

**First St. John Lutheran Church**  
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[www.firststjohn.com](http://www.firststjohn.com)

Rev. Jerald K. Rayl, Pastor

Dr. Joan Walldorf, Director of Music  
Dr. Anthony Pattin, Church Musician  
Cheri Sergent, Bell Choir, Director  
Jennifer Hess, Office Manager



*Called through faith; Gathered in worship; Serving the community*

**October 15, 2023 - 10:30 am**

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**20th Sunday After Pentecost**

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! We offer two services with Sunday School for youth and adults and catechism. Our regular Sunday schedule is:

8:00 am	Early Worship
9:15 am	JAM Sunday School
9:15 am	Adult Bible Study
10:30 am	Late Worship

**LIVESTREAM AND RECORDED WORSHIP:** We livestream the service on our church website at [www.firststjohn.com](http://www.firststjohn.com). Also, the service will be recorded and published to the website

**SMILE! YOU'RE ON CAMERA:** Please remember you may be on camera during the livestream and the recording of the service.

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:** Please remember to silence your cell phone before church begins. Thanks!

**ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL** meets at 9:15 am in the lounge every Sunday.

**CHILDREN AGES 3 THROUGH 5TH GRADE** will meet at 9:15 am for Sunday School in the basement of the church (JAM Room).

**2ND YEAR CATECHISM CLASSES:** Second year class will meet every other Sunday at 11:45 am.

**NURSERY** is in the church basement and is currently unstaffed; you are welcome to sit with your child. A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

**RESTROOMS** are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take either set of steps to the basement hallway. The ladies room is at one end, and the men's room is at the other.

**FLOWERS:** If you would like to sign up for altar flowers, there is a book in the lounge. Or, you can call the church office during the week to check on availability.

**MEMORIALS:** If you wish to give a memorial in honor or memory of a loved one, you may mail it in or pick up a memorial card in the church office.

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Prelude

Dr. Anthony Pattin

Ring of the Bell (Please Stand)

Opening Hymn “Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies” No.553

**Confession and Forgiveness**

P: Blessed be God, the one who forms us, ☩ Jesus who bears the cross, the Spirit who makes our joy complete.

**C: Amen**

P: Let us bow before God in humility, confessing our sin.

*(Silence for reflection and self-examination.)*

P: Steadfast and faithful God,

**C: you have revealed the ways of justice, yet we fail to follow you. We are overwhelmed by the world’s violence and suffering. We are afraid to risk what we have for the sake of others. For the harm we have caused, known and unknown, forgive us. For the unjust demands we place on others and your creation, forgive us. For the ways we turn away from you and our neighbor, forgive us. Lead us back to you and set us on the right path; in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

P: Beloved in Christ, God’s justice stretches beyond all understanding. God’s compassion is beyond compare. In Jesus, God is always making a new way for us. In ☩ Christ, you are already and always forgiven.

**C: Amen**

**Sharing of the Peace**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Let us share the peace of the Lord.

*The congregation may greet one another by shaking hands, fist bumping, or any other form of greeting with the words, “Peace be with you.” We conclude the sharing of the peace by singing:*

**“Lord I lift your name on high;  
Lord I love to sing your praises,  
I’m so glad you’re in my life,  
I’m so glad you came to save us.  
You came from heaven to earth to show the way.  
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay,  
From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky;  
Lord, I lift your name on high.”**

**Prayer of the Day**

P: Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C: Amen.**

*(Please be seated)*

**Announcements**

**Introduction**

In Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus’ parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 25:4-9**

*After a hymn of praise acknowledging God as a shelter for the poor, the prophet portrays a wonderful victory banquet at which death—which in ancient Canaan was depicted as a monster swallowing up everyone—will be swallowed up forever. The prophet urges celebration of this victory of salvation.*

<sup>4</sup>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,  
<sup>5</sup>the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,  
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;  
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

<sup>6</sup>On 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.  
<sup>7</sup>And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
<sup>8</sup>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.  
<sup>9</sup>It will be said on that day,  
Lo, 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.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

### PSALM: PSALM 23 (congregation responds in **BOLD**)

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not be in want.  
<sup>2</sup>**The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures  
and leads me beside still waters.**  
<sup>3</sup>You restore my soul, O LORD,  
and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.  
<sup>4</sup>**Though 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.**  
<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.  
<sup>6</sup>**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

### Special Music

"Handel's Allegro"

FSJ Bell Choir  
Cheri Sergent—Director

(Please stand)

### Gospel Acclamation



### Gospel Announcement

P: The Gospel according to Matthew Chapter 22.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

### **GOSPEL: Matthew 22:1-14**

*Jesus tells a parable indicating that the blessings of God's kingdom are available to all, but the invitation is not to be taken lightly.*

<sup>1</sup>Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>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.' <sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>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.' <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen."

### Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

## SERMON

Pastor Rayl

### Sermon Hymn

*“All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly”*

No.461

*(Please stand)*

### Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*(Please be seated)*

### The Offering

#### Offertory Music

*“Just a Closer Walk”*

FSJ Chancel Choir  
*Dr. Joan Walldorf—Director*

#### Offering Prayer

P: God of power, God of plenty, all things belong to you. We bring  
our gifts to the table, that all might be fed. Form us into the body of  
your Beloved, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

#### Pastoral Prayer *(Each petition concludes with this response)*

P: Merciful God,

**C: Receive our prayer.**

### The Lord’s Prayer *(prayed by all)*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

### Blessing

P: The God of glory, ✠ Jesus Christ, name above all names, and  
the Spirit who lives in you, bless you now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

### Closing Hymn

*“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”*

No.632

### Dismissal

P: Go in peace. God is at work in you.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### Postlude

Dr. Anthony Pattin

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### ***PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY’S SERVICE***

#### ELDERS

Bill Nelson, Mike Winslow

#### READER

Bob Haar

#### SOUND BOARD

Beth Hugueley

## SERMON NOTES:

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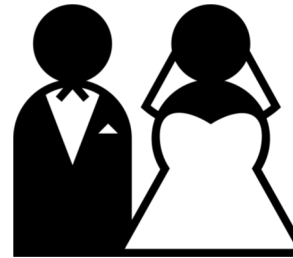
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### **Expensive Wedding. Expensive Grace.**

On a recent reality TV show entitled *Wedding Wars*, engaged couples competed for a complete wedding wardrobe. The winning couple received the bride's dress and the groom's tuxedo as well as proper attire for their entire wedding party. The estimated cash value was \$30,000. Getting married is not cheap.

In today's gospel Jesus tells a parable about a wedding invitation, a banquet, and God's grace. Jesus teaches about a king who ultimately invites all people to a wedding banquet. At first this parable seems to portray a wide open and gracious invitation to a wedding celebration. However, by the end it is hard not to feel sorry for the poor guy who gets a last-minute invitation but gets thrown out for not wearing the correct wedding duds! He apparently wasn't a winner on that era's counterpart of that reality TV show! Again, getting married is not cheap—but neither is grace.

Jesus tells this parable as a way of teaching us that receiving God's grace changes people. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught, God's grace is not cheap, it comes at a great cost upon the cross. Once we receive this costly grace, our lives are never the same. This grace compels us to act and calls us to bear fruit with our lives. Ultimately, we are led to share this grace with others. To continue to live in the same way after receiving this gracious invitation is not an option. So, what are we to do? We simply receive the gracious invitation to the banquet and find a changing room—it's time to live a new life.



# PERSONAL NEEDS PANTRY

Please purchase full size items.

|                |                        |                   |
|----------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| dish soap      | shampoo, child         | disposable razors |
| paper towel    | laundry soap           | toothbrush, adult |
| toilet paper   | fabric softener sheets | toothpaste, adult |
| tissues        | body lotion            | sanitary pads     |
| deodorant      | body soap              | band aids         |
| shampoo, adult |                        |                   |

This is a list of the items that will provide a month's worth of hygiene supplies to families or individuals in our neighborhood to help them stay clean and healthy. We always welcome any donations from our congregation members.

**If you would like to donate items, please donate only full size products as sample sizes will not last a month.** If you would prefer a Pantry volunteer to do the shopping for you, we welcome monetary donations. Please make out checks to First St. John Lutheran Church and write Personal Needs Pantry on the memo line.



## Commands and Invitations

"Come to the wedding banquet!" That can be an invitation, but it can also be a command. Commands compel; invitations seem more gracious. But if the wedding is in the king's palace and the invitation is delivered by the palace guard, the one "invited" may feel that there is little choice but to attend, regardless of personal preference. Both commands and invitations, in this case, can be backed up with the power of the king (which, in Jesus' story, is the power of God).

If we are commanded to come to the wedding, we may attend only because we *have to*. An invitation gives us the freedom to attend because we *want to*. What parts of your life are shaped by commands? What parts are shaped by invitations? How do you respond to each? What are the true intentions of your heart? These are questions that this day's readings extend for our consideration. So much is at stake when the authority behind the summons is God!

How much of your spiritual life is shaped by a *have to*? Where in your life with God do you live out of a *want to*? Perhaps more importantly, how might we turn our *have to's* into *want to's*?

The solution to that challenge comes as we live by grace--God's invitation given without regard to our own worthiness. God is not compelled to invite us to the banquet, but we have received an invitation nonetheless. It is as real as our baptism into Christ's body, the church. It is spoken through the scriptures. It is repeated in the bread and cup freely extended "for you." Never take that invitation for granted! Just because grace is free doesn't mean it's cheap. This is really some invitation! How will you respond?