

## **The holy gospel according to:**

### **Matthew 22:1-14**

<sup>1</sup> Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup> He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup> 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.’ <sup>5</sup> But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup> and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> 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.’ <sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The gospel of Christ.

## **Sermon - Thanksgiving 2026 - P. Eli Deifeld**

This weekend, we celebrate Thanksgiving—a holiday observed here in Canada, the US, and a few other countries. In Brazil, where I come from, there is no specific date for Thanksgiving. However, some churches—including the Lutheran Church—celebrate a harvest festival, also called Thanksgiving, usually in June or July, when people bring to the church altar items they have harvested, such as fruits, grains, vegetables, and flowers, as an expression of gratitude for the abundance God grants us.

Today's parable is about a wedding banquet. Jesus compares the wedding banquet to how God, throughout history, has reached out to humanity. It concerns the invitation God extends to people. First, the Creator sent the prophets, who were rejected, mistreated, and—in some cases—killed. Then, God sent their own Son. In the parable, the king prepares a feast for his son. The invitation goes out. The door is open. Yet people refuse. Some are simply too busy. One goes to their farm. Another to their business.

They are so consumed by ordinary concerns of life that they end up missing the extraordinary gift being offered. The banquet is ready, but not everyone comes.

There is another layer in this parable that we can explore. A feast in Scripture often symbolizes more than heaven. It symbolizes the abundance of God's reign: joy, dignity, community, justice, peace, and life in its fullness. Jesus says elsewhere, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Yet, when we look around our world, we see that many people are excluded from that abundance. Not because the Creator did not invite them. Not because the Creator did not provide enough - but because societies often tend to distribute God's gifts unjustly.

There is enough food for everyone in the world, yet people go hungry. According to UN data, approximately 7.8% of the global population suffers from hunger. The areas facing the most critical food insecurity situations today are: Gaza, Sudan, Haiti, Mali, and Afghanistan. Recently, the UN World Food Programme announced that it was forced to cut off assistance to families in Sudan and the West Bank because it lacks sufficient resources to feed the growing number of people facing hunger.

There is enough wealth, yet many remain in poverty. There are enough resources, yet countless people lack housing, healthcare, education, and opportunity.

The kingdom of God is like a banquet where there should be room for everyone. But our societies often resemble private dining rooms where a few feast while many wait outside. An example of this is the growing number of billionaires on one hand, and the rise in poverty on the other.

In the parable, when the original guests refuse the invitation, the king sends his servants into the streets. That is where the church is sent as well. Into the streets, toward those who have been forgotten. Toward those who have been excluded. Toward those whom society considers unimportant.

The servants do not decide who is worthy. They simply invite everyone. And we are called to do the same. Our task is not to guard the guest list. Our task is to widen the circle. To proclaim that God's table is larger than we imagine. To work for a society in which more people can experience the abundance that God intends for all.

In the parable, there is a person who is not dressed accordingly for the banquet. Perhaps you have experienced the feeling of not being dressed for the occasion.

One way to understand the improperly dressed guest could be by comparing them to a person who accepts the privileges of the kingdom but refuses its transformation. They want a place at the banquet, but they do not want to be changed by the king's generosity. In this sense, the wedding robe can symbolize a conscience that has been reshaped by grace, humility, and love.

The guest not wearing the robe may also represent someone who uses religion for personal advantage: status, influence, and authority. Such a person enters the banquet hall, speaks the language of faith, and enjoys its benefits, yet remains internally unchanged. Faith becomes a tool rather than a way of life.

Unfortunately, there are many examples of how faith is used as an instrument of manipulation: in the US, in Brazil, and other countries, political leaders have wrapped themselves in religious language, symbols, and identities in order to secure loyalty, mobilize supporters, or legitimize power.

And it's impressive how many people follow these leaders, even though their speeches and practices do not even resemble the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their concern is not the transformation of society according to the Gospel's demands for truth, justice, and care for the vulnerable.

Faith should transform our own conscience before God, not become a tool or a weapon where faith is used to gain power, loyalty, money, or social control. Those who have truly received the King's grace do not use faith as a tool, but they allow it to reform themselves.

Although the world is often unfair and prevents many from participating in God's banquet, we must also recognize a profound truth: the Creator continues to prepare the feast for all. Every sunrise, every harvest, every breath of life speaks of God's generosity. And so, let us pause in gratitude, thankful for life, for the beauty of the natural world, and for the abundance with which God continually blesses their creation.

Thanks be to God, the generous King, whose banquet is rich enough for all. The kingdom of heaven is not a banquet for a privileged few. It is God's great celebration where every person is invited, every person is valued, and every person should have a place at the table.

Thanks be to God, for the countless people around the globe who work to make tables more inclusive and the world more just. Thanks be to God for the food donated to the Shelbourne Community Kitchen during the Thanksgiving Food Collection.

Thanks be to God, who provides abundantly, nourishing both body and spirit. God supplies what we cannot provide for ourselves: forgiveness for our sins, clothing for our souls, bread for our journey, joy for our hearts. Our task is not to earn a place at the table, but to receive God's invitation with gratitude and to come clothed in the humility and love that God's grace inspires.

In our liturgy, God sets a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship, we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Creator, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life in God. Amen.