

October 15, 2023 (Pentecost 20 A)

Matthew 22:1-14

“INSANITY”

I’m going to be throwing around the word “INSANITY” a lot in this sermon message today. I figured I’d better look up the exact definition of the term to make sure I’m understanding it and using it correctly. My Oxford Dictionary said the legal definition is: “*Any form of or degree of mental derangement or unsoundness of mind, permanent or temporary, that makes a person incapable of what is regarded legally as normal, rational conduct or judgment.*” Yeah – that’s what I thought it was.

We are seeing INSANITY all over the place today! This invasion of Israel and the barbaric slaying of women and children is shocking, horrifying, and **insane** wickedness. Now we’re seeing mobs of people – on college campuses and all over the place – defending and celebrating what Hamas has done and is doing?! That’s INSANITY – how could people defend and support such horrific acts of pure evil? Our own universities seem to be experts at cranking out insanity – people want to destroy our civilization and our way of life – they actually think the “Green New Deal” is the right way to go! Simply turn on the news and look at what’s happening in the cities / what the government is allowing, and doing, and promoting . . . the word INSANITY fits perfectly.

We also see it all over in the next parable of **Jesus** during Holy Week – where He spoke to people who *should* have known better – but who *insanely rejected* the Son of God and who were actively planning how to brutally murder the One who had healed so many / raised the dead / opened the eyes of the blind / spoke the truth in love / welcomed the little children / expertly outwitted every single one of their clever traps / and was absolutely perfect in everything He said and did. The TRUTH and the FACTS didn’t matter to those wicked men who were filled with **insane** hatred and rage. Nevertheless, Jesus here was continuing to reach out to *THEM* – yes, even to *THEM* – with God’s gracious invitation: **Matthew 22:1–14** (NIV)

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. 4 Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been

invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ 5 But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. 6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9 So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”

Jesus opened the doors to ALL humanity to come – and enjoy the Greatest of what God Himself has to offer – free of charge, first to the people of Israel and from there to the ends of the globe. Who would say “NO” to this glorious Feast that **Isaiah** describes in chapter 25 where everything is the best of the best / in absolute perfection / that will never end?!

We see in them *insane apathy* and *insanely* messed up *priorities*. Here in America if you got an invitation to the White House – but didn’t care for the current administration – you could simply ignore it. But . . . back then you didn’t refuse the KING. That itself was *insanity* and it could cost you your life. But this KING – amazingly, was sadly all too familiar with **rejection**.

There are powerful truths and lessons hidden in these little parables. The parable right before this one (the one we focused on last Sunday) showed us God’s “crazy” PATIENCE in sending servant after servant to those wretched tenants – who murdered them. Then . . . and it might seem somewhat *insane* to us – He sends them His SON – who they KILLED and threw out of the vineyard!

And now, here in *this* parable, He’s ALIVE again – getting married, and throwing a huge and lavish wedding banquet. And . . . He, out of insane Grace, *invites THEM again!!* And . . . not surprisingly (I suppose) – they still **reject** Him and did exactly what Jesus described here. Even after His resurrection they turned their murderous hatred upon the Apostles and His servants who preached Christ Crucified for sinners – even for those who murdered the Son of God Himself. You know what happened as the Gospel Invitation went out to the Gentiles and how the Temple (and all of Jerusalem) was reduced to rubble in 70 AD. It all happened exactly as Jesus foretold

and they had no one to blame but themselves for missing out on this fabulous invitation from the King.

We feel bad that so many Jewish people have rejected Him – but we’re also so thankful that God’s gracious invitation has come to Gentile sinners like us. Especially since **we** – have rejected our Gracious King so frequently ourselves! Spiritual apathy and messed up priorities are things we know all too well ourselves! How often has God set before us a mini spiritual buffet in Word and Sacrament through worship and Bible study – and we’ve said, “*Nah – I don’t feel like going to church right now. I’m too busy with my chores and my garden. I work hard all week and I need to rest on Sunday mornings. I’ll make time to read the newspaper, but I just can’t find the time to be in the Word.*” After all – God doesn’t complain when I put Him at the bottom of the list. We all do it, to one degree or another, but it truly is insanity, and we DO know better.

The Holy Spirit wakes us up and sends us running back to our King for grace, mercy, and forgiveness. He makes us despise our sins and hunger to hear that our sins are all forgiven / that our King has NOT given up on us / that He still loves us and accepts us because of His perfect Son and the sacrifice that He made for us. Now we can’t wait to see our Groom and to be His Bride and to celebrate at this glorious Feast in His presence for all eternity.

We just want to *get there* – but **Jesus** adds a twist here and tells us something else we really need to know when it comes to this heavenly banquet: **verse 11 “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. 13 Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14 For many are invited, but few are chosen.”**

We might wonder *how on earth* anyone could slip into this heavenly banquet without the proper wedding clothes. Well . . . the bottom line Jesus is making is quite clear here: YOU CAN’T. Believers are draped with the robe of *His* righteousness (as Isaiah said) – and (as Paul said in Galatians 3:27) **“all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ”**.

This fellow was the one who thought he could waltz right into heaven on his own terms. He figured his righteousness was good enough, and that he didn’t need Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness.

People think, “*Hey – God will accept me just as I am!*” Well . . . that’s only **partly** true. Yes – He will take anyone – from those who *seem* to be good and decent folks to those who have totally blown up their lives and wasted them (like the thief on the cross). But – NO ONE gets in on his or her own terms. We must be brought to **repentance** and come to **despise** our own sin and filthy “righteousness” – so that we joyfully accept His blood bought forgiveness / joyfully accept His robe of righteousness – given to us by grace and received by faith. It sounds totally CRAZY to those outside the Church – but it’s the only way in. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6) and NO ONE comes to the Father (or to His banquet) except through Him.

Unfortunately, we’re not there *yet*. Instead we have to finish living out our days in this **insane world**. I think you can actually say, according to the dictionary definition, that everybody is insane! People call us nuts for believing that Jesus walked on water and rose from the dead. But we think it’s insane to believe that rain falling on rocks spontaneously generated LIFE in all its beauty, diversity, and complexity. Even God Himself comes across as somewhat *insane* here in these parables. He sends them HIS SON – *what did He think would happen?* He keeps on inviting people who obviously **hate** Him? *What is He thinking?* He invites the lame / the crippled / the beggars like us to His banquet? That’s not what you would consider “normal behavior”. No – it’s not. It’s GRACE – and we love it.

If everyone is “insane” in some way (according to some people) then I guess it comes down to WHO you are going to **stand with**. We stand with Christ Himself / with the Prophets / with the Apostles / with the martyrs – with everyone who stands on HIS WORD alone.

And – like them, let’s joyfully extend God’s gracious invitation to all the sinners around us. *But they don’t listen!* Well – we stand in good company I suppose. Many didn’t listen to the prophets, the apostles, or even to Christ Himself. **Rejection hurts** – but no one knows rejection like our KING Himself and we stand with HIM. The wedding feast is coming – therefore we are not afraid of death / therefore we are not afraid of life and not afraid to suffer and struggle down here because we know where we are headed . . . and how BLESSED it is to be among the few who are chosen by God’s Grace Alone.