

FAITH @ HOME

Week of October 11, 2020

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 22:1-14

REFLECT: Have you ever been invited to a party? How does it feel to be included in celebrations with other people? In this parable from Matthew, we hear about a king who planned a party. When the people who he invited did not show up, the king sent people from his home to go into the streets and invite anyone they saw to come to the party. Would you go to the party with the king, if you were invited?

Remember that parables are stories Jesus told to teach people about the kingdom of God. We are generously shown God's love all the time—we are invited to the party! It doesn't matter who you are. God loves you and always invites you to celebrate this generous love. In return, we share this generosity with others, too! How can you share God's love with other people this week?

RESPOND: We may not be able to have parties with other people right now, but we can still invite people to celebrate God's love with us. Make a list of people who you would invite to a party that celebrates God's generous love. Are they friends? Family members? Neighbors? Write notes, draw pictures, or create "invitations" to send to these people, reminding them that they are loved by God and by you! If you are able, you can even invite them to a "party," either online or in a physically-distant way.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: VICTORIA HOPPES



Victoria Hoppes is the Director of Youth and Children's Ministries at Resurrection Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also serves as the Project Coordinator for Faith @ Home. She has ministry experience with youth, family, and camping programs at both the parish and diocesan levels. She holds degrees from Texas Lutheran University and Luther Seminary. She also holds a certificate in Youth and Family Ministry from Forma's certificate program. You can follow Victoria on her website, www.ministryincontext.com, or on social media (@vlhoppes).

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Isaiah 25:1-9

REFLECT: Are there times when you are sad, mad, or feel all alone? I imagine that, like me, you answer this question with “yes!” These feelings are a normal part of life. What do you do when you feel this way? Whom do you turn to? For me, it was always my mom. Even now that I am an adult, my mom knows what to say and do to make me feel better. Another place I go to is to prayer. I can share my feelings with God in my prayers and I know that I am not alone. I know that God cares. In the first part of the Scripture, the author is giving thanks for the presence of God in their life. “Lord, you are my God... I will praise Malcolm McLaurin, for you have done wonderful things...” The author is giving thanks for the presence of God in their life in the easy and hard times. They go on to name the great banquet that God will prepare. Throughout Scripture, we hear a lot about this banquet. For some, this banquet serves as a way to talk about God’s on going care, but most often is a vision of heaven. Either way, it serves as a reminder of God’s ever-presence in the life of the people of God’s kingdom.

RESPOND: This week, spend some time giving thanks to the people in your life who support you. This might be close friends, parents for guardians, or teachers. Say their name in your prayers and then tell them “thank you” for being a part of your life. In addition to giving them your thanks, give thanks to God for the generosity of patience and care. Give thanks for the generous love and support.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MALCOLM MCLAURIN



Malcolm is a seminarian out of the Diocese of Olympia and is currently a senior The University of the South: School of Theology in Sewanee, TN. His background is in children’s, youth, and young adult ministry. His 20+ years of experience has taken him from Mississippi and Arkansas to California and Washington. He is a husband and father of two wonderful boys.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 22:1-14

REFLECT: What a strange parable! Jesus starts off by saying the Kingdom of heaven, the place where God's goodness and wholeness is lived out, is like this king. In the story, there is a generous welcome to anyone and everyone but only after those who were expected to come to the party reject it. The king is rather vindictive. And he, after he invites people who may or may not know the rules in his house, throws someone out for not wearing the right thing.

Then we remember who Jesus is speaking to with this story. He offers this parable to the many who have followed him as well as the other people around who want to have him killed. He is about to die. He has given everything to the people around him, the people with whom he's grown up, and he's had his message rejected over and over again. After this rejection, his message goes to unexpected people.

In today's day and time, those of us who follow the way of Jesus can, at times, think we are the only people God invited to the party where God's goodness is lived out. Allow this story to remind us that we, too, were once the people God invited generously. That somehow, not because of our education or background or grades or number of followers, God made us honored invitees.

RESPOND: How might you invite generously today? Give something away to someone as an act of generosity today. You might pay for the next person in the drive through or give someone the sweater they've commented on every time you've worn it or invite a family who needs to be included to a Zoom call to play a game.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HOLLY ZAHER



The Rev. Holly Rankin Zaher serves as Rector for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Evansville, IN. For 30 years, Holly has helped people think and reflect on what it means to be church in today's culture in the Episcopal Church as a lay youth ministry professional and as a priest. If Holly isn't hanging out with her husband or three kiddos, she's probably somewhere reading, hiking, or making things out of yarn.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Matthew 22:1-14

REFLECT: When my husband and I sat down to dinner with our young sons tonight, we talked about what it means to show grace and generosity, especially in hard times. As I write this post, life has been upended: because of COVID-19, school has been canceled and we're to "shelter in place." So, we dipped English muffins into steaming bowls of broccoli-cheddar soup and gave one another permission to feel sad and angry – but we also gave ourselves permission to show kindness and give each other the benefit of the doubt. After all, ours is the Kingdom of God.

And when it comes to the generosity of God's kingdom, I can't get enough of the wedding banquet parable. Can you imagine trying to throw the biggest party known to humankind, only to have kindness thrown back in your face? Instead of wallowing in self-pity, though, the king used his anger for good. He directed his servants to fill the palace with anyone and everyone, both good and bad. When I think about his generosity, I can't help but want the same for my family, my community, and my world – even (and especially) when we find ourselves in topsy-turvy, upside-down, unfortunate circumstances.

RESPOND: A generous response doesn't have to be with our finances – it can also be with our time, our words, and our actions. In your interactions today, think about how you might show generosity with another human, because God first showed generosity with you. When it comes to your time, perhaps you block an hour out of your schedule to respond to the unforeseen needs of those around you. When it comes to your words, maybe you notice how much space you're taking up in conversation. Whatever it is, as you move throughout your day, think about (and then act on) how you might place a buffer of generosity every inch around you.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CARA MEREDITH



Cara Meredith is a writer and speaker from Seattle, Washington. Her memoir, *The Color of Life: A White Woman's Journey Toward Love and Justice*, released in 2019 (Zondervan). You can connect with her on her website (<https://www.carameredith.com/>) and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@carameredithwrites).

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