

**Illuminations for
The 20th Sunday after Pentecost | October 11th**

First Illumination: Isaiah (25:1-9)

Chapters 24 through 27 of Isaiah are sometimes called the “Little Apocalypse,” a vision of the old order ending and God’s new one dawning. Our reading opens with thanks: the city of the ruthless has fallen, and the poor have found shelter in God. Then the prophet sees a banquet on Mount Zion. Notice the guest list: not one nation, but “all peoples.” The menu is fit for a king. The shroud of mourning is lifted from every face, and death itself is swallowed up, words Saint Paul later borrows to describe the resurrection. Listen for the invitation, and for how wide it is.

Psalm Illumination: 23

We know this psalm so well that we can miss its turn. It begins in the pasture, but in verse five the scene moves indoors to a banquet table, and the shepherd becomes a host. In the ancient Near East, a host was bound to protect a guest, even from enemies waiting outside, and anointing a guest’s head with oil was the welcome for an honored visitor. The word translated “follow” in the last verse is stronger in Hebrew: it means to pursue. God’s goodness and mercy are not trailing behind us. They are running after us, all the way to the table.

Epistle Illumination: Philippians (4:1-9)

This is our last Sunday in Philippians, the warmest of Paul’s letters. He writes from prison, unsure whether he will live or die, yet “joy” and “rejoice” run through the whole letter. Two faithful leaders, Euodia and Syntyche, women who worked beside Paul, have fallen out, and he asks the church to help them reconcile. Then he turns to joy, gentleness, and prayer “with thanksgiving.” Listen for a phrase you know from the blessing at the end of our service. Our reading stops at verse nine, but the letter does not. What comes next, Paul’s thank-you for a gift from this small church, will come up in the sermon.

Gospel Illumination: Matthew (22:1-14)

It is the last week of Jesus’ life. In the Temple, the religious leaders are challenging his authority, and he answers with a third parable in a row. In that world, guests to a great feast were invited twice: once ahead of time, and again when the meal was ready. Ignoring the second call was a public insult. Luke tells a similar story, but only Matthew includes the king, the guests gathered “both good and bad,” and the man without a wedding robe. Listen to the final line. The word translated “called” is the same word the parable uses for the invited guests. Who is invited, and what does it mean to say yes?

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