

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY

15 October The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 391 221 326 789 842 514

INTROIT: Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd. I shall not lack anything.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me to water where there is quiet.

He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of deep darkness, I shall fear no evil. For You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.

Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

COLLECT: Almighty God, You invite us to trust in You for our salvation.

Deal with us not in the severity of Your judgment, but by the greatness of Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

READINGS: Isaiah 25:6-9 Praise to God.

Philippians 4:4-13 Be united, joyful, and prayerful.

Matthew 22:1-14 The parable about the wedding feast.

Isaiah 25:6-9

⁶ On this mountain the LORD of hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet with aged wines, rich foods full of marrow and refined, aged wines. ⁷ On this mountain He will destroy the surface of the shroud that is covering all peoples and the blanket that has been woven over all nations. ⁸ He **will swallow up death** for ever. The **Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all**

faces and remove the disgrace of His people from the whole earth. For the LORD has spoken. ⁹ On that day people will say: “Look! This is our God. We have been waiting for Him to save us. This is the LORD, for whom we have been waiting. Let us rejoice and be glad that He has saved us!”

Philippians 4:4-13

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always! I shall say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all people! The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything but in everything make your requests known to God by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving! ⁷ The peace of God, which is beyond all understanding, will also guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, my fellow-Christians, keep your minds on all things that are true, all things that are noble, all things that are right, all things that are pure, all things that are lovely, all things that are appealing and anything that is excellent and praiseworthy! ⁹ Continue to put into practice what you have learned, received and heard from me and what you have seen in me! The God of peace will also be with you.

¹⁰ I am very glad in the Lord that now again you have revived your concern for me. You have been concerned but have not had an opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying that I need anything. For I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in. ¹² I know how to be in need and know how to have plenty. In every way and in everything I have learnt the secret both of being fully satisfied and of being hungry, both of having plenty and of having too little. ¹³ I can do everything through Him who strengthens me.

Matthew 22:1-14

¹ Again Jesus used parables in speaking to them. He said: ² “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding for his son. ³ He sent his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding, but they refused to come.

⁴ Then he sent other servants and said to them, ‘Tell the people who have been invited, “Look here! I have prepared my dinner. My bulls and fattened calves have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding!’”

⁵ “However, they paid no attention and went away, one to his farm, another to his business; ⁶ and the rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.

⁷ The king became angry. He sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸ “Then he told his servants: ‘The wedding is ready, but the people who have been invited have not deserved to come. ⁹ Therefore, go where the highways leave the city and invite everyone you find to the wedding!’

¹⁰ “Those servants went out on the highways and brought in all the people whom they found, both bad and good. Then the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ “When the king came in to observe the guests, he saw a man there who was not wearing a wedding garment. ¹² He asked him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ The man could not say a thing. ¹³ Then the king told the servants, ‘Tie him hand and foot and throw him out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!’

¹⁴ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

AN INVITATION TO THE WEDDING FEAST
Sermon for the 20th Sunday after Pentecost, 2023
Matthew 22:1-14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Gospel read before, Matthew 22:1-14: **Again Jesus used parables in speaking to them. He said: ² “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding for his son. ³ He sent his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding, but they refused to come. ⁴ Then he sent other servants and said to them, ‘Tell the people who have been invited, “Look here! I have prepared my dinner. My bulls and fattened calves have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding!”’**

⁵ “However, they paid no attention and went away, one to his farm, another to his business; ⁶ and the rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ The king became angry. He sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸ “Then he told his servants: ‘The wedding is ready, but the people who have been invited have not deserved to come. ⁹ Therefore, go where the highways leave the city and invite everyone you find to the wedding!’

¹⁰ “Those servants went out on the highways and brought in all the people whom they found, both bad and good. Then the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ **“When the king came in to observe the guests, he saw a man there who was not wearing a wedding garment. ¹² He asked him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ The man could not say a thing. ¹³ Then the king told the servants, ‘Tie him hand and foot and throw him out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!’**

¹⁴ **“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus was in Jerusalem during Holy Week, and His opponents were trying to trap Him. They were conspiring against Him. These religious leaders of the Jews had had enough. They had rejected Him and were already plotting ways to get rid of Him because they hated Him so much.

