

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost - Year A

30th Sunday of Quarantine (31st Overall)

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 25:1-9

Psalms 23

Philippians 4:1-9

Matthew 22:1-14

10/11/2020

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew:

1Once 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. 3He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4Again 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.’ 5But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, 6while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. 7The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ 10Those 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, 12and he said to him, ‘Friend,

how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless.
 13Then 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.’ 14For many are called, but few are chosen.”
 The Gospel of our Lord.

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

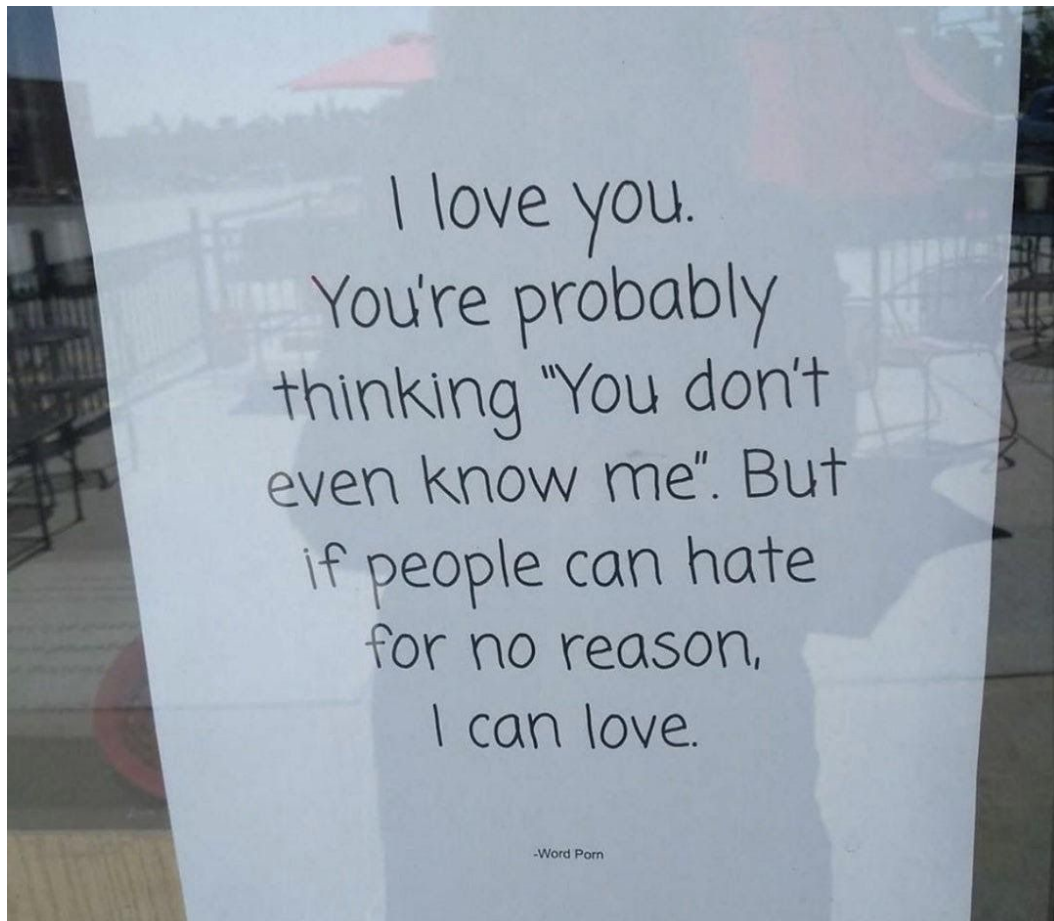
Unity

Good morning! I’ve been on vacation for the past two weeks and I’ve been spending that time in Wheeling, WV with my family. It’s been great, I have loved getting to see everyone, especially my nieces and nephew. It has especially been funny to watch the different family dynamics that are always at play. It reminded me of the funny relationship that all siblings have, and this is especially true when it comes to my brother and me. We’re only thirteen months apart, and so my younger brother Rick and I have always been able to push each other’s buttons like nobody else. This was especially true when we were younger, but as the saying goes, he is MY brother, and I’m the only one who gets to mess with him!

Conflict is nothing new for communities, especially families. This was true for the congregation in Philippi in the first century. In today’s second reading we get to hear about a little disagreement between two sisters in Christ, while not blood relatives, still part of the family and community of that church. What I find so fascinating is the way in which St. Paul writes to the community. This is a congregation that has supported him above all others, where love and friendship have been hallmarks of the relationship between all. But that doesn’t mean they can’t argue every once in a while.

So, in language that reminds them of their common friendship, Paul reminds them again and again that their bond together in Christ is one that supersedes all others. He calls them beloved again and again. The whole letter is rich with language of genuine friendship and admiration for this place, it stands in stark difference to the anger we see in Paul's letter in Galatians.

Things can feel tough for us too. Right now it can feel like the whole world is trying to tear itself apart. But God's love is still present. There is a picture that has been making the rounds on the Internet, maybe you have seen it. It's a sign that says *"I love you. You're probably thinking 'you don't even know me.' But if people can hate for no reason, I can love."*



It's a wonderful reminder that God works through each of us to be the change in the world. I often think about how we treat those we disagree with. It doesn't really mean much when we're nice to the people we love and care for. Even Hitler was nice to his dog, but we are defined by how we treat those who we disagree with.

I know, this can be challenging, but it means everything! Paul gives us a few guiding principles: *“8Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.”*¹

St. Paul reminds them that our behavior should be modeled after that of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh. A human being who gave up everything for everyone, even the people who put him on that cross.

I leave you with this. Think about our Psalm for the day, Psalm 23. It may seem like a sudden shift, but bear with me. We often associate this Psalm with death, but listen again to verse 5: “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” Whenever I heard that verse I used to think God was protecting the Psalmist from the enemies, preparing a table while keeping the attackers at bay. But what if I have been wrong all this time? What if instead of pushing the enemies away, God has invited us all to this table. What if we are called to lay our differences so that we can stop thinking about our problems, and instead marvel at the God of the universe who did everything to save us?

¹ Philippians 4:8-9 NRSV

“1The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; 3he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. 4Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff — they comfort me. 5You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.” Amen.