

**Bible Study**  
**Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 23, Year A**  
**October 15, 2017**

**[RCL] Exodus 32:1-14; Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:1-14**

**Exodus 32:1-14**

In today's culture, it is easy to expect immediate results. Fad diets, wireless internet, and other trends and technologies have taught us that we can stay connected and get feedback without waiting. It appears the people of Israel suffered the same expectations; a lack of patience for Moses to return drove them to build and worship false idols. It is hard to remember that our time is not God's time. When we sit before the Lord, it is in our stillness and patience that God becomes clearer.

- What idols do we build and worship instead of God in our own impatience?

**Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23**

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.” This psalm is the antithesis of the Exodus passage. It speaks of divine goodness and eternal gladness and glory, which we can dwell upon if we keep our hearts pointed toward God. It notes the wrongdoing of the people of Israel when they made and worshiped the golden calf, and acknowledges the continued wickedness of which humanity is capable. But it turns our hearts back toward God, reminds us of the intervention of Moses, and praises the Lord who has mercy eternal.

- How do we turn our shortcomings into praises for God like the psalmist here?

**Philippians 4:1-9**

St. Paul loves the community at Philippi. Philippians is often referred to as the friendship letter because of his affectionate tone and reassurances. This passage seems to fit right in with that assertion. We are reminded, not for the first time in this letter, to be of the same mind as Christ. And he gives examples of good people doing that work. Then we encounter the juxtaposition of worry and peace. This can be one of the hardest things to do as human beings, to not worry in the face of all the uncertainty of the world. But St. Paul assures us that Godly peace which we could never fathom will guard our hearts and minds if we commit to the practice of releasing our worries to God.

- Research says it takes 21 days to create a habit - how can we commit to prayerfully submit our requests to God for at least three weeks? Do you think it will actually yield peace beyond understanding? What might that feel like in comparison to worry? Can we trust the wisdom of St. Paul and try it?

## **Matthew 22:1-14**

This is a parable that weaves very tightly the themes of invitation and judgment. It's hard to determine where the hope is when so many people are disregarded or thrown out. But the message is this: the work of God in the world takes commitment. Once we get past the people who choose their own selfishness and cruelty over the invitation (which we read as the love and work of God in the world), we find that all are invited to the banquet. The issue becomes that even though all are invited, not all are ready to fully participate or commit to the experience. The transformation of our lives in God is complete. There is nothing that is not changed by the love and work of God in us. So to only be partially ready is to not be ready at all, hence why the man without a robe is thrown out. It is serious work, and we must take the invitation to do it seriously.

- Each of us has a wedding robe to put on to attend the banquet. That is, each of us must be fully committed to the Christian life when God calls on us. What does your robe look like? What must you do or think or get rid of to be ready and willing to answer the invitation?

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