



Sunday, October 11, 2020
19th Sunday after Pentecost
Holy Communion

In Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus' parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads 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

Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.

WELCOME! We are glad to have you join us in worship today. Here are a few notes to help you feel more at home participating in our worship.

Worshipping. Today's service is printed in this bulletin. Parts in bold indicate responses by everyone in which you are invited to participate.

Adjustments to our service. In order to comply with safety and social distancing guidelines, it will be mandatory that everyone have a face covering and everyone must be mindful of keeping their distance from others. Please refrain from mingling in confined spaces before and/or after service.

Other adjustments are:

- Congregational singing is discouraged. If you feel you must, please sing softly with your mask in place.
- The sign of the PEACE will be offered by a wave or bow while staying in place.
- The OFFERING PLATE will not be passed or brought forward. It will be in the back of the sanctuary instead.
- If this is a service of HOLY COMMUNION, communion elements will be available as you exit the sanctuary.
- At the conclusion of the service, everyone is asked to remain in their pew. Ushers will dismiss people by row to maintain safe spacing.
- The Sanctuary, Narthex and Broadway lobby are the only areas open. All other areas of St. Stephen's are closed.

Prayer Requests. Please call the office if you'd like to place someone on our prayer list.

PRELUDE: The Lord's My Shepherd

+ GATHERING +

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

C Amen.

P Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Most merciful God,

C we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

GATHERING SONG: *Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!* (ELW 873)

All are invited to listen.

*Rejoice, ye pure in heart!
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing;
your festal banner wave on high,
the cross of Christ your king.*

Refrain

*Rejoice! Rejoice!
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!*

GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.

CALL TO WORSHIP

P Caring Shepherd,
you supply all our needs.

C We celebrate God's generous care of us all.

P Good Shepherd,
you take us by the hand and lead us through the dark and fearful times in life.

C We celebrate God's compassion and understanding.

P Gracious Shepherd,
your goodness and mercy nurtures and blesses us, and it enriches our soul.

**C As we worship you, we share together in the feast you prepare for us,
and it restores and refreshes us. Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Let us pray. Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

+ WORD +

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 25:1-9

After a hymn of praise acknowledging God as a shelter for the poor, the prophet portrays a wonderful victory banquet at which death—which in ancient Canaan was depicted as a monster swallowing up everyone—will be swallowed up forever. The prophet urges celebration of this victory of salvation.

A reading from Isaiah.

¹O LORD, you are my God;

I will exalt you, I will praise your name;
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

²For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;
the palace of aliens is a city no more,
it will never be rebuilt.

³Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.

⁴For you have been a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.

When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,
⁵the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

⁶On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

⁷And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

⁸he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.

This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.
...The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: PSALM 23

*The psalm for the day is read responsively. The lector will read the plain text and all are invited to read the text in **bold**.*

¹The LORD| is my shepherd;
I shall not | be in want.

²**The LORD makes me lie down | in green pastures
and leads me be- | side still waters.**

³You restore my | soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways | for your name's sake.

⁴**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall | 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, and my cup is | running over.

⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days | of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the | LORD forever.**

SECOND READING: Philippians 4:1-9

Though writing from prison and facing an uncertain future, Paul calls on the Philippians to rejoice and give thanks to God no matter what the circumstance. God's peace is with us and binds together our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, especially when things around us do not seem peaceful.

A reading from Philippians.

¹My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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.

...The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus tells a parable indicating that the blessings of God's kingdom are available to all, but the invitation is not to be taken lightly.

P The holy gospel according to Matthew.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

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 the Lord. **C Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: *Give Thanks* (TFF 292)

All are invited to stand and listen as the Word of God is proclaimed in song.

*Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One,
give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One,
give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son.*

*And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"
let the poor say, "I am rich,"
because of what the Lord has done for us.
And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"
let the poor say, "I am rich,"
because of what the Lord has done for us.
Give thanks!*

APOSTLES' CREED

A With the whole Church, we confess our faith.

**C I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

A Gracious host, fill your church with a spirit of joyous hospitality. We pray for bishops, teachers, church leaders, and all children of God as they invite others to your table of boundless grace. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A Gracious host, as creation waits with eager longing for redemption, protect your creatures that are mistreated. Restore valleys, mountains and pastures, and still and running waters. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A Gracious host, as you set a table in the presence of enemies, so bless the efforts of diplomats, international peace workers, and world leaders who navigate conflict. May they proceed with dialogue and understanding, so that justice and peace prevails.

Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A Gracious host, let your gentleness be known among those who are weary or ill. We pray especially for Romaine, Susan and all those we name aloud or in the silence of our hearts...*brief silence*... Strengthen doctors, medical care workers, and caretakers who see to their needs. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A Gracious host, when we are quick to judge outward appearance, remind us how you clothe all in your mercy. We pray for ministries that provide needed clothing and other personal care assistance in this community. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

PEACE

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace with a wave or bow while staying in place

MUSICAL INTERLUDE: *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*

+ MEAL +
God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.
Pour out your Holy Spirit,
that by this Holy Communion we may know
the unity we share with all your people
in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.
C Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

P Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.
**C Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Communion will be distributed at the conclusion of our worship service as you exit the sanctuary. After the presiding minister hands you the wafer, take one individual cup of wine or juice, partake of communion and dispose of the used cup.

+ SENDING +
God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.
C **Amen.**

SENDING SONG: *I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy* (TFF 257)
All are invited to listen.

*I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy,
down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart;
I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy,
down in my heart, down in my heart to stay.*

DISMISSAL

A Go in peace. Christ is with you.
C **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE: We Shall Rise Again

Justice for All

As we try to make sense of today's unsettling parable, it helps to recall that it was told during the last week of Jesus' life, as the events leading to the crucifixion were already unfolding. The Jews gathered in Jerusalem were celebrating Passover, recalling how God had led them from slavery into freedom—and yet they were living under the oppressive thumb of the Roman occupation.

The wedding banquet of the parable, like the festival of Passover, takes place against a backdrop of exclusion, injustice, and escalating violence. The king of the parable who sends troops out to wage war on those who have spurned his invitation reminds one less of God, who leads us beside still waters, than of Lin-Manuel Miranda's King George III of *Hamilton*, who says, "I will kill your friends and family to remind you of my love." And yet, to a people who are oppressed and calling on God to hold the powerful to account, it is indeed good news that God will not be silent and passive forever. It matters to God how we treat one another.

In the liturgy of Holy Baptism, we are asked three times to renounce sin and the devil and all the forces that defy God, rebel against God, and draw us away from God. This renunciation can feel awkward to a people steeped in grace, yet it is critical to recognize and name the fact that there are forces in this world that would pull us into complicity with systems that deny life and liberty to our neighbors.

The God of Matthew's parable is the same God of Psalm 23, the one who walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus reminds us how passionately God resists the powers that deal in fear and death. Instead of claiming that God is on our side, we are invited to join God's side through our own dedication to justice for all of God's people.