Jesus has been telling them He knows what they’re thinking. He tells them that because they have rejected Him as their Messiah, *God has rejected them* and is pronouncing judgment on them and that God will find others to take their place, who will receive Him. Jesus is telling them this by way of parables. Last week, it was the parable of the wicked tenant-farmers. Today, it is the parable of the marriage feast.

Jesus begins: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding for his son. ³ He sent his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding, but they refused to come.”** The king, of course, is God the Father. The son is God’s own Son, Jesus Christ Himself. Those who had been invited were the Jewish people, who had the prophets for many centuries to tell them of the Messiah to come, and the servants are the messengers God sends out, like the apostles, to call the Jews to come to the feast, that is, to come to faith in Christ. However, **“they refused to come.”** What a sad commentary on the rejection the Jewish nation as a whole gave to the message of Christ! **“...they refused to come.”** They were not willing and so declined the invitation.

Now, look what the king does. **“Then he sent other servants and said to them, ‘Tell the people who have been invited, “Look here! I have prepared my dinner. My bulls and fattened calves have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding!”’** What an amazing display of

patience on the part of the king. Those who had been invited and yet declined the invitation - they get other servants sent to them, repeating the call to come. These servants even go into detail describing what a wonderful feast this will be. **“Everything is ready. Come to the wedding.”**

What is the reaction? **“However, they paid no attention and went away, one to his farm, another to his business; ⁶ and the rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.”** They paid no attention. This gracious invitation meant nothing to them. They thought they had better things to do, and some of them even went so far as to kill the servants.

Finally, the king’s patience runs out. **“The king became angry. He sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers and burned their city.”** This would literally happen in the year 70 when God poured out His wrath on the unbelieving Jewish nation by letting the Roman army come in and burn the city of Jerusalem.

This is the destiny of any who declines the invitation to come. The judgment on Jerusalem stands as a microcosm of the final judgment that will come on the unbelieving world. It will not be good. Those who have heard the invitation to salvation in Christ and yet have declined - it will not go well for them. Their unbelief will damn them to hell. The warning is clear: When the invitation comes to you, and the messengers of God call you to repentance and faith, ***do not decline the invitation.***

This is a message for our time, and how many people in our society do we see declining the invitation? Lots. Many in our community - indeed, *maybe even some in our congregation.* They have heard the message of Christ. They have been invited to church, where God’s Word is preached and taught, where the Sacrament is celebrated, and where Jesus meets with His people, yet for some reason or another, they decline to come. They think they have better things to do with their time. They would rather sleep in, read the paper, go somewhere else like the shops or do something other than attend church, *even though this is where Jesus has promised to be present.* This is where He forgives sins and gives life and the power and strength to live the new life. How foolish, therefore, to be one who declines the invitation.

But then, even if we’re in the pew every week, are there ways we still decline the invitation? Yes. How? By refusing to take the message to heart. By letting it go in one ear and out the other. By not turning to Christ in repentance and faith.

So this parable is a warning to all of us today, as it was to the people Jesus was telling it to back then.

Jesus continues the parable. After the previously invited guests have declined the call, the king is determined that there will be people at the banquet for his son. **“Then he told his servants: ‘The wedding is ready, but the people who have been invited have not deserved to come.’⁹ Therefore, go where the highways leave the city and invite everyone you find to the wedding!”**

¹⁰ “Those servants went out on the highways and brought in all the people whom they found, both bad and good. Then the wedding hall was filled with guests.”

