

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

(Serving the Tuskegee Community since 1912)

Priest-in-Charge: The Rev. H. Mawande Mzongwana

701 West Montgomery Road

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www.standrewstuskegee.com

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Proper 23)

October 11, 2026

MORNING PRAYER – RITE II Self-Guided Prayer

HYMNAL

PRAYER BOOK

Musical Prelude:

Opening Hymn:

THE WORD OF GOD

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Opening Sentences

General Confession & Absolution

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THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

**

The Collect of the Day

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The First Reading: Isaiah 25:1-9

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Psalm: 23

**

The Second Reading: Philippians 4:1-9

Sequence Hymn:

**

THE GOSPEL Matthew 22:1-14

THE MEDITATION:

www.episcopalchurch.org/sermons

The Apostles' Creed

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The Prayers

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Suffrage "A"

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Collect for Sundays

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Collect for Grace

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Collect for Guidance

OFFERTORY

Presentation: Doxology: *Praise God From Whom all Blessings Flow*

THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING

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A Prayer of Chrysostom)

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Versicle and Response

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Closing Sentence and Scripture

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ANNOUNCEMENTS (See inside Bulletin)

Closing Hymn:

The Dismissal



FELLOWSHIP HOUR

The Christian Gathering continues after this service with fellowship and refreshments in the undercroft.

PLEASE JOIN US!!!!!!

October 18 - A Parishioner

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Refer to Insert in Bulletin

THE DIOCESAN CYCLE OF PRAYER

We pray for our Companion Diocese of Honduras and their bishop, Lloyd; The Clergy and people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; Diocesan Department of Recovery Ministries; Holy Cross, Trussville; Holy Cross, Uniontown; St. Bartholomew's, Florence.

ANNOUNCEMENTS!!

- **ARMED FORCES:** Please pray for our service men and women stationed in the U.S. and overseas, especially, Sam and Margaret Gunn Bunton, Shavone Marbory Hogan, and Elijah Barber.
- **PRAYERS:** Continue to pray for those on the Prayer List, friends, family and all humankind afflicted by disease, war and famine. Pray for peace!
- **REMINDER:** Please continue to furnish our Food Basket with non-perishable food items (located on the ground floor of the Education Building).
- **REMINDER:** The link for the Sunday ZOOM Companion service can be reached by dialing: 1-312-626-6799, Meeting ID: 882 671 9532, Passcode: 008810 or click on your email invite. The next in-person service will be Sunday, October 18, 2026.
- **UPDATE:** The elevator repair is almost complete. Thank you for your patience.
- **NEW:** *2027 Pledge Letters and Forms* have been mailed. If you did not receive one, please contact the Parish Secretary (Denise Dixon).
- **UPCOMING EVENTS:** *The Annual Fall Parish Meeting* will take place the first Sunday in November, following Holy Eucharist, in the Undercroft. The meeting floor will be open to receive Nominations to join the 2027 Vestry.

Check your Emergency Storm Supplies, the Governor of Alabama has declared a Weather Alert for Macon County this weekend.

**Additional announcements are listed inside the bulletin.*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday, October 12, 2026

Tuesday, October 13, 2026

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

Thursday, October 15, 2026

Fri. October 16, 2026

Saturday, October 17, 2026

Sunday, October 18, 2026

11 a.m. - Morning Prayer, in person

HAPPY BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY!!

October	7 – Tiffanee Bulls
	8 – Lonnie & Carol Smith
	9 – Levy & Shari Kelly
	16 – Quentin E. Gaillard, Jr.
	21 – Darry & Yolanda Seawright
	31 – Lonnie Smith

**NEWS FROM ABOUT THE EPISCOPAL
& ANGLICAN DIOCESES**

Friday, October 20, 2026, 10am to 3 pm, 'A Day of Faith & Justice in Scottsboro' (Scottsboro Boys Pilgrimage and Red Mass), a reflection and remembrance legacy of the 1931 trials. This is a free event. Registration is available online at dioala.org

November 16-19, 2026, 'Magnify, A Women's Justice Retreat.' Alabama represents not only struggles but also the powerful witness of unsung saints. Join this group meeting at Camp McDowell, Nauvoo, AL, registration is available online a dioala.org

T.U. NEWS/EVENTS (www.tuskegee.edu)

October 17, 2026 – Fall Open House, Home Football Game (Albany State) and Parade

COMMUNITY EVENTS (Auburn, Montgomery, Tuskegee)

Harriott II Riverboat Cruises, Montgomery, Friday Night Dinner Cruises, Saturday Getaway Cruise and Sunday Evening Blues Cruise – until November 28, 2026.

