

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

October 11, 2020

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 25: 6-9

Responsive Reading; Psalm 1

Epistle Reading; Philippians 4:1-9

Gospel Reading; Matthew 22: 1-14

Sermon Title: **Meditate On These Things**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: When you have the greatest things in the world, concentrate on those good things and not on the bad things around us.

I once saw a cartoon picture of the caricature Ziggy. Ziggy was in the foreground and behind him was a big building with the sign over the door that said, OPTIMISTS CLUB. Over Ziggy's head was the voice bubble that had Ziggy saying, "I knew they would never let me in that club."

How many of us are just like Ziggy? We see so much turmoil and disaster around us that we always expect the worst. We are sure that the "good life" is just not available to us. We become a self-fulfilling prophecy of our own future.

There was a song titled, *Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places*.

Maybe our song might be, *Looking for Happiness in All the Wrong Places*.

Today our scripture readings emphasize the good things that God has in store for us if we will but look to Him and count our blessings instead of concentrating on what the world throws at us. God does not say that the bad things are not there, He just says that He has better things for us both now and in our future.

The Psalm that we used said, blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. The blessed man or the happy man may be around the ungodly but does not encourage their behavior. This person will be a role model that shows others how to live happily without being selfish, divisive, or destructive. The happy person is a real friend to the “ungodly” but is not a partner in crime with them. This person’s delight is in the law of the Lord, or to put it another way, in a way that Jesus himself would be pleased by. This person makes a point of trying to be the kind of person that he or she would like others to be. The Psalm goes on to say that God will give this person a stability that will enrich their lives.

Isaiah says that God will make for all people, “a feast of choice pieces, of wines, of fat things full of flavor, and He will remove

the covering of ignorance, i.e. the veil, of evil that has shrouded all nations. God will swallow up death and eliminate tears and when He does, we will be happier than pigs in mud.

Well Isaiah did not say it exactly that way, but you get the idea.

In our gospel reading Jesus tries to make this a little more understandable with the parable of the King who sets up a wedding feast for his son.

The King invites all the people that society says should be invited but they totally disrespect the invitation, not once but twice. The King then rejects them vehemently and invites common people to the feast. This is where the audience of Jesus was more understanding than I was. It seems that the old custom that is still observed in Jewish culture is that anyone not having a “wedding garment” would be provided with one by the servants of the host. This means that the guest without a garment was not that way because he was poor but because he was so disrespectful that he did not accept one when offered.

We are invited to the feast but some of us won't buy into the benevolence of God and we will not go all in and wear the garment of a guest to the feast. The passage ends, “many are called but few are chosen”, maybe this would be better understood if it were worded, “all are invited but we need to chose to be all in.”

Finally, Paul shows us how we can be “all in”. We are to work together and to uplift one another. All people cannot agree on all things but we should be able to agree on the teachings of Christ. Christ made promises including that He would die and be resurrected on the third day. Because He kept that promise we can be assured that He will keep all of his promises.

All of His promises include that He will give us our daily bread, He will hear us and answer us when we pray. He will protect us from a fate worse than death, He will be with us even unto the end of the age and He will prepare a place for us so that we can be with Him and each other for ever and ever, Amen. Basically, He has all the bases covered. Our past, present and future are all in His hands. So, what are we to do to enjoy the life in Christ that we are offered?

Well my guess is what Paul said. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

There are more important things to worry about than politics, climate change, and flatulent cows. We have God, and God is good. God is good all the time! Meditate on that and love all the good things He has given us, is giving us and will give us.

Today is a good day and tomorrow will be better. Hallelujah
and Amen