Here is good news! The Word of God will have its way, and there will be people who respond. The wedding hall will be filled with guests. So now we move in the story from those who declined to those who *reclined*. Why do we say “reclined”? Because we are talking about the dinner guests. The Greek word used here for “guests” literally means “to recline at table.” At a sumptuous Middle Eastern feast in those days, the guests would recline on dining couches around a table spread with wonderful dishes. You would do that at an incredible feast like the one described in our text.

And that is what you and I shall do, dear friends, at the great heavenly wedding banquet that God will have for His Son when Jesus comes again! Yes, you and I shall be reclining at table at the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which will have no end. Thank God that He has created saving faith in our hearts so that we do respond and say “Yes!” to the invitation. By the grace of God, and through the means of grace, Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts. God calls us to repentance, and so we see and recognise our sins and need for forgiveness. God calls us to faith through the Gospel, and we trust in Christ our Saviour, who has won forgiveness for us by His death on the cross. We have been joined to Jesus in His death and His resurrection¹, and we shall share in His resurrection when He comes again. By bestowing on us His perfect righteousness, Christ saves us from the judgment to come and brings us into the heavenly banqueting hall.

Without that righteousness, you won’t get in. That’s the point Jesus makes as He concludes the parable: **“When the king came in to observe the guests, he**

¹ Romans 6:5

saw a man there who was not wearing a wedding garment. ¹² He asked him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ The man could not say a thing. ¹³ Then the king told the servants, ‘Tie him hand and foot and throw him out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!’

¹⁴ **“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”**

We’ve talked about those who decline and those who recline. Now, here are the ones who ‘sneak in,’ or at least try to. For there will be no people sneaking in on that day. God is not fooled. He knows who has the righteousness of faith and who does not. There will be no sneaking in on that day.

So, thank God that He has made us His people by baptising us and clothing us with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Yes, we have that robe of righteousness we shall need to be admitted to the banquet. The prophet Isaiah says, “*I rejoice greatly in the LORD. Let my soul shout with joy to my God! For He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me in a robe of righteousness*” (61:10). We can rejoice that God has covered our sinful lives with the robe of righteousness. Jesus fashioned this robe from the threads of His perfect life. Then He wove it on the loom of the cross and coloured it with His own red blood. God freely gives the cloak of His Son’s perfect life to us, and it covers every sin, rebellion, and deviation from God’s standard. This robe of Christ’s righteousness is long and wide enough to cover every twisted human thought, word, and deed we are guilty of.

The wedding feast for the King’s Son. What a feast that will be! Earlier today, we heard Isaiah call it “*a banquet of rich food, a banquet with aged wines*” when God will “*swallow up death forever*” and “*wipe away tears from all faces*” (25:6, 8). In his revelation, John heard the angel say, “*Blessed are those who have been invited to the wedding-banquet of the Lamb!*” (Rev. 19:9). That includes us. We are invited. In heaven, sin and its consequences will never again disturb our souls. On this earth, we get a taste of that happiness when Jesus comes close to us in His Word, and, whenever we receive His body and blood in the Sacrament, we are receiving a foretaste of the feast to come, and what a feast it will be! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord God, heavenly Father, You are our shelter and strength. You are always ready to help us, and never leave us. We praise You for the great mercy You have shown to us sinners in the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ. We glorify Him because He has come to remove our sins by His sacrifice on the cross, so that whoever believes in Him may not die but have eternal life. We praise You, O Father, for Your great love to us, for rescuing us from the power of sin and death, and for opening to us the gate of heaven.

We confess that we are worthless sinners, guilty of flouting Your will more than we realise. We humbly repent of our evil, and trust for our forgiveness only in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Pardon us, and cleanse our lives for His sake. Grant that we may continue in Your kingdom as Your dear children.

Renew us by Your Spirit and teach us to love what is pure, holy, true, and good. Take captive our every thought, word, and deed, and make them obey Christ. Give us the desire to walk in Your ways, to follow Your Word, and to grow in it. Touch us with Your grace, that we may be transformed in character, firm in faith, joyful in hope, patient in troubles, and persistent in prayer. Fill our lives with the hope that Christ will transform our humble bodies and make them like His glorious body.

