

Make Church a Part of Your Life

WEEKLY SERMONETTE

"Ya'll Come"

Rev. Lyn Linde, First United Methodist Church, Norton

As I was working on this message, researching the text and thinking about what this passage was saying to me and what I was to share with you about this particular passage at this particular point in time, I was watching one of my all-time favorite movies, Field of Dreams. In case you've never seen the movie, it's about an Iowa corn farmer who hears a voice, plows up part of his crop to put in a baseball field that allows players from the 1919 White Sox team to come out of what is left of the corn and play on it, then travels to Boston to pick up Terence Mann, then to Minnesota, then back home.

So as I'm reflecting on invitations in this passage and in the Bible, the movie had reached the point where Shoeless Joe Jackson was leaving to go back to wherever it was the cornfield led the players. He stopped, turned, and said, "Hey, you want to come with us?" Ray Kinsella, the farmer asks, "You mean it?" Shoeless Joe says, "No, not you. Him", and points to Terence Mann.

At this point Ray gets upset, asking, "Wait a second. Wait a second. Why him? I built this field, you wouldn't even be here if it weren't for me. I want to know what's out there. I want to see it."

Shoeless Joe just looks at him and says, "But you're not invited." Which gets Ray even more upset. "Not invited? What do you mean, I'm not invited?" He can't believe he's not invited!

Have any of you ever been "NOT INVITED" to an event? Was there ever a time in grade school where a classmate had a birthday party and you were "NOT INVITED"? Or maybe in High School when someone you thought was your friend has a party and you're "NOT INVITED"?

It's probably happened to you. If you're not part of the "in crowd", you are left on the outside looking in. If you were on the outside, how did that make you feel? I can tell you from experience that it's not a good feeling.

Invitations are often very restrictive. Wedding invitations are given to relatives and close friends; celebration dinner invitations are often restricted to top people in business or politics.

But the invitation Isaiah offers in chapter 55 is a universal, non-restrictive invitation. God, through

Isaiah, issues an open invitation to "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!" Anyone can eat and drink this meal, free of charge. The only requirement is that they COME. In that first verse alone, God says, "Come" three times!

In one sense, a preacher of the gospel has an unchanged message; each sermon may have a different text, but ultimately the scriptures have but one message. And that message can be summarized in one word - it's an invitation from God - it's the word "Come".

Some of the "Comes" of God's Word

Isa 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD.

There is also the wonderful invita-

tion to come to Him for relief from our burdens and cares.

Mt. 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

First He invites us to come to see and know Him, then to come with Him to win others. Mark 1:17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

John 1:39 He said to them, "Come and see". They came and saw where He was staying, and they remained with Him that day. And note His promise to those who do accept His invitation: John 6:37 "... anyone who comes to me I will never drive away."

There is even a personal invitation to us. In Rev. 3:20: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my

voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." Jesus is knocking. And being polite, he will not "come in" until we open the door and extend an invitation. He invites us to open the door and invite him in.

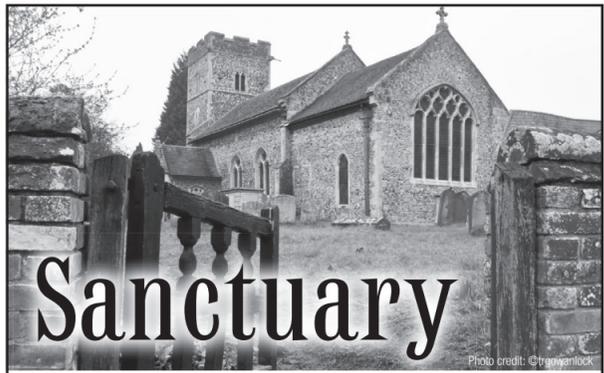
The Great Banquet comes by its name quite honestly. Those of us there for the first time were guests at a great feast. We were fed a feast, not only for our physical bodies but also for our spiritual bodies.

The Great Banquet is an ecumenical gathering. All are invited and all are welcome. Unlike those invited guests in Luke, those of us there accepted our invitation to the great banquet. Oh, sure, there were some who didn't want to be there (at first), others who weren't sure why they were there, and still others who came with their own agendas.

There are many invitations from the Lord in the Bible, with gracious promises to those who come, but note especially the final invitation of the Bible in Revelation 22:17. "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let everyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift."

It was this kind of announcement that Isaiah made in Babylon some 2,500 years ago. An open invitation from God, "Come, all you who are thirsty, and you, who have no money, come buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Jesus has set the table and is inviting us, saying, "... Come, for all is now ready." It is a free feast of Spiritual Food! And Jesus has already paid the entire bill. Let ALL who hunger and thirst come to Him and be satisfied.

God issues open invitations. Unlike those grade school birthday parties, unlike those high school "in-crowd" parties, unlike those restrictive wedding or celebration dinner invitations, and unlike Shoeless Joe's invitation to only Terence Mann, these invitations in the Bible are for EVERYONE. No one is excluded. Like the giver of the great banquet, God doesn't care if you're poor, lame, crippled, or blind. He doesn't care if you're black, white, green, or of any particular denomination. Remember and believe, that when God invites us and says, "Ya'll come", He means EVERYBODY!



Sanctuary

On vacation there is so much to see and do that it is easy to forget about worship. What an opportunity to visit a new house of God, whether it is a monumental cathedral or a small historic sanctuary. Stop in for a while and spend some time with Him. Let serenity spread through your spirit. Sing praises to the Lord, for He is with you wherever you are... He is the Creator of the splendor that we enjoy on vacation and each day. May God bless you with His protection as you travel on your way.

Weekly Scripture Reading

1 Samuel 1 Samuel 2 Samuel Matthew Philemon
1.1-28 24.1-22 26.1-25 9.1-13 18.21-35 20.1-16 1-25

Scriptures Selected by The American Bible Society

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