

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor

November 28, 2021

Lesson 13

Title: Come to the Banquet

Text: Isaiah 25:6-10; 55:1-3

Around here, you are usually a Blue Devil or a Tar Heel, depending on whether your athletic loyalties tilt toward Duke University or the University of North Carolina. Around here, you usually prefer vinegar-based or tomato-based barbecue, depending on whether your taste buds grew up in eastern or western North Carolina. Around here, on Sunday mornings you head for either the United Methodist church or the Baptist church, probably depending on how much water was used when you were baptized.

On a more serious level, around here you get built-in privilege if you are white instead of black. Around here, folks expect you to say “y’all” instead of *todas ustedes*. Around here, the streets may get violent, depending upon your political leanings. Around here, there is a cultural demand that you choose sides.

Then, there is Isaiah. Pushing back against all these ways we divide ourselves into “us” and “them,” the prophet looked ahead and saw God’s coming perfect kingdom. “On this mountain, the LORD of heavenly forces will prepare for *all peoples* a rich feast” (Isaiah 25:6; italics added). Look at the words that shape the Focal Passage from Isaiah: “all peoples” (verse 7), “all nations” (verse 7), “every face” (verse 8), “the whole earth” (verse 8). The invitation to the banquet (verse 6) has no limitations.

November 28 is the first Sunday of Advent, a time when we look with anticipation. The prophet Isaiah invites us to look and see what God intends. In Isaiah 55:1, we are told that we can buy food even though we don’t have any money. That’s not a bad deal! The division between the “haves” and the “have nots” is gone.

And when we pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we sign up for working that we might now get glimpses of that “all inclusive” kingdom. What am I doing that signals that I already look to that coming kingdom? What am I doing that signals that it’s a kingdom of welcome? What am I doing to celebrate even now the tomorrow that God will give?

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “You have created us to be one people, but we confess we have broken that oneness.”

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