

WELCOME TO THE FEAST!
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
October 11, 2026

Welcome, my friends, to the Feast! That was Jesus' message that day. His was a message of both condemnation and hope. He warned the religious establishment of judgment to come, and provided a message of great hope to the common ordinary people and the outcasts of society.

He said, this is what the kingdom of God is like. A king prepared a wedding banquet for his son's marriage. All his relatives and his wife's relatives were invited of course; along with his entire royal court; his noblemen and many advisors. As a man of great power and influence, his invitation had extended to every social and political and religious powerbroker for many miles around; kings and their courtiers; sages and socialites and the political elite. All were expected to be present. The menu would include a feast none would soon forget! It included every kind of exotic fowl and fish and beef and vegetables, and wine brought in from many lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It would be the most delicious, extravagant expensive feast that anyone would ever see.

The king sent his servants far and wide to call everyone on the list to the wedding banquet. — — — — And then Jesus threw out his zinger; the unexpected, shocking twist to the story. As the servants went out to every town and village with the wonderful summons; one by one, every individual who had been fortunate enough to receive an invitation, refused to come to this event of a lifetime! Well, when the word got back to the king of the people's refusal, he sent out even more servants to those invited, 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 against all expected social decorum, every single invited guest ignored the festal invitation; not once, but twice! Saying simply that they had business to attend to, or a farm to check out. And some of those invited guests even beat up the king’s servants and killed some.

I can imagine the shocked silence in the crowd at this point in Jesus’ story. Why would any guest ever refuse such an extravagant gracious invitation? Then Jesus, speaking in hyperbole, said that the king in a fit of rage had every one of those invited guests murdered and their cities burned to the ground. This story was meant especially for a particular group of individuals; the religious establishment; those who thought they were working on behalf of the kingdom of God, but instead were working contrary to it. Author C.S. Song in his book “Jesus & the reign of God” has this to say about those “invited guests”: “What [Jesus] encountered in the religion of his day is not the reign of God but the reign of the religious hierarchy, not the power of God, but the power of religious leaders, not the saving love of God but the fear with which people are taught to view God.” This was Jesus’ condemnation of the religious establishment.

But his condemnation was not meant just for the Jews in Palestine two thousand years ago. His condemnation extends into our day; anywhere where religious system or political systems or social systems oppress people; exclude people; reject people. Jesus condemns those structures that send the message that you do not belong among us; you are not one of us. If Jesus were here today, he would have many harsh words about many systems and institutions and individuals in our nation, and around the world.

Well, after condemning those who rejected the King's invitation to the banquet, Jesus turned his tale to a great message of hope for all people. And in the story the king had a problem; an empty banquet hall, and food that would soon spoil. He decided to send his servants out in different directions; into the main streets, inviting everyone they could find, both good and bad, to the wedding banquet. Luke's gospel adds that the servants were to invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame; those who were the outcasts of Israel. But there was still room left in the banquet hall. So, the servants went out again, reaching out even further, into the gentile communities; inviting to the feast those of other religious faiths and cultures and value systems.

My friends, welcome to the feast of the kingdom of God! God's feast will not be found among many faith communities with their strict moral religious codes of holiness that oppress and burden the people. The reign of God is found in the glorious freedom found in God's ever-expansive love and joy and life and Oneness. Communities where there are no insiders and outsiders; where everyone loves everyone, no matter their differences.

We see a slice of that glorious reign of God right here at Good Shepherd; where the hunger for God is being satisfied; where hearts are made whole; with God, and with each other. Where we serve each other joyfully and faithfully; where we give food to those who are struggling, clothes to those in need, financial support for those desiring to improve their lives; a loving spiritual home for all who need one. Yes, Good Shepherd is indeed a slice of heaven on earth! But it is only one slice.

There are many, many, slices of the glorious feast of the reign of God found in every corner of our country and in every corner of our world. It is found in churches and synagogues and mosques and temples and indigenous

communities and homes and businesses and prisons and slums and gated communities and among the royalty as well as the poor. Those seated at the feast of the reign of God are among the upper class and lower class and outcasts. ALL, are invited; and many respond; the rich and the famous and the powerful and the well connected, as well as the middle class and the homeless. None are excluded. And it is not just those of European descent who are invited. Those who respond to the invitation are made up of Chinese and Malay and Thai and Pakistani and Russian and those from the Congo and Zimbabwe and Sudan and Paraguay and Venezuela. All are invited, and many respond. They are children and men and women as well as those who reject any specific gender or sexual identity.

My friends, welcome to the glorious feast of the reign of God!