

Pastor's Message
October 11, 2020

Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Hope you are all doing well!!

I will be on vacation this weekend and Pastor Wickert will be preaching and leading worship. Thank you Pastor Wickert.

Boscov's Fund Raiser – On October 14th and October 15th, Boscov's is again supporting local non-profit organizations through their "Boscov's Friends Helping Friends" program. This year there is no shopping pass needed as there had been in the past. You will receive 20% off most purchases and when you give our name as your non-profit choice, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church will receive 5% from Boscov's based on the total of your purchases. We will be listed as "Good Shepherd Lutheran Church". Spread the word to friends, family and neighbors.

Harvest Home – Pandemic Style – As you know we continue to distribute food to our neighbors at the Muhlenberg Churches Food Pantry each month. Since the pandemic, the food comes in pre-packaged boxes for the safety of all our volunteers and clients and for the ease of distribution. Therefore, donating actual cans or boxes of dried goods is not being requested this year. Instead, if you would like to contribute to our Harvest Home offering this year, we ask that you make a monetary donation. You can either mail it in to the church or you can drop off your donation at our Harvest Home drive-by collection event at the church on the parking lot on Saturday, October 17th between 10 and 12. Checks are preferred, but cash will be accepted also. Please make your checks out to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church with a note at the bottom left – Food Pantry. We will gather all the donations and send one check to the Muhlenberg Churches Food Pantry. If you would like your donation recorded on your giving statement please use a Special Offering envelope. The Social Ministry Committee will have envelopes available on Saturday morning. Masks and social distancing are required at all times.

Several people have asked about dropping off their offering envelopes at the church instead of putting them in the mail. The office is not open on a regular basis, but Dale Nelson, our financial secretary is usually at the church on a Monday morning between 8:45 and 10:00.

Our next communion Sundays will be on October 18 and October 25 (Reformation Sunday)

God's Peace!

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Exodus 32:1-14

The first reading is from the 32nd chapter of Exodus beginning at the 1st verse.

1 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."

2 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." 3 So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

4 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!"

5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made

proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord." 6 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.

7 The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; 8 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!" "

9 The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. 10 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."

11 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?"

12 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.

The word of the Lord.

13 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.' "

14 And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Matthew 22:1-14

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon for Pentecost19 (A) Good Shepherd, Reading 10/11/2020

One trend I have noticed in recent years is that fewer and fewer weddings are taking place in the church. No doubt there are several reasons for this. Fewer people are getting married than in the past. The age for marrying is increasing. People are living together without being married. And many of those who have weddings get married at the same site as the reception so that everything takes place in one location. Then we have the matter of cost. A small, simple ceremony with just the family and very close friends present is a lot less expensive than inviting two hundred people to a big wedding in a church.

When we hear the parable Jesus tells as our gospel lesson for today, we might easily get misled into thinking that, as we need to make elaborate preparations for a big wedding, we also are the ones who have to prepare for the kingdom. It's not hard to find that attitude in history. Alexander the Great wanted to have one world (ruled by himself, of course) where all people would harmoniously share

one way of doing things and there would be peace. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels thought their philosophy of communism would create a paradise for workers in a classless society. In 1945 when the United Nations was chartered in San Francisco, no doubt there were those who sincerely believed this would be the beginning of a lasting, sure peace among all nations. Lo, these many years later, we know that hope was never realized. These and other dreams of utopia people have had through the years have been smashed in one way or another. That's not surprising, especially when you consider that the word "utopia" literally means "no place." So we need to be reminded of what may seem elementary: it is God who ushers in God's kingdom. The kingdom of God has nothing to do with the reforming or revolutionary efforts of mankind. God's kingdom does not center on the law, nor one group of nations being superior to another, nor one political party being superior to another, nor upon a philosophy of life. God's kingdom

centers upon a person, Jesus Christ, in whom God has made himself known.

Imagine, if you will, what it would be like if you or I had to plan the kingdom of God. Here are just some of the questions we would have to decide:

+will all the members be alike or different? In attitude, in abilities, in skin color, in language in likes and dislikes?

+what will we have the people do? Will they sit around and strum on harps all day as they sing hymns of praise? With what would they occupy themselves if all their needs were met?

+who will be included and who will be excluded? Would we really want the tremendously difficult task of judging other people?

I know I would not want the difficult task of planning the kingdom. I don't think you would, either. The kingdom is God-planned and God-given. That's the first message Jesus gives us in this parable.

The second has to do with letting God into our lives and make us part of his kingdom. The persons in the parable who refused the invitation to the banquet were much like you and I: so busy with all the rest of life that there was no room left for God. One goes off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seize the slaves sent with the invitation, mistreat them and kill them. The words that stick with me about their response to the king's invitation are these: "They made light of it." They blew it off! They snubbed the king! This would be the equivalent of open rebellion against their ruler! Each of them had their golden calves that were, they thought, much more important than saying "yes" to the invitation.

+like the one who says he cannot stay awake for a 15 minute sermon and stays at home to read a 700 column newspaper. Who is he kidding?

+or the one who says Sunday is his only day of rest, and then gets up at 4:30 to go fishing, or spends the day on the golf course. Who is he kidding?

+or the one who says the seats in church are too uncomfortable and then sits on bleachers for three hours in the rain to watch 22 men push one another over a muddy field. Who is he kidding?

+or the one who says she cannot afford to give, yet who lives in a comfortable house, drives a new car, dresses stylishly, and eats well. Who is she kidding?

+or the one who says he has no time for Christ and his church and then spends evenings shopping, bowling, watching TV, going to clubs, playing cards. Who is he kidding?

Not God!!

God is seeking entrance into our lives by breaking down the barriers we have created by holding up the golden calves in his pathway. Only you know what those golden calves are for you. Has God gotten them knocked out of the way into your life?

Finally, this parable challenges another way you and I often think

about the kingdom of God. For too many of us, it is strictly an individual matter. It's about Jesus and me, we think, and no one else. What's missing in our picture of the kingdom is the fellowship we share, the whole people of God.

Suppose you received a wedding invitation from a friend. It was nicely printed. In a special envelope. An RSVP card was enclosed. You bought a new outfit for the occasion. You got a present that you thought would be the perfect gift. Then you show up at the service and there is just the pastor, the couple and you. You go to the reception and the same four people are there, but no more. It would be a strange wedding, wouldn't it? Likewise, when we do not include the whole people of God in our concept of the kingdom, we are telling and living only half the truth. Jesus makes it clear that God wants his banquet full. So leave your golden calves at the door and go on in. Many others have done it before you. After all, the invitation might not come again. And you never know when the door will be shut.

Blessing

May
God, our Guardian, protect you,
Christ, our Healer, restore you,
and the Holy Spirit, sustain you,
this day and forever more.

Amen