

Lesson Plans That Work
Year A – Season after Pentecost, Proper 23
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 22:1-14

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus’ ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word “ordinal” which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

This is the final parable that Jesus gives in the temple, and it is especially a difficult one youth to understand. To explain the parable briefly, many sight it as being an allegory of salvation history. The wedding banquet is given by the king (God) for the son (Jesus). Many guests are invited ahead of time and say they will come, but on the day of the wedding, no one will come and some, in fact, abuse the slaves he sent to gather them. The king (God) is furious and sends troops to punish them.

The wedding banquet is still ready, so the king (God) tells the slaves to go and gather all who are in the streets, good and bad, to the banquet. They come, ready for the banquet – all except one, who is singled out and taken away. This final piece is said to be not about a physically being ready, but about leaving behind the old and being ready for the feast, being ready for God, presenting yourself to God in such a way as to say, I have prepared myself and am here. It is also good to note that in Jesus’ culture, when one was invited to a wedding, there were robes given to the guests to wear and this man chose not to – he chose to keep his own clothes, thus not giving himself fully to God and to the feast.

This is a difficult parable that has been used to exclude people and bully people into being a certain way to get into the feast. This is really about God inviting us to come, choosing to come, and welcoming us to be ready when we are invited. Jesus is urging us to come to the feast when we are invited and to put on the “clothes” that God has provided for us. We are all invited into the kingdom of heaven, it is our choice to accept and prepare ourselves or not.

Theme: We are Invited

Supplies Needed: You will need two translations of the Bible.

Note: The children may be preparing a “feast” for coffee hour today, so you may want to check with the children’s teachers to see if there is anything the adults need to do before coming to coffee hour.

Beginning: Welcome everyone as they arrive. If you want to lead into the lesson, you can ask them what big party or banquet they went to most recently. What was that like? Did you wear special clothes?

Opening Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for bringing us together today to hear and understand your word. Be with us as we prepare for you to come into our lives. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 22:1-14

Invite the group to listen to the scripture the first time through, noticing what word or phrase stands out for them. Invite a participant to read Matthew 22:1-14.

Pause and ask what word or phrase they noticed.

Once everyone has shared, invite the group to listen for where they see or find God in this lesson. Invite a different participant to read Matthew 22:1-14 from a different translation.

Pause and ask where they see or find God in this lesson.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder why no one came to the feast?
- Why did the king get so angry?
- I wonder what the strangers on the street thought when they were invited to a wedding feast?
- Have you ever been invited to a party for someone you didn't know? What was that like/What would that be like?
- I wonder what this might tell us about God's invitations to us?
- How can we prepare ourselves to be ready when God calls us to the feast?

Note: If people are struggling with what this scripture means, you may want to read them the Notation for This Week's Gospel to help them understand a bit about this story.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. Thank you for the feast that reminds us that we are all invited and all welcome at the table. Help us to remember to always be preparing our hearts and souls for you to come into our lives in new and amazing ways. Amen.

Matthew 22:1-14

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

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

Written by The Rev. Shannon Kelly

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