

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“The days are evil”, the Apostle writes. Looking around he saw the ungodliness and the unbelief of the fallen world. True wisdom is the knowledge of God. Without that knowledge all else is foolishness. So do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. It is His will that the invisible church be filled, that the saints be perfected and that the True Church be complete.

In order that the fullness of the Church be accomplished, the visible church be filled, in grace, in mercy, the King invites men to His celebration, the wedding of His Son. He has made everything ready. The house of the wedding feast is the holy catholic and Apostolic Church. It is truly God’s House, the place where He feeds His guests. The invitation is one of grace. In love He freely invites.

The marriage is one of arrangement – the King sends His Eternal Son, and He picks the Bride written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. He chooses Her not for her wealth or beauty, not for her worthiness or her works, but in grace. In divine love He calls out of the fallen world a Church unto Himself. He does so through His servants, who bring the guests into the safety of His House.

All those who will not come are evil. They reject the grace of God. But not all those admitted are good. The visible church is an admixture of believers and unbelievers. The servants’ job, the work of the Prophet and the Apostle and the Pastor, is to invite, to gather, not to judge. The servants go forth to gather guests beginning in Judea to the ends of the earth.

They gather everyone they find, both good and bad, from Judea to Galilee to Asia Minor to Rome to Detroit, and invite them to God’s House. For the parable teaches of the church militant, where believers and unbelievers are mixed, for a time.

Men cannot see faith. The Church plants the Seed, God works the increase. So it is that the other guests in the parable, indeed even the servants, did not see that the man lacked a wedding vestment. God alone can see faith. So for now His house, the church you see with your eyes, is filled with good and bad, waiting for His return. And that brings inevitable strife, as the unbelieving try to take the Kingdom by force, and the Remnant that is the true Church clings to the Apostolic Doctrine.

In heaven, the Holy Church is One. But on earth, in the Church Militant, there are divisions in the visible church. There are denominations. There are conflicting doctrines. There are congregations that practice open Communion. There are churches that ordain women. There are churches that strive to be just like the fallen world, to make sinners comfortable.

The Scriptures condemn all these false doctrines and aberrant practices. But in the visible church, there are churches that do not keep God’s Word, and believe and teach and practice rather the fallen reason and the desires of sinful men.

But soon the Truth will be known to all men. For soon the King returns. Soon judgment will come. Then those who would not believe the truth, those who do not wear the vestment that God

freely gives, those who have rejected the vestment of Christ's righteousness, will be cast out. For many are called, but few are chosen.

The wrongly-vested man could give no answer to the King. He was speechless. So it is for all sinners. All men stand before God without excuse. God sees your sins. He knows your dark desires and what you do and think in secret. He knows that you have been soiled. He knows which vestment you wear. He knows you are not worthy to enter His dinner.

So the man without the vestment may have spoken with the tongues of men and angels, He may have had the gift of prophecy and understood all mysteries and knowledge. He may have held a congregational office or been a Synodical official or worn a clerical collar. But He did not have faith, so he could not have true love. He could not truly love God. He could not truly love neighbor.

That's why the fallen world seizes the servants of the King and kills them. Jerusalem is the city where they kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to her. For the Prophets preached against idols. They preached God incarnate in Christ Jesus. For a bitter little time, now it seems as if the persecution and death of those sent by God goes unanswered.

But at the last the hands through which the sin of the heart is expressed will be bound. The feet that go in the wide, crooked paths of the fallen world will be tied. And every transgressor will be cast body and soul into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And so it is with all men who have sinned. Their house is left to them desolate.

But those they stoned, the Prophets and Apostles and those who believed their Word, now enjoy the unending feast. For the Christ they preached, the Christ of whom you hear this day, died for those who stoned the Prophets. He died for those who would not hear the Apostles. He died for the unworthy. He died for all those who have sinned, for you, even for those who reject His saving Gifts.

He was stripped of His vestment, that you might don His righteousness, that He be vested in your sin. He was bound. He was cast out into the outer darkness of Golgotha. And there He endured the terrors of hell, that you be spared. The King allowed His Son to be destroyed as murderer, that you be saved. But He alone is truly good. Death could not hold Him. The Son for whom the Bride is prepared returned from that tomb alive, ready to wed the Bride He won.

The King will come. And He will see you. For only God can see faith. Only God can give faith. You live now in God's Kingdom of Grace, where sinful, fallen men are invited to hear the saving Word, repent, and be converted. You live in the time when Baptism saves you from the outer darkness, where by those Holy Waters you are vested in the wedding garment of the righteousness of your Groom, vested in spotless white, to await His return.

Now is the time that the unworthy are made guests of the King. Now is the blessed time when you are made sons of the King by His marvelous Mysteries. And on the last day He will come, and see you vested in Christ, and you will dine forever at the celestial Feast with Christ and the martyrs and saints and the holy angels.

St. Matthew 22:1-14
The Second Sunday of Michaeltide, 2018 A.✠ D.

In His mercy, the King has prepared a Holy Supper for you this day. The Son is crucified, risen and ascended. He has made all things ready. Your sins are forgiven. You are invited. Come, take and eat, take and drink. For by repentant faith in the Christ whose Blood you drink, you, dear Christian, are worthy.

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