

Trinitarian Congregational Church

TakeOut

October 4, 2020

Prelude: “Amazing Grace” Lynne Walker
Sacred Ballads 1790
[Video - <https://youtu.be/SifMHRHdTAI>]

Call to Worship

One: The Lord is our God, let us honor and praise God’s name.

God has done amazing things, planned and promised from ancient times.

All: We have come together to worship our God.

We celebrate the One who is faithful and true.

One: Come meet God, whose love is as high as the heavens,
whose justice is as deep as the seas.

We will find refuge in the shadow of God’s presence.

All: We praise God for the astounding abundance of his goodness.

We give thanks to God for his saving acts of mercy.

One: We are welcomed to the feast of God’s great banquet,
We are invited to drink deeply from the river of God’s joy.

All: We praise God for the invitation to life;

We have come to worship and serve our God.

Gathering Prayer

We come before you today, O God, with thankful hearts, for you are gracious and loving and patient with us. You have invited us to the marriage feast of life, but we put off accepting the invitation. You have summoned us to celebrate the love of Jesus Christ, but we busy ourselves with other distractions. You have entrusted us with your covenant, but we have ignored our responsibilities and hindered others who seek your ways. Be gracious to us, O God, free us from all that keeps us bound, and equip us to live for your glory. Amen.

Word of Assurance

Children of God, hear God’s Word of promise to us:

Since we have made right through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who also through faith Christ brings us into the grace in which we now live. And so we rejoice in the hope of experiencing God’s glory. Romans 5:1-2 adj

My friends, in Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven and our lives are made new.
Let us praise our glorious God.

Gloria Patri

[Video - <https://youtu.be/OLz3R1hnUjs>]

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 25:1, 6-9

¹ O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

⁶ On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

⁷ And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; ⁸ he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

⁹ It will be said on that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'

Matthew 22:1-14

¹ Once 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. ³ He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴ 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.'

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."

Special Music

"Nearer, Still Nearer"

Chris Harris and Lynne Walker

Lelia N. Morris. Arr. Nathan J. Arnold.

[Video - <https://youtu.be/KfToveXgV74>]

Sermon

Wedding Invitations

It started as every wedding plan starts, with anticipation for a perfect celebration. But then suddenly everything was upended. It started with one minister accepting the date, but then he took another call and moved out of state. That was not a problem, the interim minister would simply step in to officiate at the wedding. Except that he completely forgot about it, and made another commitment out of town; one he absolutely could not break. Only a couple weeks before the wedding he told the couple of his mistake and promised to find yet another substitute. He searched for several days, calling every minister he knew to find someone willing to step in at the last minute - me.

Can you imagine how stressed the bride and groom must have been by the time they came to me. The reception hall had been rented, the caterers chosen, and the invitations had been sent out and the worship service had already been planned to the word. And here, me, a stranger, had to step up into the middle of it all. Who would have thought so much tension could be created by the words, "sorry I can't be there".

Now go with me to our gospel story. The wedding in Jesus' parable was another one of those wedding. There was the celebration, but it wasn't all joy and laughter. Instead there was distress in the midst of joy, all because some folks 'couldn't be there.'

In the ancient near east weddings were really big event. Weddings lasted a full week, cost up to a year's wages and took that much time to plan. It was a glorious celebration. So you can imagine the preparations that would be made for a royal wedding of Palestine. The King initially sent out the good news to all his nobility and allies. And apparently they all received the news with grace. But then on the day of the wedding when the king sent his servants to escort his honored guests, he was informed, "sorry, we can't come". That was shocking and insulting. Imagine if Senator Mitch McConnell refused to attend President Trump's presentation of Judge Amy Coney Barrett in the Rose Garden and you begin to get the picture.

But this king is gracious. He sends out the invitation once again, and his servants described all the anticipated festivities and imploring them not to miss the party of the century. But that did not change their minds. All they had was disdain for the invitation. Some blew off the request. Others made up excuses. And then there were those who not only ignored the invitation but mistreated and killed the messengers. Talk about putting a damper on the festive spirit. In that light, I think we can begin to understand the king's angry. It was more than an insult, it was sedition. And so he sent his troops to avenge the murders and destroy the cities.

Now imagine the reactions of those who heard Jesus' story that day? From the most lowly Israelite, to the most learned scribe, they knew the image of God's kingdom as a great wedding feast. They understood themselves to be the honored guests. They considered themselves to be God's allies and friends. And yet here Jesus is telling them all is not one big party. They had ignored God's many summonses, even though they were God's people. They had refused follow God's way, and they had even killed the prophets. And now they were refusing the Son's invitation.

They did not grasp the most fundamental character of being the people of God. It was not about knowledge or rules or traditions. It was about keeping a living, vital relationship between God and his people. What God and his Son really wanted was for them to share in God's joy by coming to the party. All they needed to do was send in their RSVP. But Israel, like the folks in this parable, did not respond to the invitation some even forcefully rejected it.

Can you imagine how God felt? Well, we know how the king in the parable felt, hurt and disappointed and angry. Is that so hard to picture? Not really. Maybe you too have experienced someone blowing off a party you had worked so hard for. And then you find out that they thought 'it wasn't worth it.' If you know how that feels then you know how the king in our parable felt. And in some small way you know how God feels too when we ignore the good news, the invitation of the gospel. We know how God feels when we dismiss prayer and meditation, fellowship and service, and consider it 'no big deal.'

