

Sermon October 11, 2026

Children's Time

Different ways we serve

\$120

Heifer Project Explained for Kids (Including Pigs)

The Heifer Project is a special kindness program where people give animals — like pigs — to families so they can have better food, income, and a happier life, and then pass the gift on to help even more people. [Heifer International+2](#)

What is the Heifer Project?

Heifer International is a nonprofit that helps families around the world escape hunger and poverty. They do this by **giving them animals** — such as cows, chickens, goats, sheep, ducks, and yes, **pigs** — that can provide food, money, and resources [history-commons.net](#).

When a family gets a pig, for example, they can:

- **Eat healthy food** like pork and use pig manure for fertilizer to grow more vegetables [history-commons.net](#).
- **Sell pig products** (like pork, bacon, or even piglets) to earn money for school, medicine, or other needs [history-commons.net](#).
- **Grow more food** for their family and neighbors.

The "Passing on the Gift" Promise

The Heifer Project has a special rule called **"Passing on the Gift"**. When a family gets an animal, they promise to give its first baby to another family in their community  [mystorypie.com+1](#). This means one gift can help many families over time, just like a ripple in a pond.

Why Pigs Are Special in the Heifer Project

Pigs are one of the animals Heifer gives to families because:

- They can **produce meat** that is a good source of protein.
- They can **produce manure** to help grow crops.
- They can **bring income** through selling pig products  history-commons.net.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION FOR NORTH CAROLINA MISSION TRIP

God of grace and wonder, we give thanks for the vision, adventure, and passion that have brought this team together. As they travel to be fully present with neighbors near and far, we ask that you send them to be your love in the midst of others.

Give them eyes to see you in new ways, hands to work for justice, and hearts open to learning from those they serve. Protect them in their travels and keep them united in your spirit of peace and joy.

May this team represent the best of our community, energized for new forms of discipleship, as they help your world to be healed. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Christ, Amen.

Prayer

Bless these shawls, O Lord:

To be a mantle of warmth in cold times,

A shelter of peace in times of trouble,

And a gentle embrace of Your unconditional love.

In Your holy name we pray,

Amen.

Jesus tells the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22:1-14, in which invitations are sent to a chosen group, but few respond. Some even mistreat

and kill the servants who bring their invitations. God invites all into a relationship with God but few respond – some laugh, some are too busy, some react violently. So, in response, God extends the invitation to everyone... an invitation into relationship to all people and to God.

Once more Jesus spoke to them 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, maltreated 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.'

Message

Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like a banquet put on by a king for his son's wedding. He sends out messengers with the fanciest stretch limos to bring the guests back to the party.

Some of the people are too busy to come: "no thank you, I need to wash my hair." Others are just plain mean - Grabbing the messenger, beating him up, and leaving him for dead.

So the king in our story burns up that part of town, and sends more messengers out to the street to invite everyone they find to this party. And I mean everyone! The people stuck in rush hour traffic , eating Big Macs, shopping at Walmart. Look around at a gas station or the emergency room or the homeless shelter. That's who the king declared to be worthy of this banquet. Everyone is welcome!

So, since we are welcome too, we go to this fancy dinner, find a seat and get ready to dig in to a wonderful feast. The host comes by and sees somebody who is not dressed for a wedding, which is not surprising since people were pulled in off the street. Do you get dressed up when you go to Walmart, in case you might get an invitation to a wedding? Maybe he doesn't even own fancy clothes! And yet the host points a finger at this poor guy and orders him to be tied up and thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We look around and think: *What happened to everyone is welcome here?*

The king's feast is meant to symbolize the blessed banquet, where all of us gather in the presence of God... and of each other. A place to be fed and redeemed and resurrected and held in love. We remember that blessed banquet every time we gather at the Table and I want to be there. I don't want to be the one thrown out!

But this story isn't about wearing the right clothes or accidentally saying or doing the wrong thing. *It's about our intentions when we walk through the door.*

When the Bible tells us that there are gnashing teeth, it always refers to the wicked. Only the wicked gnash their teeth. So, when the host decided that this guest belongs where teeth are being gnashed, it is because that this person is wicked. We don't know what he is doing or saying, when the host notices him. But, when the host asks where is your wedding garment, he is asking not about clothing but about attitude.

"Where is your respect... where is your joy... where is your gratitude?"

When God gives the Israelites the 10 Commandments, the focus of each one is LOVE. We are invited into the banquet through grace and *all God our host wants is that we respond with love.*

We are all responsible for what we bring to God's party, and I think it should be our very best. I'm pretty sure God is not worried less about how we dress and more on how we treat each other, especially those siblings that others condemn or reject. Every morning, we are called to clothe ourselves in gratitude and love. So when we are called to God's table, we will be absolutely ready to celebrate... wearing the garments God intends for us to wear: a face shining with joy, a life full of love.

We are responsible for every attitude we bring into every situation just as surely as we are responsible for the clothes we wear and the expression on our face. And we are responsible not just to God and to ourselves: We are responsible to the one who sits next to us at God's table.

The Israelites let this responsibility slip through their hands. Their faith is so weak that they forget the God who brought them to freedom, and they turn their backs on the loving presence freely offered to them.

They watched as God parted the Red Sea to bring them across. They were led through the wilderness by a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. They saw God provide manna every day and quails every night. They watched as God brought forth water from a rock. And they still complained. They still failed to trust God. They still wanted to take their salvation into their own hands.

Moses stays up on the mountain with God for days and days. We know that he is receiving the 10 commandments, but all the people know is that he is gone. Maybe he'll never come back, they think. So, in their fear, they pool their resources together and create a golden god.

They have been invited to the wedding banquet at the foot of that mountain and they clothe themselves in fear and faithlessness. They have missed out on the peace that comes from trusting God. Even though God has done so

much for them, they do not wear their joy or thankfulness. They focus only on what they do not have.

Times are tough, and it is easy to focus on what we do not have... to let fear and anxiety take hold of our hearts. The news in our world and in our own lives are filled with broken relationships and tragedies: there is much too much to be frightened of. God's challenge to us today is this: Will we face life like the Israelites sitting at the foot of the mountain, waiting for yet another sign that everything will be okay? They still have the manna and the quail. They still have the pillars of fire and smoke. They still have water from the rock. But they've somehow forgotten to trust in God.

Or will we be like the many guests gathered together, coming to the banquet, grateful for the invitation? Will we enter the gates with our faces shining with joy?

Remember the Good News! God is always present, from birth to death; from dawn to dusk; in the wilderness, up on a mountain and at the banquet. When we forget that God is here with us, we forget that we are created to be in relationship with each other. We say and do things that distort and destroy our relationship. But God always offers healing and hope; forgiveness and love, and we should offer the same to each other. When we do, the banquet doors will be opened wide and we will know that we can live in God's Holy place forever.

Praise be to the God who invites us in and welcomes us with open arms.
Amen.