2026 Football Schedule – Tuskegee U.

October 17 – T.U. vs Albany State, 2 pm, HOME

November 7 – Homecoming, T.U. vs Miles, 2:30 pm, HOME

November 26 – Turkey Day Game, T.U. vs Alabama State U., Cramton Bowl, Montgomery

2026 Football Schedule – Auburn U.

October 24 – Auburn vs LSU, 11 am, HOME

November 7, Auburn vs Arkansas, 11 am, HOME

November 21 – Auburn vs Samford, 2:30 pm, HOME

November 28 – Iron Bowl, Auburn vs Alabama, Tuscaloosa

PRAYER LIST

CHRISTINA ANDERSON

MARIAN GARMON*

STEPHANIE BOSWELL

THOMASINE BRAYE

MARIO LIGHTFOOTE*

THOMAS BRAYE*

JAMES BRAYE

REBECCA LYN CARTER

CURT CARTER, SR*

CHARLES M. CRANK, II

PRESTON CRAYTON

DAVID NGAWA**

MARTHA OSGERBY

ANNA C. OWENS

CLEMENT SCOTT

TUNESHA SMITH

ANGELICA SNOWDEN

YOLANDA P. SEAWRIGHT

DARRYL SEAWRIGHT

BRENDA D. ROBINSON*

LIONEL B. RICHIE

LISA TECZAR

CHARLES THOMPSON**

E. DRAKE WHITELAW

MARGARET 'KATIE' JONES

THERON JONES

DIANE KENNEY*

JULIUS MYHAND. JR.

*Local Parishioners

** Shut-In Parishioners

Proper 23, Year A – Track 2

The Collect:

Rite I:

Lord, we pray thee that thy grace may always precede and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Rite II:

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Old Testament: Isaiah 25:1-9

¹ O Lord, you are my God;

I will exalt you; I will praise your name,
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

² For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;

the palace of foreigners is a city no more;
it will never be rebuilt.

³ Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.

⁴ For you have been a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.

When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,

⁵ the noise of foreigners like heat in a dry place,
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

⁶On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.
⁷And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the covering that is spread over all nations;
⁸ he will swallow up death forever.
Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.
⁹It will be said on that day,
“See, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

Psalm: Psalm 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd; *
I shall not be in want.
²He makes me lie down in green pastures *
and leads me beside still waters.
³He revives my soul *
and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil; *
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
⁵You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; *
you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.
⁶Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Epistle: Philippians 4:1-9

¹Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown,
stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my coworkers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

⁹ As for the things that you have learned and received and heard and noticed in me, do them, and the God of peace will be with you.

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

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. 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.

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

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Quotations from the collects, psalms, and canticles are taken from the Book of Common Prayer 1979.



SERMONS THAT WORK

Pentecost 20A (Proper 23)

[RCL] Exodus 32:1-14; Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:1-14

What If?

It's possible that the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" referred to at the end of this parable is being performed by anybody who has to preach on this Gospel passage this morning. The kingdom of heaven is like ... a king with anger issues, a vicious aristocracy, and a guest with poor taste in clothing who gets thrown into everlasting torment? How is this good news?

Where's the Jesus who says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)? The one who gave us the Beatitudes; the one who heals all the sick; the one who says, "Let the children come to me" (Matthew 19:14)?

Believe it or not, this *is* the same Jesus who is speaking to us this morning, but this time, the verbal form he's using can be trickier to understand. Unlike a wise proverb or a beautiful promise, parables are stories that are *meant* to be weird. They are undomesticated by design. They have no clear answers tied up in a bow. Instead, they have outrageous characters doing ridiculous things, all for the purpose of expanding our holy imaginations.

And yes, of course, we first use intellect, study, and analysis to understand the foundational context of the parables—that of the original culture and language—and all the implications thereof. But then, springing from that foundation, parables invite us to feast on "what if?" And in that "what if," we can explore new ways of living and loving outside the stifling, normative box created by our own cultural assumptions, conventions, and any self-righteous sense of moral certainty. Author and New Testament theologian Amy Jill Levine, in her book, *Short Stories by Jesus*, offers this key to our exploration of multi-faceted truth in parables:

Like a poem (another simile), a parable will evoke numerous interpretations; it is our job to sort through them.

When we seek universal morals from a genre that is designed to surprise, challenge, shake up, or indict and look for a single meaning in a form that opens to multiple interpretations, we are necessarily limiting the parables and, so, ourselves.

We might be better off thinking less about what they “mean” and more about what they can “do”: remind, provoke, refine, confront, disturb.

And *disturb* is exactly what this parable does. Here we find a dismissive and murderous aristocracy that kills royal servants for the crime of inviting them to a dinner. Here’s a king who has apparently never heard of de-escalation, so he destroys a city. Here’s a royal social order so rigid that commoners are coerced to come and party while unburied corpses—and what little possessions they may have had—are still burning in the city’s rubble. And we can’t forget the guy without a tux who gets tortured for all eternity. Not to mention all the elegant foods prepared for the gourmet feast—the fatted calf and slaughtered oxen waiting to be consumed like some time-sensitive parmesan and truffle double-baked soufflé—across the time it took for a monarch to assemble troops and commit war crimes against his own people!

