

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

October 15, 2017 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 25: 1-9

Responsive Reading; Psalm 106: 1-6, 19-23

Epistle Reading; Philippians 4: 1-9

Gospel Reading; Matthew 22: 1-14

Sermon Title: HOW DO DEY DO DAT?

Summary: The King is still the King and the kingdom is still the kingdom and don't you forget it!

Not too long ago Payton Manning, a retired Quarterback, was on a late night show and the host started razzing him for playing golf with President Trump. Payton answered, "Arnold Palmer told me years ago that if the President of the United States asks you to play golf with him, you do it. It is a no brainer.

The King sent his slaves to those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 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. But they made light of it and went away, one to his

farm and another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.

Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet. 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. But there was one man who was not wearing a wedding robe.

How do dey do dat?

Where was Arnold Palmer when they needed him?

You are a Congressman or Senator, or a wealthy businessman or a Judge or some other person considered to be of significant importance to be invited to the wedding banquet for the son of the King and you just fluff him off? How do you do dat?

Or even worse, you are a quote “nobody”, i.e. a farmer or mechanic, or dish washer or garbage collector and you get invited to partake in a meal like you have never had or will ever have again. Then you do not bother to shine your ragged shoes or barrow a suit coat [even if it is old and too big like mine] and dress to show respect to the best of you ability.

The gospel ends, “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Many years ago, before I started wearing a clerical collar while driving truck, I had a totally unexpected and probably undeserved experience while delivering a load in Buffalo.

A lumper who introduced himself to ~~me~~^{me} as Joseph, which was strange because he was Joe to everybody else, Joseph asked me, "How does it feel?"

I asked him what he meant and he said, "How does it feel to have the anoint? I saw it on you when you walked in."

I asked him what he meant by "the anoint". He said, "You know the anoint, you know many are called but few are chosen."

This kind of knocked me for a loop but I could tell that he was being serious. I also suddenly got a wonderful feeling that he was right. I got this crazy sensation that God had been talking to me and I never heard it until Joseph hit me over the head with it.

I told Joseph, "It feels great, it feels great but I don't know why I got it."

This is where my bragging stops and reality kicks in. When you really feel how much God loves you and then you turn down the invitation to the banquet because you are too busy worshiping another idol to take the time, you feel like Peter when he realized that he had just denied Jesus 3 times.

"Love the Lord thy God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength. And the second is like unto it love your neighbor as yourself." "You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in

heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God."

Rev. Karen, my mentor from Berry Center Presbyterian church, told me that when she first started the ministry she was asked by her advisor what she saw as the biggest problem facing the church she had just become part of. She said that the biggest problem was that her parishioners could not tell the difference between a mistake and a sin.

Jesus faced this when he said, "There is no one so blind as he who will not see." Paraphrasing, the Pharisees said, "Are you saying that we are blind?" to which Jesus replied, "If you were blind you would be innocent but because you see and will not change you can just go to Hell!" Well sorta; I said that I was paraphrasing.

Our Epistle says, "Let your gentleness be known to everyone."

This is what I have to do now. It is either that or say Hallelujah and amen and skip all the stuff that I believe God wants me to say.

OK, here goes. In our responsive reading from the Psalms it says, "They made a calf at Sini and worshiped a cast image."

We read the story of how the Hebrews got ^{Aaron}~~Amin~~ to make a golden calf to worship while Moses was on the mountain

talking to God. We are appalled. How could they forget God that fast. How could they worship a calf made by hand out of gold?

“Have no other Gods before me for I am a jealous God.” “And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

America, and some of us in this church, is making a serious mistake but it is not a sin until we realize what we are doing and then do not change.

They say that any time you point a finger at someone you have 3 fingers pointing back at yourself. This could not be more true than it is with me.

I am speaking of this whole NFL/Flag thing. Now you probably feel that I am overstating at very least but hear me out.

In football, might as well use an example from the sport that is smack dab in the middle of this, if a player defends a pass and then gets up and says to the would be receiver, “You may be good but you will never be as good as me.” The ref will then throw a flag for unsportsman like conduct, i.e. taunting. If before the flag is thrown the would be receiver punches the guy in the face it becomes off setting penalties and both guys are charged with unsportsman like conduct. The point is that

saying something to be hurtful and get a reaction is just as bad as getting physical.

OK so where am I going with this?

We think that an idol has to be made of wood or a metal but what we do not realize is that an idol can be made of cloth or parchment with writing on it.

Do any of you remember when a conservative Christian group in the 50s tried to have the Pledge of Allegiance banned in schools as idolatry? They said that the Pledge required a child to put his or her hand over their heart and pledge allegiance to a flag of a country instead of to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior.

If I have my history and timing right this was defused when Danny Thomas got the words “under God” inserted into the pledge.

You have heard of “throwing the baby out with the wash but that really gets serious when the baby is Jesus and 3/5 of Americans are saying “Jesus can go to Hell I stand for the flag and refuse to love any neighbor that does not agree with me.” 2/5 are saying, “Jesus can go to hell, I stand for the constitution and refuse to love any neighbor that does not agree with me.”

Right in the middle of all this insanity the Las Vegas shooting goes down and I say, “OK, God is giving us a wakeup call. God is

telling us that lives and loving one another are more important than the flag or the constitution,”

Guess what, America did not wake up. There is still as much garbage about this whole subject as there was before Las Vegas and North California wild fires.

During the Revolutionary War Patrick Henry said, “I may not agree with a word you have to say but I will defend unto the death your right to say it.” Patrick was not talking about a flag issue. Patrick was talking about Tories that said that the King of England was their savior and any opposing him should be hung as a traitor. Patrick was saying, “I may not agree with a word you have to say but I will defend to the death your right to say I should be hung for treason.” Wow!

This is where I have 3 fingers pointing back at me. I have one niece that was going on Facebook to ask for prayers for Wanda. I have another that although she claims to love and honor Wanda more than any other woman, with the possible exception of her own mother, never posted anything regarding Wanda but posted 5 times her disdain for the NFL with her last post saying that everyone should turn off the NFL that Sunday. Although I was disturbed by the protests I reflected Patrick Henry to the point of hateful idolatry. I responded, “I won’t turn off the NFL as I respect them. I am turning off my crybaby family!”

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength, and love your neighbor {and family} as thy self.”

I believe that America, and James Gardner, have stooped lower than at any time in our history except the Civil War era and the Civil Rights era. I am no longer so blind because I will not see. I see and I have turned that page. I hope you will join me in taking a more Christ-like stand and that you along with me will live the words of our Epistle Reading where it says,

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and see in Jesus, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Hallelujah and Amen