



# DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

## Week of March 12, 2023 (Matthew 22:1-14)

### Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

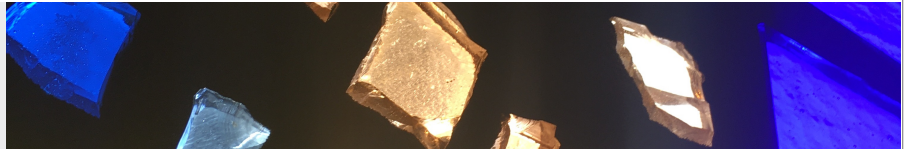
May our prayers be invitations, O God. May the words we use to voice the longing we have for the world be an invitation to include all into your reign.

May the people we mention be the names written on every invitation to the feast of life and the banquet of heaven.

So hear us as we pray for a faith that has excluded too many because of doubt, and gender, and age and culture. May our prayer be a renewal to include and renew ourselves.

Hear us as we pray for a culture that has excluded too many because of religious prejudice, for fear of the other being excluded because of economy and a growing gap between us all. May our prayer be to renew our relationships and a new sense of justice.

Hear us as we pray for a world that excludes too many...



## Devotions for Life

**Context:** A lot happens between where we left off last week and this week's text. Jesus does some more healing, he predicts his death a few more times, and he tells some more parables. But most notably, Jesus and his disciples have left Galilee and entered Jerusalem. This is the Palm Sunday scene, where Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, goes to the temple, and turns over the tables of the money changers there. As we do every year, we will come back to the Palm Sunday text on Palm Sunday in a few weeks. That Jesus is no longer



in Galilee, but in Jerusalem matters: Think of it like doing ministry in Iowa versus Washington DC.

All of this leads us to this week's text, another parable, and a really tough one at that. The first note with this parable is let it trouble you. Don't rush to reconcile it or find a way to make it palatable. Rest in and name what troubles you about it. That's part of what parables are meant to do.

...through conflict and trade, through an economy that favours the wealthy, of tax systems that are blind to the poor. May our prayer be to renew your shalom and the diversity of the kingdom. May our prayer be an invitation to ourselves to broaden our faith, renew our relationships and build your kingdom starting here. So be it. Amen.

## Compassion & Justice

### Minnesota FoodShare Month:

March is Minnesota FoodShare Month, a 40+ year statewide effort to fill local food shelves. As usual we will be collecting food for STEP, and we're excited to do so in partnership with Spirit of Christ Lutheran. Specifically, this year we are **collecting cereal**. If you have the means pick up a bag or two of various cereals and drop them off at the entrance to the sanctuary. Also, STEP seems to have an on going need for paper grocery bags. If you have a stash to spare, consider donating those as well.



The other note about this parable is that it is one that has been used a lot for antisemitic ends. This is one of the problems with much of the New Testament: In a very real way, it's not a big leap to get to antisemitic ends. So we must reimagine them from some of these interpretations and dig more deeply, for if we don't, and they simply are antisemitic, then they are intolerable, should be condemned, and should no longer be part of the Christian canon.

But there is a very real way in which this is not antisemitic, but simply anti-corrupt-power. And that is a theme that has been running through Matthew since the very beginning (the story of the Magi is very much about subverting corrupt power), and which also aligns with the Hebrew Bible prophetic tradition. So as you read this text, keep all of that in mind: If you're reading this and finding it to be anti-Jewish, rethink it, or at least don't accept it as right and good. And if you are troubled by it, well... let your heart be troubled, I guess!

### Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. What stood out to you? What was hard to hear?
2. What do you think this parable is about?
3. Where is God's love and grace in this story?
4. Why is this parable so violent?
5. If God is the king in this parable, what does the king's anger about the man without a wedding garment say about God? What does the wedding garment represent?
6. Who is Jesus' target audience? (Hint, back up and read Matthew 21:43-46).
7. How might being aware of who Jesus is talking to change our understanding of this parable?
8. Also, look ahead to Chapter 23. What is the trajectory of Jesus' words and teaching? How, if at all, does this inform this parable?
9. With all that in mind, what is this parable calling out of you? What is it calling out of us, the Church?

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