

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15th, 2023**

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Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God
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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Mount Pleasant

Patience and persistent God, we are grateful that even when we get sidetracked, you are with us. Be in our hearts and spirits today as we learn of your love through creation.

OFFERING PRAYER

Washed in your peace and love, O God, we bring our gifts to you. Bless the gifts and the lives that they represent, that all may be used in your service and to your glory. In Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN.

PRELUDE AND WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Look around at this wondrous world!

P: God's mighty acts in creation are magnificent!

L: Look around at the diversity of God's people!

P: Diversity is to be celebrated for we have much to learn from each other.

L: Come, let us offer praise and prayer to God.

P: Let us celebrate all God's goodness, for even in the midst of the horrible storm, God is with us.

OPENING HYMN: #223 Eternal, Unchanging, We Sing

Eternal, Unchanging, we sing to your praise:

your mercies are endless, and righteous your ways;

your servants proclaim the renown of your name

who rules over all and is ever the same.

Again we rejoice in the world you have made,
your mighty creation in beauty arrayed,
we thank you for life, and we praise you for joy,
for love and for hope that no power can destroy.

We praise you for Jesus, our Master and Lord,
the might of his Spirit, the truth of his word,
his comfort in sorrow, his patience in pain,
the faith sure and steadfast that Jesus shall reign.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord of diversity and union, we call upon you this day to open our hearts to your love, our ears to your words, our eyes to see the needs of those both near and far, and our spirits to do your will. Be with us and give us courage and inspiration for the future of your world, O Lord. AMEN.

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S VIDEO

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of infinite forgiveness, we implore you this day to forgive those many times in which we have turned our backs on you by turning away from the needs of the voiceless, the hopeless, the helpless. We let ourselves get distracted by schedules and activities which drain us of energy and enthusiasm. Light a fire under us, O God, that we may again feel the exciting challenge of being your people. Heal our wounds of indifference and apathy; bring us together in harmony and joy to serve you and your creation with peace, justice, and hope. It is in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, that we offer this prayer. AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Feel the powerful warmth of God's love for you! God is with you, healing and restoring your lives and bringing you peace. This is the good news from our persistent and patient God. AMEN.

CHORUS: #18 “He Has Made Me Glad”

I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart,
 I will enter His courts with praise.
 I will say, “This is the day that the Lord has made,
 I will rejoice for He has made me glad.”

He has made me glad, He has made me glad;
 I will rejoice for He has made me glad.
 He has made me glad, He has made me glad;
 I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 22:1-14

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

⁵“But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and 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 wedding clothes. ¹²He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

¹³“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

MESSAGE

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus told the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14, and it has some important distinctions. To better understand the context of this story, it is important to know some basic facts about weddings in Jesus’ day.

In Jewish society, the parents of the betrothed generally drew up the marriage contract. The bride and groom would meet, perhaps for the first time, when this contract was signed. The couple was considered married at this point, but they would separate until the actual time of the ceremony. The bride would remain with her parents, and the groom would leave to prepare their home. This could take quite a while. When the home was all was ready, the groom would return for his bride without notice. The marriage ceremony would then take place, and the wedding banquet would follow.

The wedding banquet was one of the most joyous occasions in Jewish life and could last for up to a week. In His parable, Jesus compares heaven to a wedding banquet that a king had prepared for his son (Matthew 22:2). Many people had been invited, but when the time for the banquet came and the table was set, those invited refused to come (verses 4-5). In fact, the king’s servants who brought the joyful message were mistreated and even killed (verse 6).

The king, enraged at the response of those who had been invited, sent his army to avenge the death of his servants (verse 7). He then sent invitations to anyone his servants could find, with the result that the wedding hall was filled (verses 8-10).

During the feast the king noticed a man “who was not wearing wedding clothes” (verse 11). When asked how he came to be there without the furnished attire, the man had no answer and was promptly ejected from the feast “outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (verses 12-13). Jesus then ends the parable with this statement: “For many are invited, but few are chosen” (verse 14). So what does this all mean to us today... but this parable is very intense...almost frightening. This is my take on it.

We’ve all done this, declined invitations. Sometimes our ill health or injury gets in the way; other times we are in sorrow;there are a whole host of reasons we decline invitations.

It is easy for us to make a jump to the comparisons of the Pharisees, who would have among those first invited because of their status and influence in the community and those who were poor, perhaps foreign born or “Gentiles” as they were so often called. But I believe that the comparison can go further — or perhaps closer ... to us.

There are so many ways God invites us to celebrate and then to serve. But it is easy for us to get side-tracked. Needing to work on Sundays can be a block to attending the celebration; having family responsibilities, even if they are sports or other social events, can get in the way.

Two questions What have we gained by accepting God’s invitation to the banquet?

Are we healed, strengthen, given courage, inspired, challenged by declining God’s invitation? No

We are healed, strengthen, given courage, inspired and challenged by accepting God’s invitation.

What have we lost? Simple the promise of everlasting life.

But it is very hard in today’s society to maintain that invitation. Many still maintain that the demands of living in today’s “day and age” determine our responses. We are too busy to accept the invitation. That may be the reason, but isn’t it wonderful that God does not use excuses to exclude us from God’s love and goodness. God never declines our prayers, even though our impatience tells us that we want an answer and we want it right now. God does answer – we just have to be ready to listen.

