People of the Feast

Heidelberg Sunday Sermon | Isaiah 25:1–9 • Philippians 4:1–9 • Matthew 22:1–14

God does not only invite us to the feast; God invites us to become people of the feast.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There is something deeply human about sharing a meal. A table can become a place of friendship and belonging. Yet not every table is welcoming. Some people are included while others are forgotten. Sometimes, even when we sit together, we remain strangers to one another.

Perhaps this is why the image of a banquet speaks so powerfully through our readings today. It reveals what God promises and who we are called to become.

In Isaiah, God prepares a feast for all peoples. But this is more than a celebration of abundant food. God promises to remove the covering over the nations, swallow up death, wipe away tears, and take away disgrace. It is a vision where suffering does not have the final word.

Notice that the feast is for all peoples. God's vision is wider than the boundaries we create. It is not reserved for those whom society considers important or respectable. God desires life and hope for humanity.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells of a king who prepares a wedding banquet. Everything is ready, but the invited guests refuse to come. Some are absorbed in their businesses and farms; others violently reject the messengers. The story includes severe judgment, and we should not pretend that its troubling images are easy. Jesus is speaking in the strong language of a parable, challenging those who reject the invitation to God's kingdom.

Then the king sends his servants into the streets to invite everyone they can find. The hall fills with people, both good and bad. Those who had no place on the original guest list now find themselves welcomed to the celebration.

This is a powerful picture of grace. God's kingdom is not an exclusive club of people with the right background, culture, or religious credentials. It gathers people who might otherwise never share the same table.

And this raises an important question for our life as a church. We may say that everyone is welcome. We open our doors each Sunday. But there is a difference between an open church building and an open Christian community.

Someone may attend worship regularly, receive Communion, and leave without anyone knowing their name or their struggles. We may sit beside one another for years while knowing very little about each other's lives. Being in the same congregation does not automatically mean that we have become a community.

So we must ask: Do we make room for one another? Do we notice those who are lonely or new? Are we willing to listen across differences of culture, generation, and experience? Do our relationships reflect the hospitality we proclaim at the altar?

Yet the Gospel does not end with the hall being filled. The king notices a guest without a wedding garment, and the story takes another disturbing turn. We should not reduce this to a lesson about proper clothing or suggest that anyone must earn God's invitation through perfection. The guests were gathered from the streets, both good and bad.

Rather, the wedding garment challenges us to consider what accepting the invitation means. Grace welcomes us as we are, but it also calls us into a transformed way of living. We are not invited merely to occupy a seat. We are invited to participate in the life of the kingdom.

Paul's letter to the Philippians helps us understand what that life might look like. Even a beloved Christian community had disagreements. Paul appeals to Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. He encourages gentleness, prayer, thanksgiving, and attention to whatever is true, honourable, just, and worthy of praise.

Perhaps these are the garments we are called to wear: not outward respectability, but reconciliation, kindness, truthfulness, and justice.

They are not signs that we have become perfect. They are signs that God's grace is beginning to shape our relationships.

This matters because Christian unity does not require everyone to think alike. We bring different experiences and expectations into the Church. Sometimes we misunderstand one another. Sometimes we disagree about the direction our community should take. But our calling is to keep listening, to seek reconciliation, and to remember that belonging to Christ is greater than our differences.

Every Sunday, we gather around another table: the table of the Holy Eucharist. We come not because we have earned a place, but because Christ invites us. We receive one bread and share one cup, a sign that we belong not only to Christ but also to one another.

Yet the hospitality of this table must continue beyond our worship. The peace we exchange must become a commitment to reconciliation. The grace we receive must inspire generosity. And the welcome we celebrate must become visible to those who feel forgotten or excluded.

Isaiah shows us God's promised feast. Jesus opens our eyes to the breadth and seriousness of the invitation. Paul reminds us how people who accept that invitation are called to live.

So as we come to the Eucharist today, let us ask ourselves: Are we merely attending the feast, or are we becoming people of the feast? May our church become a place where strangers become neighbours, differences do not destroy fellowship, and God's love is made visible in our common life.

For God does not only invite us to the feast. God invites us to become people of the feast. Amen.