



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

2400 Eighth Avenue West • Seattle, Washington 98119

Mailing: P.O. Box 17029 • Seattle, WA 98127

206.284.1960 • www.queenannelutheran.org

✧ *Staff* ✧

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Children's Ministry Coordinator	Terry Anderson
Parish Administrator	Barbara Bash
Sexton	John Bryant

✧ *In Worship Today* ✧

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Gospel Reading	Lori Lynn Phillips
Hymn of the Day led by Meg Shaw, Lori Lynn Phillips, Joel Matter, & Cantor Kyle	
Prayers of the Church and Responses	Lori Lynn Phillips and Joel Matter

This service of worship can also be heard as audio online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 11, 2020

"Word Out" audio transcript



Prelude

Prelude on DEEP RIVER

African American spiritual; setting by Marianne Kim (b. 1972)

Welcome

P: Welcome, this nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Wherever you are listening, however you may be struggling, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God.

In Jesus' parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our traditional liturgy, God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship, we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great hope we look forward to the day when we will feast again at the table of the Lord, and we share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.

Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

G: And also with you.

Gospel Acclamation

Isaiah 25:9

G:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia

A: This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in God's salvation.

G:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel:

Matthew 22:1-14

A: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the twenty-second chapter.

G: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

A: ¹Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again 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.’⁵ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business,⁶ while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.⁸ Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.’⁹ Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’¹⁰ 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.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe,¹² and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless.¹³ 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.’¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

A: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

We Will Not Replace the Jews: A Closer Look at Matthew 22:1-14
Pastor Dan Peterson

What a challenge. Our reading for today, the parable of the wedding banquet, raises so many issues it’s hard to know where to start. It’s bad enough we have to say “The Gospel of the Lord” after the king throws a man out of the party for simply wearing the wrong clothes! We also have to contend with more serious problems, including the way Jesus depicts God throughout this parable as well as what he *seems* to be saying about the Jews and their abandonment by God. In contending with these problems, we risk the possibility that the outcome may not be what we want to hear.

And it isn’t. At least with respect to God.

Now, it's not as if God has a perfect record in the Bible. In the Old Testament story of Job, for example, God agrees to gamble with Satan over Job's life. "Take away Job's good fortunes, which you provide," Satan says to God, "and he will curse you."ⁱ God thinks otherwise, and so he allows Satan to wreak havoc on Job. By the end of the story, however, we learn that it was *God* who made Job suffer. Job's friends and siblings confirm it when they comfort Job "for all the evil that *the Lord* had brought upon him" (42:11; italics mine).

If we acknowledge God as the source of evil and suffering in the story of Job, something 42:11 confirms, we might be tempted to cast it aside as just another example of how immorally the "Old Testament God" behaves. "I prefer the New Testament with its focus on God's love and mercy," we might think to ourselves. But turn to Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, and you will hear Jesus, God's spokesman, spew threats of eternal torment and hellfire with an astonishing frequency, both of which stem from God.

The binary, we quickly discover, does not hold up.

Historically, most interpreters within the Christian tradition read Matthew 22:1-14 as an allegory. They assume, based on the comparison Jesus makes in v. 2, that the king represents God. The trouble is that this king doesn't *act like* God, or at least he doesn't act like the God of the prophets who, from Jonah to Joel, describe God as "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Instead, he comes off as vindictive, impetuous, and unpredictable. He resorts to excessive acts of violence for the sake of revenge, burning down an entire city according to v. 7. Even his compliant subjects cannot trust him, as the story of the man being thrown out of the wedding party illustrates (v. 13). No wonder Martin Luther regarded this parable as a "terrible Gospel" embedded in the broader narrative. Who among us could confidently place our faith in a God whose actions resemble those of a tyrant – a Herod who art in heaven?

Unpacking the "Terrible Gospel"

Jesus' parable contains two parts, the first regarding the refusal of some to enter the kingdom of God (vv. 1-10) and the second regarding how to prepare

ⁱ This is a paraphrase. See Job 1:9-11.

for the kingdom. Some scholars see the discrepancy as an indication that these were originally two separate parables the author of Matthew combined. Both parts, like many of Jesus' other parables, have generally been understood as allegories.

