

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

OCTOBER 15, 2023



## DRESSED

*wearing the right clothes*

by Drew Downs

I've been thinking a lot about how we dress, what we communicate through clothing, and the expectations we put on each other.

This, of course, was prompted by the recent discourse about Senate rules requiring men wear suits on the Senate floor. The irony, of course is that the history of the suit was not as an elevated form of dress, but that it was the *common* dress. It wasn't required of a profession, but of everyone.

Removing someone for not wearing the right outfit has become very situational for us. As has the idea of dressing "up" or "casual".

Lost in this discourse, of course, is what the clothing is actually for and what expectations are actually worth anything! Should someone be tortured for eternity for not meeting a wealthy person's unspoken expectations? And is shaming others into submission a worthy goal?

# ORDINARY TIME

2023

---

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### **Finding Common Vision**

This past Sunday, we gathered with Kristin White, Canon to the Ordinary for Congregational Development and Leadership (and bishop-elect of the Diocese of Southern Ohio!) who led us in a vision conversation.

We ate together, celebrated a generous time together, and shared in a simple exercise to help us connect with our identity and vision for the future. Next, I and our vestry will gather with Jen Phelps, Transition Minister, to go over what we saw and heard this week and begin to put words and goals for the future. A process that I look forward to!

What I saw was hope. A sincere sense of hope for the future, for our lives, and for St. Stephen's.

I saw joy, anticipation, and common ideas.

And what I didn't see was outdated expectations or attachment to our own desires over common ones (i.e. "my way or the highway").

We did some very good work together, communicating deeply in a very short amount of time. And we did so with great generosity—to one another and to our common mission.

Our time together was a true common vision of hope, care, and community.

With love,  
Drew

# ORDINARY TIME

2023

---

## FOR SUNDAY

*Proper 23A*

October 15, 2023

### **Collect**

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

Matthew 22:1-14

Once more Jesus spoke to the people in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call 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, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 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 when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. 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.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

# ORDINARY TIME

---

## Reflection

As a teaching tool, the parable may be the most effective. As much as people may like the “classic” didactic method of back-and-forth conversation or the modern rote memorization approach, perhaps nothing is more effective than telling people a story.

Stories hook us. At first with their creativity. But then, with their ability to work past our defenses. So when we read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, we aren't intending to think deeply about identity: particularly race, sex, and ability. But we do.

As a teaching tool, I'm not sure anything beats the parable. Even a parable like this one.

We often think of there being “two sides to every story” but this story contains far more than that. And depending on how we see Jesus and the Temple leaders addressed in it can tell us a great deal.

However we read it, there are clear takeaways for the modern reader. That Kingdom of Heaven isn't a familial inheritance that can be perpetually abused. Like wealthy scions who waste their lives and family fortunes on excess. We're called to do good. To show up for God.

We can also see it in a fundamentally different way. Not only as Jesus as the groom, but as the one who showed up without dressing up. And it isn't God who is throwing him out, but a very human king and Temple leaders, eager to enforce the rules with punishment.

Unlike memorized statements of faith, parables pull together our sense into the faith we're learning. We get to listen and decide if this sounds like God's dream for humanity. Which then reveals even more.

---

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807  
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG