

“Our Wedding Banquet Guest List”
19th Sunday after Pentecost
October 11, 2020
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Iao United Church of Christ

Philippians 3:4-14
Matthew 21:33-46

Unknown Author – Untitled

*“Women are women regardless of sex
And men are men in most respects
You can be both or a mix of the two
You can be neither if that’s what suits you
But people are people whatever their parts
Because what really matters is inside of our hearts”*

Aloha beloved brothers and sisters from our virtual world, for those of you who are joining us for the first time, I’m Rev. Florentino Cordova, Tino for short, Pastor of Iao United Church of Christ, an open and affirming congregation. My pronouns are he/him.

As we celebrate Pride Sunday as a faith community and in solidarity with our Aloha Maui Pride brothers and sisters here on Maui, I would like to begin this morning with – “hate disguised as love is still hate!” – let us repeat that again – “hate disguised as love is still hate.” When anyone in our society intentionally harms people with the words from their mouths and by their own actions because they see others as different skin color, of different race, of different sexual orientation is not love – it is harmful, hurtful and is hateful. As Stefan Baumgartner writes in his message for Pride, “No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us.” This should remind ALL of us that we must

stand in solidarity with one another. When one group in our society is being treated as the “rejected cornerstones” of society, we are ALL being rejected. Pride stems from the Stonewall riots in 1969 because of police brutality against the gay community of that time. These rejected cornerstones of society, the drag queens, trans women of color and other non-binary/gender non-conforming beloveds, rose up and fought back against unjust treatment of another human being, against unjust treatment of God’s beloved children.

Maybe for some of us who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, straight or any other orientation or identity – we have had our own wedding banquet guest list and as it is written in our scripture reading this morning in Matthew, some on our list would not show up because of who we are as God’s beloved children. Maybe we have experienced being left out of someone’s wedding banquet guest list because of who we are as God’s beloved children. They have made light of their actions and went away. Many within our society still refuse to come to or invite many like us within the LGBTQ+ community to social events. Some within our community continue to be killed because of who we love and who God has made us out to be – our authentic selves. And it is not just within the LGBTQ+ community beloveds, no, even some within the straight community, many are being unjustly being maligned for not being the “correct” skin color, on the right side of the economic tracks, or on the wrong political party. Back to Baumgartner, “No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us.” As Martin Luther King Jr. also wrote – “no one is free, until we are all free.”

In my conversation this week on one of the social media outlets with someone who is against gay marriage asked me what Jesus said about

“homosexuality.” My response to her was that Jesus didn’t and couldn’t say anything about “homosexuality” because the word did not exist in biblical times as it was an invented word by a German Scientist in the mid 1800’s for scientific purposes, not religious purposes. Then she asked me what Jesus said about same sex relationships. My response was “nothing.” “But he sure had a lot to say about love of neighbor, feeding the poor, caring for the sick, welcoming the stranger and taking care of the needs of our fellow citizens.”

Beloved community, beloved Church, just staying we are a church that is open and affirming of ALL people regardless of sexual orientation or gender means nothing if we do not grow feet on our faith. Being a Christian is a daily commitment and one that requires action – again, one that requires we grow feet on our faith. What might this action look like for us today. Woody Allen once said that “ninety percent of life is just showing up.” When we put feet on our faith, we need to make sure that the left out of our societies, the people out on the margins, the unwanted, the “othered” the people who are considered as “blemished” – that they and ALL of God’s children are on our wedding banquet list.

You see beloveds, the elites of society in Jesus’ time, and even on our own society – the Pharisees, the who’s who in social status were and are happy in placing God and Christ into a square box. Only a few get invited to this wedding. Others are rejected and even killed for their refusal to conform and join in the party of hatred of the “other.”

As the body of Christ, Iao Church must be ready to serve at this big wedding party. This wedding party is one of an invitation to ALL of God’s children. Iao Church, this is an invitation that speaks through our words and our

actions. An invitation where ALL of God's children who have once been the rejected cornerstones can come to this party of hope, of joy, of peace and of love. Those who come, the only thing they need to know is this – no one is expecting you to be perfect, no one is expecting you to be excellent in all things, no matter where you are on the economic ladder, ALL are welcomed. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, ALL of God's beloved children are welcomed. No matter who you love, as servants of God, Iao United Church of Christ loves you, accepts you, and affirms you as a child of God – the wedding robe we wear is the robe of authenticity – let us all wear our authentic robe. Be ready to be changed by us as we are ready to be changed by you.

Let us close with this beloveds. God is having a big wedding party and we are ALL invited. Including those who have been disenfranchised by society and religion. Those who for so long have been “crying out in the wilderness” of our societies for justice, for inclusion, for peace, for hope, and to be loved. Those who want to wear their authentic wedding robe of self-acceptance and authenticity. As I have said many times before, if we are all made in God's divine image, then were we stand is “holy.” God does not make mistakes nor does God make junk. The same God that created the beautiful mountains and oceans and all the stars and galaxies we see at night – also created each one of us and let us not forget “God calls you good – beloved child” Beloveds, we are ALL on God's wedding banquet list.

Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.