An allegory is a story that contains two levels of meaning – an obvious or literal meaning and a hidden or symbolic one. In some cases, the hidden meaning of the parable is so subtle or complex that Jesus must interpret it for his followers (see Matthew 13:36-43). We can see how Christians subsequently read the parable allegorically by starting with v. 7 and working backwards.

According to Matthew 22:7, the king, after his messengers were killed, became furious. "He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city." The city in question, according to the allegorical reading, would have been Jerusalem. Roman soldiers obliterated it, along with the Jewish temple, in 70 CE. Its destruction would have been fresh on the mind of Matthew, who probably wrote his Gospel 10 to 15 years later. You can see where the reasoning goes from here: if God used Rome to enact vengeance upon those who rejected and killed God's messengers, and if the clearest sign of such vengeance was the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, then this must be God's judgment upon the Jews who rejected Jesus. Indeed, the preceding verses *seem* to support this reading.

Let's take a look next at three of these preceding verses. The king, who gives a wedding banquet for his son according to v. 2, sends his servants out twice (vv. 3-4). The allegorical interpretation equates the king with God, the king's son with Jesus, and the servants who call those invited to the wedding as the prophets who either announced or foretold the messiah. The people reject them and their message, and so the people (according to this reading) merit punishment, which God delivers by destroying their great city and temple through a third-party (Rome). A third sending occurs later in v. 10 which the second century theologian Irenaeus interprets as Christian missionaries who, following the earlier prophets, complete the job.

Now, as you may see, we no longer have one problem: we have two. Read allegorically, the parable portrays God negatively as vengeful, violent,

capricious, and untrustworthy. Beyond that, it apparently suggests **not that the Jews will replace us, as Neo-Nazis infamously chanted several years ago in Charlottesville, but that we (as Christians) will replace the Jews!** The technical term for this reversal is *supersessionism* or “replacement theology,” which refers to the view that the Christian Church has taken the place of Israel as the chosen people of God.

(The alternative view, which I support, affirms that God has established two separate and *enduring* covenants, one with Israel and one with the Christian Church, promising never to abandon or revoke either one; see Romans 11:1-2. Scholars identify this view as “dual-covenant theology.”)

Supersessionism creates several problems, not least of which is the contribution it makes to anti-Semitism. Today, as white supremacy increasingly gains confidence, we must speak out against it. We can also do this “in house” by challenging our brothers and sisters in faith who read a parable like the wedding banquet in supersessionist terms.

So how do we do that? We read the text in context.

Expanding the Allegory

Now when I say we must read the text in context, I am not referring to its original historical context, although that can help, too. I am referring, rather, to its literary context. Two groups of people who make this difficult for us may surprise you: the editors of our lectionary, and the scribes who added chapters and verses to the content of the Bible beginning in the Middle Ages.

To illustrate my point, let me ask you a question. When you see the Gospel reading in your bulletin or hear it read during a service, do you consult a Bible to check the verses that precede or follow it? If you are like me, you don't.

When I attend church as a layperson, I unconsciously assume that the text, divided as it is by chapter or selected for our lectionary by editors, will make sense on its own. As a preacher, however, I must fight this assumption every time I prepare for a sermon – and lucky I did so for today! If you look at Matthew 21:45, just two verses before the beginning of our parable, you will discover that Jesus is speaking about a particular group of people. The narrator

confirms it. “Now when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables,” he writes, “they realized that he was speaking about them.”

Do you hear what the narrator is telling us? Jesus isn’t speaking about “the Jews” as a whole in chapter 22! He’s speaking about Jewish leaders, the chief priests and the Pharisees! They are the ones who refuse to participate in the kingdom from heaven; they are the ones who persecute Jesus’ messengers, and they are the ones – as Mark 15:10 and Luke 24:20 tell us – who crucify Christ himself.

Raymond Brown, a Roman Catholic biblical scholar, summarizes our discovery nicely. In the parables of Matthew’s Gospel, he says, never “is it simply a question of the replacement of Israel by the church or of the Jews by Gentiles; the issue for Matthew is the replacement of the unworthy in Judaism (especially the leaders) by a community of Jews and Gentiles who have come to believe in Jesus and have worthily responded to his demands for the kingdom.”ⁱⁱ

Reclaiming the Gospel

The parable of the wedding banquet requires us to examine our habits and assumptions when it comes to the ways we read or hear Scripture. Just by taking into account the two verses that come before our reading for today, we uncovered the profound error that results when, upon examining vv. 1-14 in isolation, we equate the identity of those who harm God’s messengers with the Jews as a people, rather than the leaders of their time.