Why would Jesus offer any part of this absurd nightmare as an example of the kingdom of heaven?

Let’s start at the foundation.

The foundation for this parable derives, at least in part, from an argument unfolding after the time when Jesus lived and taught. At the time when Matthew’s Gospel was being written, there was an intramural cultural and theological argument between two sides of the Jewish community: about whether Jewish Christians or Jewish non-Christians were the ones truly following God.

By having the parable’s king destroy the city of those who “would not come” to the wedding banquet he had prepared, Matthew is weighing in on the debate. The destroyed city in the parable recalls the Roman decimation of the city of Jerusalem—and the absolute razing and defiling of temple—in 70 AD. The application seems to be that, in the destruction of Jerusalem, God’s judgement has been enacted on the Jewish religious leaders who rejected Jesus. The parable could be Matthew’s way of arguing that Jewish believers in Jesus are the ones truly faithful to God.

Now this historical context doesn’t necessarily mean that we should read this parable as a wholesale allegory, but that’s most often how this parable is explained in pulpits, Sunday School, and Bible studies. And unfortunately, from that interpretation, it’s just a hop, skip, and a jump to many false and anti-Semitic notions: about how Christians and Jews fit into the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation.

What if, for us here and now, Jesus is also doing a new thing? The great thing—the good news—about Christ’s invitation to the “What if?” of parables is that—once we honor the foundation—we’re set free to listen to whatever else the Holy Spirit has to say. Is this parable about existence of judgment? The fact of Jesus’s rejection? The inclusion of others who are often rejected, now being fed and honored at God’s table?

What if this parable is a mirror held up for us to see our sometimes-distorted notions of God and God’s kingdom—or shall we say God’s “commonwealth”? (Remember: parables invite us to think about God in fresh and vivid terms, asking, “What if...?”) What if God operates outside of our notions of power and control, of scarcity and fear? What if God rejects being depicted as angry or power hungry, rejects being used as an excuse for the crusades or the slave trade or the Doctrine of Discovery? What if Jesus isn’t the bridegroom as depicted in this story—a royal so inconsequential to the lives of his subjects (and to our

daily lives now), that he's ornamental rather than functional? What if Jesus isn't a prince so negligible that we can offer worship on Sunday and then uphold empire on Monday?

If this parable can function as a mirror, the reflections we see in it are not for the purpose of beating up on the church, using shame as a punishment for judgment. What if judgment isn't exclusively about punishment, but about clear sight and honest repentance, leading to love and liberation?

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr said it best: "Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."

What if the ridiculous cruelty of this parable is meant to remind us of the simple fact that God is love, and we are beloved? Jesuit priest and author Gregory Boyle addresses this beautifully in his book, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*:

God, I guess, is more expansive than every image we think rhymes with God ... The God, who is greater than God, has only one thing on her mind, and that is to drop, endlessly, rose petals on our heads. Behold, the one who can't take his eyes off of you. Marinate in the vastness of that.

Following love's logic to its conclusion, let us look again at the parable's mirror.

Perhaps Jesus isn't king or son, but a conscientious objector to empire. Jesus is the one who won't go along with status-quo maintenance and the terror that comes with abuse of power.

Lutheran pastor and author Nadia Bolz Weber describes Jesus in the parable like this: "At Calvary he (is cast out into) the outer darkness of empire, the outer darkness of our self-obsessions, the outer darkness of our secret addictions, the outer darkness of our sins and sorrows, the outer darkness of our human competition extravaganza. He goes to Calvary, rather than play along."

What if we, like Jesus, refuse to "play along" with empire, and with our projections on and emulation of God as tyrant?

What if—among the many who are invited—the few chosen are the ones who choose to follow Divine Love incarnate, so that we can *all*—every human being everywhere—may be called "beloved," God's children with whom God is well pleased?

What if, because of what was done by Jesus in the outer darkness of Calvary, we really do get to, as Father Boyle says, "marinate in the vastness of a God who can't take their eyes off of you, and who endlessly drops rose petals on our heads"?

Amen.

***The Very Rev. Thelma M. (“Nikki”) Mathis** is the Rector of St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church in Athens, GA, Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta. She is also Dean of the Oconee Convocation in this diocese. For more than a decade, she has served on the faculty for the Episcopal Preaching Foundation and is currently faculty for the Learning to Lead program in her diocese. She is a contributor to Forward Day by Day, The Sewanee Theological Review, Graymoor, and the Episcopal Preaching Foundation publications Kerygma and Preaching the Beatitudes.*



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