Fill Your Church with Your Spirit, that it may have a power and wisdom superior to all human knowledge. Give to all preachers and teachers the conviction and courage of true prophets, that Your people may be built up in faith and love, strengthened in service, and kept faithful to the end.

Spread Your truth and love among the nations, that they may receive Your truth in repentance and faith. Rescue them from error and godlessness, and move them to offer You true worship and praise. Bless our country. Help all to understand that personal advantage, public opinion, and party politics do not make a nation great, but obedience to Your will. Give us public servants and leaders in management and labour who are unselfish and far-sighted and whose concern is for the public good and the God-given dignity of every person.

We pray for all those suffering from war in Europe and the Middle-East. Help people realise that war brings nothing but destruction and death. Keep Your people safe and their eyes fixed on You.

Be gracious to our homes. Give to all families the gifts of faith, love, and obedience to You, so that each home may be a first taste of the joy and blessedness of our heavenly home.

We pray you to heal and comfort all who face sickness, pain, hardship, suffering, or danger. Teach them to turn to You for help, and to trust in Your mercy. Give them hope and a joyous release from all their burdens.

These things we pray in the name of Jesus, our sure refuge and eternal hope. Amen.

Article: When You Bear Your Cross, Christ Is Your King

Many Christians have a cross somewhere in their home - a religious plaque, perhaps, or maybe a painting. Some wear crosses around their neck or other jewellery. Others have a cross tattooed into their skin. I suppose these crosses mean different things to different people, but all crosses have one thing in common: they distil the essence of our faith. Whether an empty cross or a crucifix bearing the image of the crucified Redeemer, every cross captures the core of the Christian hope. Because Jesus Christ was crucified and has risen from the dead, there is forgiveness as well as the promise of resurrection into life everlasting for every believing sinner.

The cross is the sign of our salvation.

To preach Christ is always to preach His cross. As the apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians, *“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). The Christian gospel isn’t sophisticated; no wonder highbrows so often scorn it. The cross is offensive. It grates on us that God would achieve His highest purpose through lowly degradation and in such disgusting squalor by using human flesh and bone; nails, spear, and wood; blood, sweat, and spit.

In the Gospel that Jesus proclaims, everything is turned inside out and upside down. In our world, winners take all. In His kingdom, the best take the lowest seat: *“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (Luke 14:11). Likewise, whoever signs on with Jesus needs a radical attitude adjustment: *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it”* (Mark 8:34-35).

Just what does it mean to deny yourself and take up your cross? Some have turned their back on riches and fame and taken up serving the poor and destitute in Jesus’ name. Others have given up promising careers in impressive fields and gone to seminary to learn to preach the gospel and pastor churches. Still others contend with physical disability or chronic illness every day of their lives. Some are mocked regularly and ridiculed as bigots or haters because they uphold biblical truth instead of cultural fads. Each of these instances fit into a larger

pattern: the Christian life is upside down. It follows the pattern of Jesus' cross. As He won by losing, so we live by dying. In His cross and by His death He won life for us all. So upon His invitation we follow Jesus even though it may bring us suffering, misery, and loss.

For all, the cross is the sign of challenge.

In response to Jesus' call, people in every generation have confessed Him boldly in word and deed, no matter the consequences. Sometimes it leads to martyrdom. That price can be high. But to be a Christian witness doesn't always call for martyrdom. Neither do you need to be a pastor or missionary or social service worker to serve Jesus. Every Christian in his or her daily calling is challenged to put Jesus and His kingdom above every selfish motivation - to deny themselves, in other words - then follow Jesus where He takes them.

No matter your circumstances or daily occupations, Jesus is calling you to follow His lead - even if He takes you to places you would rather not go. Whether you're young or old, married or single, no matter your job or role in society - Jesus' invitation is challenging. "Deny yourself," He says. "Take up your cross and follow Me."

