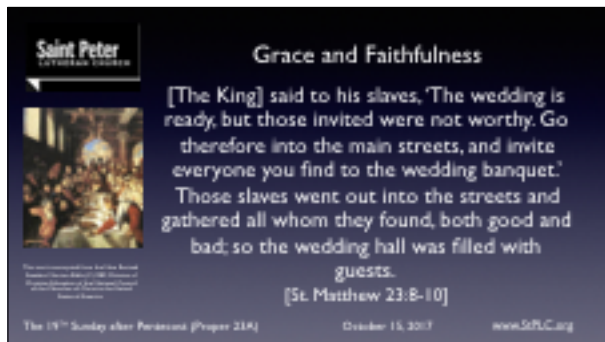
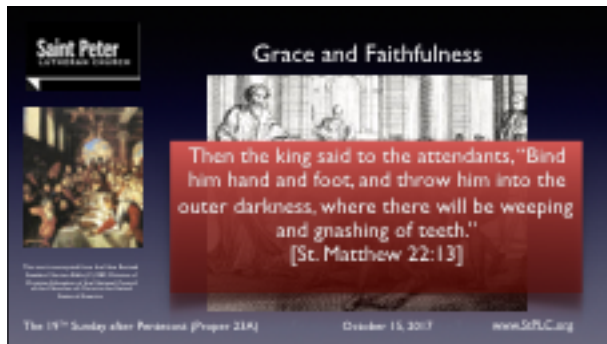


The Parable of the Wedding Feast.  
 It's a story of rejection and accountability.  
 The original invitees scorn the king's invitation.  
 They mistreat and kill the king's slaves.  
 They are uninvited and punished for their actions.  
 It's also a story of grace and inclusion.  
 The king's slaves are sent into the streets.  
 Now the wedding invitation list is expanded.  
 No longer is it a gathering for the social, economic and political elite.  
 Everybody is invited.  
 The good and the bad are gathered for the feast.



Up to this point, grace seems to have the final say.  
 It seems to be aimed at the people who opposed Jesus.  
 Religious officials offended by his message,  
 Who resist his grace, and whip the people up against him.  
 They scorn Jesus, and what he stands for.  
 But before long they find themselves excluded; left out of the party.  
 It then shifts attention to those who replaced them:  
 Tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, sinners...  
 "The good and the bad," Jesus says in this parable.  
 A community so open that it even welcomes people like you and me.  
 So far, so good. A compelling message of grace and inclusion.  
 Those rejected by religious leaders are welcomed by God.  
 But, unfortunately, this isn't the end of Jesus' story.



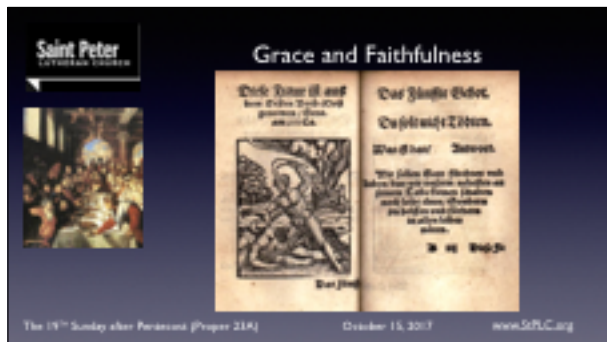
Instead, he brings it to a close with a terrible ending!  
 No fairy tale “happily ever after” here.  
 You or I might prefer grace upon grace.  
 “A man is found without a wedding coat, and the King, so deeply touched by the joy being experienced at the feast, gives that man his own coat, allowing him to be fully included in the festivities...”  
 You or I might prefer grace upon grace, but not Jesus. Not this time.  
 Just because this guest doesn’t conform to the standard dress code for weddings.  
 Thrown into the outer darkness.  
 Weeping.  
 Gnashing of Teeth.  
 A devastating end to such a promising parable.



So what do we make of this terrible ending?  
 We could conclude that God is, at heart, a demanding and angry judge.  
 That an effort is made to welcome the unwelcome, but it just doesn’t work out very well.  
 This would go against most everything we’ve come to understand about God, though.  
 It would take the joy out of our 500–years–as–Lutherans celebration, wouldn’t it?  
 The truth is: it would misunderstand this parable.  
 It would dramatically misconstrue God’s grace as well.



It may be that our discomfort with this story is an indication that we've come to misunderstand God's grace. Grace has to do with forgiveness and wiping the slate clean. Grace is how we are welcomed into the heart of God. Grace is the gift God gives, that we neither earn or deserve. But grace doesn't mean that nothing matters. It doesn't mean that sin is inconsequential. In fact, those who are graced by God are called to faithfulness. As we like to say here at Saint Peter: We are welcomed into God's love, just as we are. And we are sent into God's world, to be a reflection of Christ.



We've been talking about this in our Adult Catechism Class. When Luther created the Small Catechism in 1529, he began with the Ten Commandments. Luther understood that the Ten Commandments are not just a leftover artifact from Old Testament days. They still are an important gift from God. They serve a roll in keeping peace in civil society. They help us to discover our need for forgiveness — our need for God's grace. And they have the ability to shape our faithfulness as God's forgiven people. They guide our notion of what it means to live as a reflection of Christ.



This is what Jesus is getting after in today's Parable. Graced by God, you and I are welcomed to the feast, just as we are.

As Jesus puts it: "both good and bad" are brought in to the celebration.

At the same time, we are expected to honor the one who has welcomed us.

