

17th Sunday after Pentecost Sunday
October 9, 2011

Pastor Bob Coughlin, Karen and I attended the 11th Annual LCMC Convention in Des Moines, Iowa this last week. It was a wonderful gathering with others for worship and listening to great presentations on DOING the Great Commission that Jesus gave the Church in Matthew 28:18-20:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **GO** therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them **to observe ALL** that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.*

If you were unable to life-stream the LCMC Convention on your computer you will soon be able to watch archived segments at www.lcmc.net.

Some of what we heard and experienced at the Convention may find its way into this sermon, but I really want to continue on with the third parable that Jesus presented concerning the coming judgment of God. Pastor Bob Coughlin started with the first parable three Sundays ago, his daughter Elizabeth Coughlin followed with the second parable last Sunday and now I have the third parable in that series.

Pastor Bob preached about the **Parable of the Two Sons**, both were asked by their father to go work in the fields, the first son said **NO** but later changed his mind and went, the second son said **YES** but never intended to go at all.

Jesus then compared the First Son to the tax collectors and prostitutes and the Second Son to the righteous – to the chief priests, the Pharisees, to the religious-minded who thought they understood everything concerning God.

Elizabeth Coughlin preached about the **Parable of the Tenants**, in which the one who plants the vineyard symbolizes God, the vineyard is Israel, and the tenants are the righteous – the chief priests, the Pharisees, the religious-minded who thought they understood everything concerning God, the servants are the prophets God sent, and the Son is Jesus who deserves the highest respect but who is killed outside the walls.

Jesus asks, “What will the landowner do to those who killed his servants and his son?” The religious leaders respond that he will put “those wretches” to a miserable death – judgment for not following God’s ways.

The second part of this parable talks about the stone that the builders rejected, it became the cornerstone. And the judgment is that the Kingdom of God will be taken from those who do not produce its fruits and it will be given to those who do.

Today I get to preach on the **Parable of the Wedding Feast**, in which the King symbolizes God, the Bridegroom symbolizes Jesus, those officially invited are the righteous – the chief priests, the Pharisees, to the religious-minded who thought they understood everything concerning God, and who refuse to come to the feast. The King (God) sends his servants to go into the highway and the hedges to gather all the people they can find, both the bad and the good, so that the Wedding Hall will be filled with guests.

But before the feast begins the King (God) comes to inspect those who are gathered for the feast and finds someone wearing no Wedding Garment. The King (God) comes to this person in kindness and with a searching heart and asks, "Friend, how did you get in here without a Wedding Garment?"

This person is speechless before the King (before God).

Then the judgment comes; The King (God) tells the attendants (the angels) to bind this person, to cast this person out into the outer darkness, "*for many are called, but few are chosen.*"

Most of us probably do not like this ending to this ***Parable of the Wedding Feast***, we think that it is not fair for the King (for God) to send out his servants to invite all these people (the bad and the good) to the Wedding Feast of his Son and then judge some of them to be unfit to be there – he invited them after all.

Do you think that the judgment of God NEGATES the salvation of God?

These three parables are a warning to the Christian Church to not assume that we have a FREE PASS to God's salvation simply because we are the tax collectors and prostitutes, just because we are the new tenants of the vineyard, just because we (the bad and the good) are gathered from the highways and the hedges to attend the Wedding Feast of His Son.

The King (God) comes to look over those gathered for the Marriage Feast of His Son before it begins.

Everyone is under the scrutiny of the King (of God).

In kindness God says, "Friend, how did you get in here without a Wedding Garment?"

It is not a threatening question.

But it is a question asked with God's search heart, thus it demands a truthful answer from us, and since we can give only a truthful answer to God, some of us might have to remain silent.

This person is welcome, even with the filthy rags of sin, but this person must cast himself on God's divine mercy and grace **and trust** that God's divine mercy and grace is all sufficient for his salvation.

If this person wants to remain in his sinful ways while at the same time being gathered with others for the Wedding Feast, or if this person wants to deceive others to follow in his sinful ways, or if this person just wants to experience a religious high to ridicule it later, then this person is without the proper Wedding Garment and will not be allowed to remain gathered with those who are properly dressed.

However, if this person seeks God's forgiveness for his sins, if he repents, turns around, begins life anew, walks once again in the waters of his Baptism, then God will provide him with the proper Wedding Garment and he can partake of the Wedding Feast.

There comes a time when the MASQUERADES of our life have to end.

When God asks us, "Friend, how did you get in here without a Wedding Garment?" We know we are under God's all knowing vision of the truth, and we cannot give a falsified answer.

We either remain standing before God in our chosen silence, or we fall on our knees before God, confessing our sins, and exclaiming that our forgiveness, life, and salvation comes through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

The repeated message that we heard at the 11th Annual LCMC Convention was that we are to be DISCIPLES of Christ Jesus and we are to reproduce DISCIPLES!!!

One of the speakers said that if we think that just because we can flash the **Bar Code of Christian** past the scanner and get rung up on God's computer in heaven that we will have it made, we will discover that we are sadly mistaken.

We have a dilemma, he said.

How many people can say they are Christian?

Well, many people claim that title for themselves.

How many people can say they are a TRUE DISCIPLE of Christ Jesus?

Well, not many people claim that title for themselves for they know that title requires a commitment that they may not be willing to give.

Claiming to be a Christian may mean that we are an admirer of Christ it may mean that we will stand in the audience and applaud Christ, but we don't want to get up on the world stage with Christ and follow what He does.

Claiming to be a TRUE DISCIPLE of Christ Jesus means that we will truly follow we will get up on the world stage with Him and live life as He intends us to live it, unafraid of the consequences.

We will put off the dirty rags of our sins and put on the New Wedding Garment!!!

Yes, the Christian Church is well warned by the Three Parables of Jesus that we have covered these last three Sundays.

And we need to take seriously the call to be TRUE DISCIPLE of Christ Jesus, we need to be TRUE FOLLOWERS who through a life-time of adjustments are found to not be speechless before God on Judgment Day.

And we need to work continually to lead others to become TRUE DISCIPLES as well.

Amen.