Jesus would be easier to follow if He would leave out that part about the cross. But that's the thing about Jesus: He's inseparable from His cross. Self-denial and hardship come together in His discipleship package. You can't sidestep the cross.

Frankly, Jesus wouldn't be much of a Saviour without His cross, would He? By His cross and in His death, He rescued us from sin, death, and hell. The cross was the price He paid to free us from that bondage. Because of our sins, we deserve nothing but God's judgment and condemnation, yet Jesus has cancelled out the judgment we deserved by His redeeming death. "This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). Likewise, He has trounced Satan and his demonic horde publicly with His cross. "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in the cross" (Colossians 2:15).

Since Christ Jesus laid down his life for us, forgiveness and a whole eternity of joy and bliss await every believing sinner in the resurrection. The cross isn't so bad if it's the cross of Jesus - for by His cross He has won our salvation.

Children's Message:

Are you hungry? How many of you ate before you came to church today? How many of you will eat when you get home? Every one of us knows what it feels like to be hungry.

Let's imagine for a moment that you're out to eat with your family and you're told you can have anything on the menu you want. What would you pick? If you were given the chance, would you start with dessert first? Would you choose only vegetables? How many of you would pick chicken or steak? Would you want a hamburger or brussels sprouts? Each of us might choose something different. But every one of us could probably find things on the menu that we think are the very best - the things we'd choose if we could choose anything.

Unfortunately, sometimes you can't get some of the things on the menu you think are the very best. Like maybe they only baked one chocolate cake today, and other people already ate all the pieces. They're all out. Or maybe some things on the menu I think are the best are too expensive.

In today's First Reading from Isaiah 25, the prophet Isaiah talks about a very special meal. Isaiah is describing the meal we'll enjoy in heaven - the heavenly banquet, we sometimes call it. We don't know exactly what heaven will be like, but the Bible describes gathering around a table for a wonderful meal with Jesus. And guess what? Isaiah



says it'll be a *"banquet with aged wines, rich foods full of marrow and refined, aged wines."* I'm not going to suggest you have any of the aged wine, but you would probably really enjoy the rich food and best of meats. It's going to be like looking at the menu and saying, "That's the best! That's what I want to have!" And nobody will have to say, "Oh, they're all out of that," or "Can't have that. It's too expensive." Whatever kind of food Isaiah's talking about, the Lord is going to give us the very best.

That's because Jesus has earned the very best for us and paid for it by dying on the cross for us. Heaven will be the very best of everything! And we'll get to have it all because of Jesus! *Thank You Jesus for inviting me to Your heavenly feast. May I hunger every day to feast Your Word. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

22 October 21 Pentecost	29 October The Reformation	5 November All Saints' Day
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	10.00am HC AELC Service at Trinity Marburg, followed by our Children's Sunday School Picnic. 9.00am OAK LR	9.30am OAK HC Confirmation Service 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD LR
Sunday, 22 October		
READINGS: Isaiah 45:1-7; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22		
HYMNS: 166 457 757 (tune 339) (356 71) 556		
Sunday, 29 October		
READINGS: Revelation 14:6-7; Romans 3:19-28 Matthew 11:12-19		
HYMNS: 468 195 418 (368 285) 465		

The next CoC/Sem Committee meeting set down for 11 November at Marburg will have to be moved to 18 November (Pastor will be away on the 11th). Will this suit our reps?

Reformation Day Service

Everyone is invited to the AELC service at Marburg, followed by the Children's Sunday School picnic. Could each family please provide something for a shared lunch? A BBQ will also be running, with the loose offering for the day going towards the cost. Please come along if you can! For those that cannot make it, a 9.00am LR service will be held at Trinity Oakey.

October Bible Studies

Thursday, 19 October, 10.00am, Lowood/Marburg at Lowood.

Sunday, 22 October, 8.00am Toowoomba.

Thursday, 26 October, 7.30pm Greenwood.

Friday, 27 October, 7.30pm Oakey/Aubigny at Oakey.