Several years ago, there was a terrific power wedding scheduled in a suburban church. A wealthy debutante was engaged to marry an equally wealthy businessman, and a lavish reception was to follow. Just hours before the wedding, the groom got cold feet; he left his bride – literally – standing alone at the altar. The wedding, of course, was cancelled. But what would they do with all that food? It had already been paid for and prepared. The family of the bride decided to send buses to the Salvation Army and several downtown shelters, and they brought street people to the country club, where they sampled fresh crab, steak and lobster, and steamed vegetables and fancy desserts well into the night. They celebrated, rejoiced and felt welcomed.

That is what this parable is all about God wants us to rejoice and be glad, feel welcomed to the banquet. But the God also wants to change us

with his grace, and this is where the parable of Jesus takes on a dramatic turn at the end.

“When the king came in to the banquet, he saw a guest who was not wearing a wedding robe.” That doesn’t mean that the guest was wearing the wrong clothes, but rather, that he was wearing the wrong attitude. He rejoiced at the party, but there was no humility about him. He was arrogant. He was unaffected by the astonishing hospitality of the king. And so, he planned to go back to his loser life in the coming days, and still return to the party again next week for another free meal. He was not properly adorned in humble gratitude.

And this is the truth about the God who has invited us to this party; that he invites us to come as we are, but he loves us too much to leave us as we are. God wants to change us, to mold us and make us into honest to goodness children of a God. It’s a process; a journey that happens over time, but certainly, it begins with gratitude.

May God give us courage to see ourselves in this story, and faith to receive his grace with joy. WE are all invited Feel the power of God’s love poured on you and through you to others in need. Come to the feast! It has been prepared just for you. AMEN.

HYMN: #357 Tell Me the Stories of Jesus

1 Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear;
things I would ask him to tell me if he were here;
scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea,
stories of Jesus, tell them to me.

2 First let me hear how the children stood round his knee;
and I shall fancy his blessing resting on me;
words full of kindness, deeds full of grace,
all in the love-light of Jesus' face.

3 Tell me, in accents of wonder, how rolled the sea,
tossing the boat in a tempest on Galilee;
and how the Master, ready and kind,
chided the billows, and hushed the wind.

4 Into the city I'd follow the children's band,
waving a branch of the palm-tree high in my hand;
one of his heralds, yes, I would sing
loudest hosannas! Jesus is King!

5 Show me that scene in the garden of bitter pain;
and of the cross where my Saviour for me was slain.
Sad ones or bright ones, so that they be
stories of Jesus, tell them to me.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Today, Lord, we gather at the table, to receive the blessings of salvation; gifts that are given to transform our lives from quiet isolation to joyful service. We have come here from various struggles and times of confusion. We have come seeking restoration and healing; and you have given both to us. You have reminded us again of the blessings of healing love for all people represented in the bread and the cup in which we partake. As we have offered prayers for many people and situations near and dear to us, help us also remember that we are in prayer for ourselves, for strengthening, healing, encouragement, peace. Give us spirits of confidence in your presence that we might be part of the great healing and justice ministries you have set before us. These things we ask in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #278 In The Quiet Curve of Evening

- 1 In the quiet curve of evening, in the sinking of the days,
in the silky void of darkness, you are there.
In the lapses of my breathing, in the space between my ways,
in the crater carved by sadness, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.
- 2 In the rests between the phrases, in the cracks between the stars,
in the gaps between the meaning, you are there.
In the melting down of endings, in the cooling of the sun,
in the solstice of the winter, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

- 3 In the mystery of my hungers, in the silence of my rooms,
in the cloud of my unknowing, you are there.
In the empty cave of grieving, in the desert of my dreams,
in the tunnel of my sorrow, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

SENDING FORTH

You have received blessing upon blessing from the Lord. Now go into the world offering hope and peace to all people you meet. Be involved in justice and healing ministries in the name of the Lord. Go in peace, AMEN.

CHORAL AMEN

POSTLUDE

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Announcements

Sunday, October 15th: Please join us for a showing of “The Chosen” at Hagersville at 7pm in the Sanctuary. This will be continuing each Sunday.

Tuesday, October 17th: Coffee time at Springvale starting at 9:30am. All are welcome.

Wednesday, October 18th: Official Board meeting at 10:30am at Springvale.

Friday, October 20th: Soup Lunch at Hagersville from 11:30am-1pm. Cost is \$10 per person and includes soup, bun & cookie. Soup kinds will be chicken noodle, hamburger, butternut squash & potato corn chowder. This will be a take-out only event. To order, please call 905-768-3729 by October 18th at noon.

Sunday, October 22nd: Hagersville Anniversary Service at 11am. Presenting the music video “Brotherly Love” Featuring Jimmy Fortune of the famous Statler Brothers Band with Brad Walker, Mike Rodgers and Ben Isaacs. Singing such classics as “The Lighthouse”, “Lord I Hope This Day is Good” and “Go Rest High on That Mountain”. Please join us following the service for coffee, snacks and great music.

Monday, October 30th: Coffee time at Hagersville from 10am-12pm.

Saturday, November 25th: Please join us at Hagersville United Church for High Tea from 12pm-2pm. Cost is \$20 per person, in advance if possible. Call or text 905-515-6908. E-transfer can be sent in advance to dalebvecero@hotmail.com.

Wednesday, November 29th: Springvale will be selling their Pre-Order Cookie Trays with pickup between 4-6pm. Large trays are \$40, medium trays are \$30 and small trays are \$20. Bowls of chili will be available to go for \$10. Available by pre-order, please call 905-537-4188 or 905-768-3910

**Please bring in your paper products for the
Hagersville Food Bank ☺**

