

# **"Jesus Brings the Party"**

## **Mark 13:33-37**

Why hasn't Jesus returned yet? We know he is going to come back, but what could be taking him so long? The Advent season is a time of waiting for the coming of Christ.

I believe our Gospel text for this morning, the book of Revelation at the end of the Bible, and other places in Scripture do a good job of explaining what's taking so long for the second coming of Jesus.

Revelation 19:6-9: John's vision of heaven. "Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder peals, crying Hallelujah! For the Lord, our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" — for the linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb'."

You know, every once in a while, at funerals we hear about the marriage feast, the wedding reception going on in heaven. And we are consoled that our loved ones who have gone before us are now participating in that eternal wedding feast. But we don't hear about that wedding party too much on Sunday mornings. This morning Jesus is telling us that it is precisely that wedding feast that is delaying his second coming.

The same story that Mark describes of Jesus' second coming is also told in the Gospel of Luke. Luke begins his story in 12:35-36 with these words -- "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks".

Again, in Revelation 3:20, Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

The imagery of the coming of the Lord in this parable and in the book of Revelation is party imagery: Jesus comes to us from a party with our loved ones who have gone before us, and he brings the party with him. And, he has made it clear that he will keep the party going both now and forever: now, in the mystery of the Lord's Supper and, forever, at the "Supper of the Lamb" so vividly described in the book of Revelation.

Jesus brings the party. And it is our great luck that he will come home in a good mood. He will not come all upset about our failures and past performances but will come with a song in his heart and a breakfast to end all breakfasts in his hands: bacon, sausage, corned beef hash, and eggs sunny-side up. He will knock at the door of our own death, as he has knocked at the doors of our loved ones who have died before us, and he will come in and bring the party: if we hear his knock, and he will open the door.

You see, Jesus has something to say in this parable about what we're doing while we're waiting for him to bring the party. What are we doing in the meantime? How are we watching and waiting for his knock at the door of our own death? What are we doing and how are we living in the house of this life?

Mark describes what we need to be doing in the meantime in verses 34-37. "It is like a man when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge (us), each with his work. Watch, therefore — for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or in the morning — lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch."

Luke quotes Jesus and what he says we need to be doing with these words in 12:37-40. "Blessed are those servants whom the Master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at the table, and he will come and serve them. (He brings the party to us at the door of our death.) If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! You must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. "

So, Jesus warns us to be ready at all times for his knock at our door. We need to be ready for our own death.

Last summer, when I spent over 60 days in the hospital, mostly in I.C.U., I had many dreams and visions. One of those went something like this. . . I walked into the fellowship hall door of Divinity Lutheran Church down the hallway I have walked so many times these past 17 ½ years and then around the corner to the narthex. But this time, everybody passed me by like they didn't know me. Even people who always greet me with a smile and a handshake, totally ignored me. Everyone was slowly filing by an open casket. People were saying things like, "he doesn't look like himself or he looks good for his age." I didn't want to look into another casket, so I took a seat in one of the back pews. Then I noticed something very strange.

Pastor Tina was standing at the lectern getting ready to read. Why? As soon as she began to read, I knew why. "In memory of Douglas Scott Gunkelman." I immediately stood up and began to yell at her and at God, "I object, I object, I object!" A trinitarian objection. I object!

There is death in the land. There is death in myself, in you, in my preaching, in our witnessing to one another. And we cry out in objection, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." We don't want to hear that knock at our door. We don't like to dream about our own funerals.

But, through our faith in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit we object to death and we join together in crying out, "Renew your people, give us new life, turn us back to you, deliver us from the grave, and fill us with your Spirit so we can take up our cross and follow you, so we can be ready for your knock at our door and the party you are bringing to us!

That's what we're doing in the meantime. "We're getting ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour we do not expect." We're taking up our crosses, we're being faithful and wise stewards of this house, this creation, this community, this church, this body that Jesus has left for us to take care of.

Now none of this sounds like fun. Witnessing, serving, suffering, dying – Resurrection! Eventually, Jesus brings the party.

But, you know, Jesus, is this parable really for us? There's an awful lot of stuff out there I'd really rather be doing than getting ready for your knock at my door. Witnessing my faith to others, inviting people to church, studying your Word, -- there's a lot more fun things I could be doing.

Then I come to Divinity Lutheran Church on Sunday morning before the pandemic. I see our greeters and ushers faithfully welcoming people into our worship. I see the parish nurses doing blood pressure checks for God's people. I see our Sunday School teachers faithfully teaching the Story. I see all kinds of people who are called to believe. And they respond to their belief by being faithful householders. It may not always be fun, but it's being faithful. We're not called to be clever or talented. Our vocation is simply to be faithful waiters on the mystery of Jesus' coming in death and resurrection. What the world needs to see and hear from us Christians is our own commitment to the ministry of waiting for and waiting on the only Lord who has the keys to death.

And so, I ask again, "Jesus, is this parable really for us?" Waiting for you doesn't sound like much fun!

When Jesus finishes this parable in Luke 12, Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?"

And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing."

The parable is for all of us. We may not always feel like the faithful and wise steward God has called us to be. We may not think this calling to take up our cross and witness, serve, suffer and die is a whole lot of fun. We may struggle through it with many diversions along the way.

But always, through it all, we look forward to that knock at our door. When we hear Jesus knocking, (knock on altar wood), we may yell out, "I object, I object, I object!"

We will hear that knock anyway and the door will be opened through our faith in God that opens it. There will stand Jesus, not upset with us at all, but with a song in his heart and a breakfast to end all breakfasts in his hands.

Ephesians 2:4-8 – “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For, by grace, you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.”

May the peace of God . . .

#244 – Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers