

Warm Fuzzies
Matthew 22:1-14

Is this the place to come to get warm fuzzies? ... There aren't nearly as many handshakes or hugs as there were a year ago, but hopefully someone smiled at you when you arrived this morning and said something welcoming.

As nice as those things are, we really come here because of Jesus. Is He radiating warm fuzzies in our Gospel reading today? The verses right before our text give us a hint. We heard them last week. They say: *When the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.*

Jesus continues along the same line today with another parable about the kingdom of heaven. It is a story of *a king who gave a wedding feast for his son*. This one, too, is about them. God the Father has sent His Son into the world to be united with His bride, the Church. The Father couldn't be happier that all of His plans are coming together. He invites His special guests. Since the time of Abraham, the Israelites have been His chosen people, the people near and dear to His heart. The King has had a long history of sending servants to His people to inform them of His will that they may remain faithful citizens of His kingdom. Most recently He had sent John the Baptist to proclaim, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. 3:2). The long-awaited Messiah is on His way. The feast is set to begin!

But like other servants before him, John's message was ignored: *But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.*

Jesus has the ability to not only see the past, but also the future. In His wrath against His peoples' sin, the Father has allowed Jerusalem and the temple to be destroyed by invading forces who killed many and set the whole place ablaze. In just under 40 years it is going to happen again. Roman troops will kill many and destroy and burn the city and temple. It is not good to dishonor the King.

But, the unworthiness of those invited is not going to keep the feast from happening. It is going to continue as planned. And the wedding hall will be filled with guests. The king will make sure. He sends out His servants to invite anyone they see.

That's you! You have been invited to feast with the King – to enjoy His lavish generosity. It is a feast that begins now and lasts throughout eternity.

Isaiah describes in our Old Testament reading what it will be like: *On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.*

Death will be swallowed up forever. The reproach of our sin will be taken away. They are now, but not yet. Jesus, the Bridegroom, has laid down His life for His bride, the Church – you. It is an accomplished fact. The work has been done. Death has been defeated. Forgiveness of your sins has been won. The victory is yours – now but not yet.

Are your sins forgiven? Yes! Jesus lived without sin so He would be the sacrifice acceptable to His Father as payment for your sins and mine. Faith in Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world grants you the full and free forgiveness of all your sin.

Is eternal life yours? Yes! Jesus defeated death and the grave in His death and resurrection. He rose from the dead first and has promised to raise all who believe in Him.

Forgiveness of sins and life eternal are yours. But, we still live in this fallen world. Unless Christ returns first, all of us will die. Our bodies will rest in the grave waiting for the trumpet blast announcing that the Bridegroom has returned to raise the dead and take all the faithful to be with Him forever. But, try as we might to be faithful, we fall short. We dishonor the King in what we think, say and do.

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

We are, and are not, like the man with no wedding garment. We do dishonor the King, and rightly deserve the verdict He decrees. But unlike the man, we are not speechless. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Say the rest with me: "But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We have something to say: "Forgive me, my Lord!" and He does!

The King gives us something much better than warm fuzzies. He brings us into His kingdom through the water and Word of baptism. He marks us with the cross of His Son, Jesus, fills us with His Holy Spirit, and places faith in our hearts. He strengthens that faith and delivers to us the cross won forgiveness of sins as we feast on Jesus' body and blood in the bread and wine of His Supper.

Warm fuzzies are nice, but Jesus is here today to give you life and salvation! A life free from the guilt of your sin is yours now in Jesus. Life forever feasting at the banquet table of the King is yours now, but not quite yet. The King has made the promise, and in His good time you will celebrated with Him forever. Amen.