Unfortunately, while we hopefully turned the supersessionist reading on its head, the allegory’s depiction of God remains a problem. Perhaps here we have no solution except to do as Luther did, namely, to criticize the parable’s theology, to weigh it against the broader witness of *both* testaments which portray God as “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

This, dear friends, is the true Gospel of the Lord. Amen.

ⁱⁱ Raymond Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 196-97.

Hymn of the Day

Wade in the Water

ELW 459

Refrain

All



Wade in the wa - ter, wade in the wa - ter, chil - dren,



wade in the wa - ter, God's a - goin' - a trou - ble the wa - ter.

Leader

All



- 1 See that host all dressed in white,
- 2 See that band all dressed in red, God's a - goin' - a trou - ble the
- 3 Look o - ver yon - der, what do I see?
- 4 If you don't be - lieve I've been re - deemed,

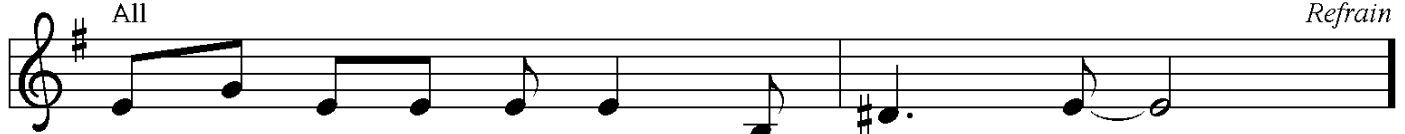
Leader



wa - ter. the lead - er looks like the Is - rael - ite.
looks like the band that . . . Mo - ses led.
the Ho - ly Ghost a - com - ing on me.
just fol - low me down to . . . Jor - dan's stream.

All

Refrain



God's a - goin' - a trou - ble the wa - ter.

Prayers of the Church

A: With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

A: Gracious God, fill us with a spirit of joyous hospitality. We pray for bishops, teachers, church leaders, and all children of God that we may treat our neighbors kindly, with dignity and respect, seeking Christ in them and being Christ to them. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Gracious God, as creation waits with eager longing to be freed from its bondage to sin and death, protect your creatures that are mistreated. Restore valleys, mountains and pastures, and bring rain where it is desperately still needed. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Gracious God, as you set a table in the presence of enemies, so bless the efforts of diplomats, international peace workers, and world leaders who navigate conflict. Inspire leaders to proceed with dialogue and understanding, so that justice and peace prevail. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Gracious God, let your gentleness be known among those who are weary or ill. Strengthen doctors, medical workers, and caretakers who see to their needs. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Gracious God, when we are quick to judge outward appearance, remind us how you clothe all in your mercy, and how all things are made in your image. We pray for ministries that provide needed clothing and other personal care assistance in this community including the Queen Anne Helpline, the Queen Anne Food Bank, Compass Housing, and New Horizons Ministries. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

A: Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: Gracious God, as we remember those who have died and who gather with us when we gather at your table, comfort us with your presence. Be near to us. Assure us of your peace at all times. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C: **Our Father in heaven,**

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,

now and forever.

Amen.

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

P: Receive now the blessing:

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

G: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

G: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Wade in the Water
African American spiritual; setting by Moses Hogan (1957–2003)

About Today's Music

Moses Hogan was arguably his generation's leading composer in the tradition of the African American spiritual until his tragic death in 2003 at age 45 from a brain tumor. Today's choral postlude is Hogan's exquisite arrangement of "Wade in the Water," recorded in concert by Northwest Repertory Singers and conducted by Cantor Kyle, who is the artistic director of the Tacoma-based ensemble (several members of QALC attended the 2019 concert when the recording was made). "Deep River" is another cherished African American spiritual, and Moses Hogan's setting for solo voice was recently sung by mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves as Ruth Bader Ginsberg lay in state at Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol. For today's service we hear an organ setting of this spiritual by Korean-born composer Marianne Kim, who serves at Christ Church of Oakbrook, Illinois and maintains a career as organist, pianist, harpsichordist, and composer in a variety of genres and styles.