

Pentecost 20 (Proper 23A)

October 11, 2026



One thing, and only one thing,
is necessary for Christian life, righteousness,
and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the
gospel of Christ, as Christ says, "I am the resurrection
and the life; he who believes in me,
though he die, yet shall he live."

– Martin Luther–

On Christian Liberty

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Isaiah 25:6-9

On the mountain of the Lord, Zion – God’s chosen dwelling place in Jerusalem, God will make a rich feast for his people. The hope-filled apocalyptic vision expressed in these verses foreshadows similar New Testament imagery of righteous judgment and salvation. As in Revelation 21:4, we hear the promise that when God puts an end to death, he will “wipe away tears from all faces” (Isaiah 25:8).

- *What does it mean to you that God will eradicate death one day? Why must we “wait”? In what sense is waiting on the Lord at the very heart of faith?*

At the scene of a crime or accident, dead bodies are covered by the police. Verse 7 refers to a “covering” and a “veil” that is cast over all people.

- *In what sense do we all live our entire lives in this world under the veil of death? For better or worse, how does the fear of death shape the way we live?*

Verse 8 says that God will “swallow up” death. The Hebrew word, *balatz*, is the same word used in Jonah 1:17, in reference to the prophet being “swallowed” by a great fish.

- *Read Jonah 2 for Jonah’s description of the experience of being swallowed by death. What is the irony in Isaiah that death itself will be swallowed by God?*

Psalms 23

The depth of these well known words makes them so much more widely applicable than just on the occasion of a funeral where we hear them most frequently. This psalm vividly reminds us of God’s abiding presence in this life. He provides for all our needs and accompanies us on our journey of faith. He leads us in peace and before our last enemy.

- *In what ways does this psalm speak to you in your present life situations? How can it comfort you in daily life and not just in times of trial and grief?*

As in Isaiah 25, in Psalm 23:5 the blessing of God is described in terms of a banquet.

- *What does it mean that God spreads a table “in the presence of my enemies” (i.e., those who trouble me)?*
- *Does this say anything about the regret unbelievers will experience when Christ returns?*

Philippians 4:4-13

Paul wraps up his pastoral letter to the church in Philippi, admonishing a pair of local women to get along for the sake

of the gospel. He asks the rest of the faith community to help them do so in order that their important Gospel work may continue.

- *In what ways does internal church conflict impair the mission of the church? How is the entire community of faith responsible for smoothing things over so the mission of God can flourish?*

Paul goes on to say, “Rejoice in the Lord always!” Be reasonable. Do not be worried about things you cannot control. Pray! Do whatever is of God. We are able to follow Paul’s advice because of the promise he iterates, “The Lord is at hand!” With the Lord at hand, we need not worry about things so that conflict ensues amongst us. These are nuggets of advice from which every congregation and every Christian can benefit.

- *Which pieces of Paul’s advice about how to live in Christian community catch your attention the most? Why do we fail to attend to these teachings until things get out of control?*

Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus tells a parable that describes the urgent nature of the kingdom of God. He describes God’s kingdom as a wedding feast he was hosting for his son. Specific people were invited by the King, but the people gave all manner of lame excuses for why they couldn’t attend. Rather than grieving their absence, the King sent out servants to invite guests from among the roadside travelers.

- *How does this parable help to explain the inclusion of Gentiles in the promise of the Gospel, in terms of the rejection of the Gospel on the part of the Jews?*
- *Compare how Paul addresses this same subject in Romans 11:1- 24. What conclusions does he draw? What is Paul’s warning to the Gentiles in Romans 11:21?*

To those who are inclined to see the King’s actions in this parable as an example of “cheap grace,” there is an additional twist at the end of the story. One of the last-minute invitees comes to the banquet but is not dressed appropriately for the occasion. He showed up, but he did not appear to understand the importance of what was happening — and he was thrown out.

Once again, keep in mind that when Jesus spoke of the “kingdom,” he was talking about faith. Martin Luther said: “Faith does not free us from good works, but from false opinions about good works.” (On Christian Liberty)

- *Does the grace of God make void our accountability to God? What does God expect of us as people of faith? What sense do you get from this parable that the time to act on faith is now?*