In the words of the parable, we are expected to wear a wedding coat.

We are expected to be dressed for the occasion. So the question today is: "What does your wedding coat look like?"

It is a question not raised by a fear of being thrown into the darkness.

A fear of punishment or rejection.

But instead, a question born of gratitude.



So what does your wedding coat look like?

Maybe it is your effort to give your whole heart to God in worship.

Maybe it is your love for your family and friends.

Your attention to sharing faith with those who don't know Christ.

Your willingness to support this congregation generously. [Angie will have a few words to share with us about this in a couple of minutes...]

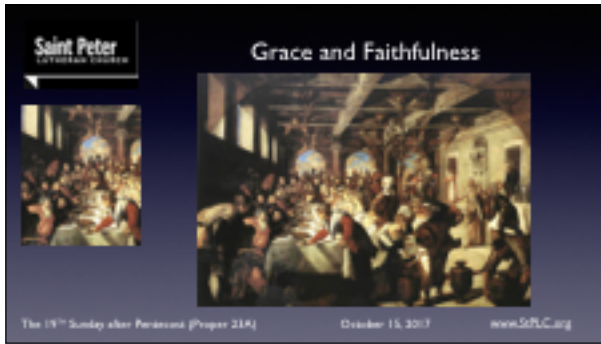
Your involvement in serving the community in which you live.

Your eagerness to help Dr. Jacobson put the ALMC School of Nursing on solid footing.

Your participation in ministry teams here at Saint Peter.

Your thoughtfulness in how you deal with strangers.

9



Each of these can become the wedding coat we wear to the banquet.

A way we honor the host who has invited us into the banquet.  
A way for us to love the God who has loved us so passionately.

A way for us to thank the God who has given us absolutely everything.

10



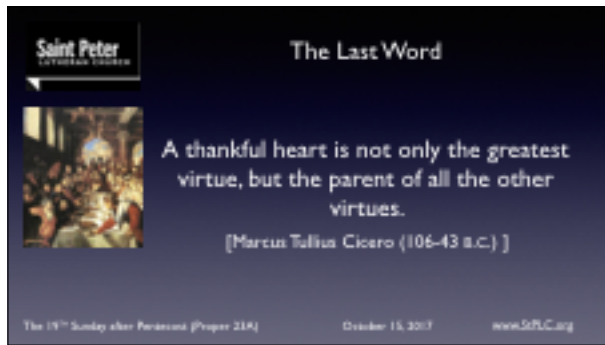
So that's our task for this coming week.

To spend some time considering what our wedding coat might look like.

As you leave today, our hosts have a 7-day devotional for you. Let's spend the next couple of days reflecting on this morning, and preparing ourselves for next Sunday.

Question for this evening's conversation: "What does Jesus mean by disparaging the invited guest who doesn't wear a wedding robe?"

11



**Saint Peter**  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

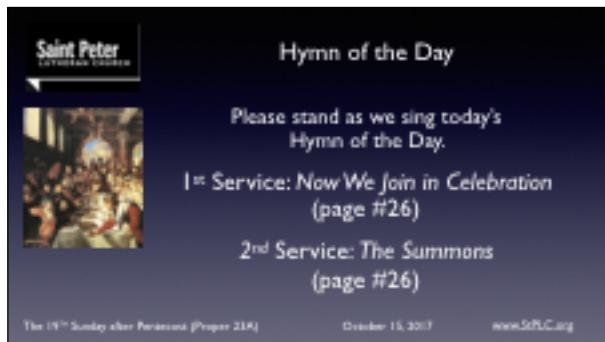
### The Last Word

A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all the other virtues.  
[Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.) ]

The 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 21A)    October 15, 2017    www.SPLC.org

A half century or so before Jesus was born, the great Roman orator, Cicero, had this to say about living a virtuous life.  
He said:  
“A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all the other virtues.”  
We are called to live as a thankful people.  
What shape will our gratitude take in the coming week?

12



**Saint Peter**  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

### Hymn of the Day

Please stand as we sing today's Hymn of the Day.

1<sup>st</sup> Service: *Now We Join in Celebration*  
(page #26)

2<sup>nd</sup> Service: *The Summons*  
(page #26)

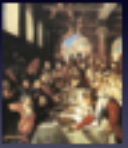
The 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 21A)    October 15, 2017    www.SPLC.org

Please stand with us as we sing today's Hymn of the Day.  
**1st Service: Now We Join in Celebration**  
(page #26)  
**2nd Service: The Summons**  
(page #26)

13

**Saint Peter**  
CATHOLIC LITURGY

**St. Matthew 22:1-14**



22.1 Once 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. 3 He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4 Again 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.' 5 But they made light of it and went away: one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.

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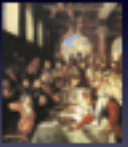
The 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 21A)      October 15, 2017      www.SPLC.org

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14

**Saint Peter**  
CATHOLIC LITURGY

**St. Matthew 22:1-14**



7 "The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.' 9 Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

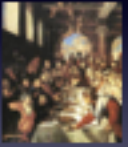
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**Saint Peter**  
LITURGICAL LECTURE

**St. Matthew 22:1-14**



<sup>11</sup> "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe. <sup>12</sup> And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then 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.' <sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen."

The iconography of the Wedding Feast is derived from the parable of the Wedding Feast in the Gospel of Matthew (22:1-14). The icon is a work of the 17th century, possibly by the Italian painter Giovanni Battista Tiepolo.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 21A)      October 15, 2017      www.SPLC.org

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