turns out those who were regarded to be the preferred and chosen, didn't really know what it meant to be in right relationship to God. And those who regarded to be unchosen, were those who were flattered to know that the invitation from God was offered to them too.

And when we're all excited that the wedding feast has these new guest, we're shocked to find out a guest is condemned to outer darkness because he is dressed inappropriately. And we wonder, why so severe punishment for a minor dress code offense? Doesn't God honor California casual?

And of course, we cannot take a parable literal; we have to crack the riddle code. God indeed, has a generous invitation to the great feast, but attending the feast still has the vows of relationship. And what is our vow of relationship? We don't have to be perfect. And we are provided with the garments of graceful righteousness by God. But we still have to put on these graceful clothes. As great as God grace it, it does not mean that we can "do" our own thing. It means we have to embrace the path of repentance, or a Paul writes, a path of intentional excellence. St. Paul warned about not misunderstanding God's grace. "Where sin abound, there did grace much more abound....shall we continue to sin so that grace may abound?" Whoopee, since I've got a "get out of jail card" for everything, I'll just keep doing whatever I want.

The grace of an invitation to the feast is offered to all, and the Host for purposes of social leveling provides graceful clothing as a gift to everyone, a uniform as it were. Accept the gift; and don't do your own thing. Don't be like a single soldier or band member who decides to wear pink spats to "stick out" among the battalion or band.

What is the Gospel for you and me today? God wants to be in relationship with us. We're all invited to the feast. To make the vow of relationship is to enter the experience of being chosen. So we don't try to do our own thing; we accept the vows of our relationship with God. We don the garments of righteousness provided for us by the great host of the feasts.

And we avoid the false sense of being chosen. How can we be chosen if the invitation to the great feast is not important to us? Lots of people can live in this sense of "false chosenness" and not regard the invitation to the feast of God as important to respond to. Let us not miss the invitation. Let us not use God as a rubber stamp to "do our own thing." The feast of God is a feast of communion and fellowship where love and justice is the profound experience.

Do not send your RSVP regrets to God today. Attend the feast and accept the lovely protocols of grace. Amen.

The Nicene Creed (page 357)

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People:

We are invited to the wedding banquet which the Father is preparing for the Son's marriage to the church. Let us pray to the host of the eternal feast, that we may be drawn to the banquet, saying: Lord hear our prayer.

That all in our community may joyously and fully accept God's invitation, and that our heartfelt response be undeterred by distraction and excuses, let us pray to the king of the feast: Lord, hear our prayer

That all who hunger and thirst for the bread and wine of life may be drawn to the meal of fellowship in Christ, let us pray to the Lord of heaven: Lord, hear our prayer

That all leaders of the church may recognize that God bids the banquet be filled with the rich and the poor, the prominent and the unknown, the healthy and the sick, let us pray to the Host of the wedding feast: Lord, hear our prayer.

That all leaders of the nations may address the global problem of hunger, and that the hungry may be fed, let us pray to the Giver of good food: Lord, hear our prayer.

That Christians everywhere, abandoning anxiety, may nourish themselves on the marriage celebration with God and on the eternal feast prepared for all peoples, let us pray to the God of lavish and insistent love: Lord, hear our prayers.

Intercessions: For Debbie, Aaron, Michelle, for Donald, and all Covid-19 sufferers. For those afflicted by hurricanes and wildfires. For racial justice and an orderly election.

O Lord, supply our needs fully out of your magnificent riches in Christ Jesus. May all one day appear clothed with amazing grace at your Son's wedding banquet, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Let us confess our sins against God and our Neighbor
Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins
through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all
goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in
eternal life. Amen.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.
People: And also with you

Hymn: On Eagles Wings, by Michael Joncas
Played and sung by Rob and Deb Lewallen

You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord
Who abide in His shadow for life
Say to the Lord, "My refuge, my rock in whom I trust!"

And He will raise you up on eagles' wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His hand

The snare of the fowler will never capture you
And famine will bring you no fear
Under His wings your refuge, His faithfulness your shield

And He will raise you up on eagles' wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His hand

You need not fear the terror of the night
Nor the arrow that flies by day
Though thousands fall about you, near you it shall not come

And He will raise you up on eagles' wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His hand

For to His angels He's given a command
To guard you in all of your ways
Upon their hands they will bear you up
Lest you dash your foot against a stone

And He will raise you up on eagles' wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His hand
And hold you, hold you in the palm of His hand

Doxology: Sung by Rob and Deb Lewallen
Eucharistic Prayer B

The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Lift up your hearts.
People We lift them to the Lord.
Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and every- where to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who on the first day of the week overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Celebrant and People

Sung and played by Joshua Charney

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."
After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

Celebrant and People

We remember his death,
We proclaim his resurrection,
We await his coming in glory;

The Celebrant continues

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with the ever blessed Virgin Mary, and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. *Amen.*

Sung and played by Rob and Deborah Lewallen

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
People: Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion Hymn: # 712, Dona Nobis Pacem
Played and sung by Joshua Charney

Dona nobis, pacem, pacem. Dona, nobis, pacem.

Post Communion Prayer (BCP, page 365)

Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Benediction:

Dismissal:
Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God!

Closing Hymn: How Great Thou Art,
Played by Stanley V. Smith, Jr. on the Hammer Dulcimer

I O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the *worlds Thy hand have made,
I see the stars, I hear the *rolling thunder,
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed!
Refrain:

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

2 When thru the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze, [Refrain]

3 And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in-
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin! [Refrain]

4 When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art! [Refrain]