And yet, there is still good news. Despite the inconsiderate response of the King's friends and allies, despite Israel's response, the party still goes on. They did not join it, but the wedding feast went on without them. Whether we or anyone else accepts the invitation and sends in the RSVP, the party goes on.

That is the joy in Jesus' story. When the invited guests refused the invitation, the King did not simply call it quits. The King was determined to have a celebration anyway. So, he sent the servants out into the streets and invited everyone else, everyone he could find who was willing to come to a party. Both the good and the bad were welcomed, the rich and the poor were invited, the noble and the lowly were received. No one was left out. The invitation went to all.

That's where you and I come in. That's where our party begins. The invitation has been sent to us as well, and that is good news. You see, most of us would never have been on the King's advisory board or called his friend or even been considered an ally. We were simply those folks in the street, both good and bad. We never would have expected an invitation, but it is there for us, an invitation to live as the King's allies and God's friends.

The invitation has gone out to the world, and to every one of us. The messengers have been sent, the party has already begun, and God is eagerly awaiting our response. We are invited and we are welcomed at the wedding feast of the Lamb. Now is the time to put on the wedding garment of God's grace. Now is the time to celebrate the steadfast love of God that fills our hearts with joy and transforms our lives with goodness. So what is your RSVP? For me, I think it's time to party.

Amen.

Hymn

“I Come with Joy”

Brian Wren

Chris Harris

[Video - <https://youtu.be/vH-6WhpLD-U>]

Joys and Concerns

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns that may be shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use.

Prayers of the People

O God, it is a joy and a privilege to receive the welcome of your love and grace. We thank you for the wedding feast you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. And we thank you for the Spirit who clothes us in the power of your love and righteousness. O God, this invitation is also an awesome summons, and so we turn to you once again, seeking your aid to live as your faithful people.

We pray, for your church and for this congregation. Grant that we may always celebrate your mercy and live for your honor. Most of all may we be a community who extends your invitation and your goodness to all we meet.

We pray for all our leaders. May they hear your summons and respond with faithfulness, living out your gracious care for all people and establishing your peace throughout the world.

We pray also for all who need your care this day. May the contrite find your grace, the despondent gain your hope and the weary receive your strength. Grant also your healing to the ill, your comfort to the mourning, and your provision to the needy. We especially seek your aid for... and celebrate your goodness to... Grant to us all the privilege of sharing your abundant love and faithful goodness with all our neighbors, near and far.

We praise you, Wondrous God, for your gracious welcome and faithful presence with us, through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray...

Lord's Prayer

Offertory

We have heard the gracious invitation of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we have the opportunity to welcome the world to God's banquet. From the abundant blessings we have received we give that others may know the fullness of life. Let us now dedicate our gifts to God's great purpose.

Thank you, God for welcoming us with extravagant grace and profound compassion. May our offerings help many join the feast at your banquet table. May our generosity reflect the amazing abundance of your care. Use all that we have and all that we are to accomplish your good will for the world. Amen.

Doxology

[Video - <https://youtu.be/5I7PEGUPAXQ>]

Communion

Hymn

“Let Us Break Bread Together”
traditional, Arr. John Carter
[Video - <https://youtu.be/D-zawjL8iWk>]

Lynne Walker

Invitation

Beloved in Christ, the Gospel of Luke records that on the first day of the week, the same day in which Jesus was raised from the dead, he sat at the table with two of his disciples, and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

And so for centuries men and women, youth and children, have come from east and west, north and south, and gather about Christ’s table, for this is the joyful, welcoming feast of the people of God. Here Christ is the host and we are his guests.

This table is open to everyone who wishes to know the presence of Christ and share in the community of God's people.

Great Thanksgiving

We come to you O God, with thanks and praise, for you are full of mercy and grace, and you invite all people to feast with you in love. Since the beginning, you formed humanity for a relationship with you. When we turned away, you remained steadfast, calling a people to Yourself, and offering them a covenant and a purpose to make your good will known. In the fullness of time you came to us in your son, Jesus Christ, who welcomed all people with love and invited them into a community of grace. When he was rejected and put to death you raised him to life and exalted him in glory and you poured out his Spirit on all who accept his gracious invitation. And so, with joy, we gather at this table, a foretaste of your great wedding banquet. We ask you to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and cup, that they may be for us the life of Christ, and we may live his life in the world. Amen.

Consecration and Service

The Bread

We gather now and remember that on the night he was handed over, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying,
“Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”
In his name, this bread is offered to you. The body of Christ, the bread of heaven.
Take and eat.

The Cup

When the supper was over, he took the cup, and after giving you thanks, gave it to his disciples, saying *“Drink this, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*

In his name, this cup is offered to you. The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation.
Take and drink.

Prayer of Gratitude

We thank you God that at this table you have renewed our faith, strengthened our hope and rekindled our love. Through the power of the living Christ, at work with in us, may we now share your gift of life with all we meet. Amen.

Common Commission

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Benediction

Go now into the world

giving thanks to God who has made it possible for us to share in what he has promised to his people in the kingdom of his dear Son. Col 1:12 TEV adj

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude

“Wondrous Love”
Walker’s Southern Harmony
[Video - <https://youtu.be/TZalZmyA6M8>]

Lynne Walker