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Gospel lesson

We continue from where we left off last week, with Jesus condemning the temple leadership in the temple during Holy Week.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-authority/>;
courtesy of Lumo Project Films - www.lumoproject.com

Matthew 22:1-14

NRSVue

¹ Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying:

² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.

³ He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come.

⁴ 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.'

⁵ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business,

⁶ while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.

⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his troops,

destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

⁸ Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.'

⁹ Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.'

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe,

¹² and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless.

¹³ 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.'

¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

The word of God for the people of God

<Children's/Interactive time>

How do you feel about immigrants? <Let them respond>

How should they behave? <Let them respond>

What about invading forces? How should we respond to them? <Let them respond>

There's a federal holiday this week. What is it?
<Let them respond; Columbus Day, also celebrated as
Indigenous Peoples' Day>

The Haudenosaunee people lived in this region before
European settlers came. How do you think those
indigenous people felt about the immigrants?
<Let them respond>

How do you think the settlers behaved toward the
natives here? <Let them respond>

How have most immigrants in recent years behaved
toward US communities? <Let them respond>

What does God say about treating immigrants?
<Let them respond>

There are a variety of Old Testament references about
showing love to foreigners in the land and not
oppressing them. Jesus taught compassion and mercy.
Our history of Native American boarding schools, like
the Hispanic concentration camps ICE uses today, are
completely opposite what Jesus taught and against
what God commanded people to do.

Why are these things permitted today when (by now) we
should know better? <Let them respond>

How do we do better moving forward?
<Let them respond>

May we all seek to put God first in everything & thus

have love instead of hate and find joy in all we do.

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<Hymn "Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast" UMH #339>

Message: Rejoice in the Lord!



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/pressing-on-worship-series/week-4-twentieth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-4-twentieth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-pressing-on-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Great Provider of all that is good,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may rejoice in You and press on to share Your
holy grace upon this Earth. Amen.

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We conclude our series "Pressing On" this week as we
"Rejoice in the Lord!"

*"Joy gives us sustenance to maintain life, hope,
resilience, and perseverance, even in the most
impossible circumstances. Joy isn't an escape."*¹

I was downstate to be with my sister post-surgery
this week, and returned on Friday afternoon. I took a

¹ Theme summary taken from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/pressing-on-worship-series/>.

different route than usual, going through the Catskills in NY rather than the longer (but more familiar) route through NJ and PA.

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screencapture from
<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Centereach,+New+York/Sherburne,+New+York+13460/> on 10/10/2026

Since I did not know the way, I turned on my gps and mapping software. Then, because it was a beautiful Friday afternoon during peak leaf season, I discovered that rush hour traffic had started early. I got stuck in very heavy traffic, construction, and was really worried/anxious about getting onto the right roads when traffic was so much less forgiving than it is up here.

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I was so stressed that I started yelling at my gps about taking me through the areas where I drove. Fuming, there were a couple of times that I followed road signs when I was confused about what the gps was telling me, even though it meant a few minutes longer, because I am more familiar and comfortable with following road signs.

The Israelites had been traveling in the wilderness and were trying to follow God. Now they were at Mt. Sinai, and with Moses communing on the mountain with God, they were confused about exactly what they should be doing. Despite all that God had done for

them, all the direct guidance they had been given, they chose to go with worship traditions with which they were familiar – even Aaron went with it, instead of consulting God about what to do.

After all, as we heard last week, they were too afraid of God to speak with the Lord, demanding Moses be their go-between. So, they created the gold calf.

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picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/spi-moses-golden-calf/>;
courtesy of Sweet Publishing / FreeBibleimages.org

Worshipping a physical representation that they had made instead of worshipping God directly was a huge step backward in the faith-building process that God was working on with them. They were avoiding the relationship with their Creator that God was inviting them into. God had a right to be angry.

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And yet, God did not simply smite the people for their sin. God used it to build Moses into a better leader of the people. God told Moses that he could become a great patriarch at the expense all of the people he had led out of Egypt. All of Moses's railing at God about what to do with these people who had been driving him nuts was about to be resolved in his favor – the people would be eliminated.

If Moses had not been warned about the people's

behavior, he might have gotten angry enough upon discovering what they had done as to do something very rash, that he would later regret. By telling Moses that God would destroy the people, God let Moses choose to take on the role of protector of the people instead of enforcer of the Lord.

That choice shaped Moses's dealings with the people from that moment forward – and was aligned with the love and nurturing that God had in mind for the Chosen people. The people were allowed to repent and take up the better path again – God's forgiveness of sin goes back much further than the time of Jesus.

When we are fearful and anxious, we should always look to God for guidance. In discerning whether a leader is acting according to God's will, we should look for those who foster the wellbeing of those over whom they have authority rather than someone vengeful or fostering hate. God is in control, offers us clarity/peace/blessings where others cause wrath, and leaves the choice of what we will pursue up to us.

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picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-authority/>;
courtesy of Lumo Project Films – www.lumoproject.com

As I mentioned before, the temple leaders were supposed to help the people connect with God, but had gotten sidetracked with personal prestige and

politics. Thus, in Jesus's parable, they were the invitees who made light of the son's wedding and went off to other business.

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Jesus warned them: If they would not open their hearts in faith to God's work, they would be destroyed and others would take their place – ones who had not had any standing with God's people before. I do not think it was just coincidence that forty years later the temple in Jerusalem was razed and never rebuilt. The leaders had time to repent.

God is constantly calling us back into healed relationships – and God's servants do similarly. Paul wrote to the Philippians asking for Euodia and Syntyche to “be of the same mind in the Lord,” implying that there was a dispute between them. Paul reminds the Philippians that when we focus on the Lord, our anxiety goes away and we can have peace and joy – and he wants that for them always.

God wants that for us always. When we trust in the Lord, we find joy that gives us sustenance to maintain life, hope, resilience, and perseverance, even in the most impossible circumstances.

On my road trip, I was praying to God that we all could make it safely to our destinations and learn to be better drivers in the process. God did not take away the struggle of the drive from me, but God

certainly gave me enough calm alertness that I could manage the trip without significant mishap. Along the way I was able to see some beautiful scenery and give God thanks for the natural handiwork of Creation.

Rejoicing in the Lord enables us to live life more fully rather than try to escape it. So this week:

- ✝ Seek the Lord in whatever means works for you to connect with the Holy One.
- ✝ Give God your worries, your fears, your anxieties.
- ✝ Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance on a better way forward than floundering in worry/fear/anxiety.
- ✝ Listen to God.
- ✝ Live as the Lord directs, sharing love and grace.

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May you always find reason to Rejoice in the Lord, walking with Jesus through all things and nurturing others in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now let us affirm our faith with verses from Paul's letter to the Romans: