

Homily Notes for Sunday Oct 15th 2017, 28th Ordinary A

Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10a, Ps 23, Philippians 4:12-14, Gospel – Matt 22:1-14

Why is it today that there are people who do not come to the feast?

1. Summary: After many weeks of formation as disciples with Jesus, we are getting close to the end. The Gospel readings now come from Jesus's last week in Jerusalem, after the "Palm Sunday" entry. During these weeks, conflict with the values of the world is high. We are invited to "intentional discipleship. Fulfillment and salvation is represented as a lavish marriage feast, the marriage feast of the Lamb. God provides an extravagant banquet but we must open the door.

From the very beginning, God has promised a reward, like a great feast, for his faithful.

2. The first reading (Isaiah 25:6-10): The prophet Isaiah (742-700 B.C.) describes, under the image of a great banquet, the blessings and happiness that the messianic kingdom will bring. Our reading comes from a section of prophecy called "the Apocalypse of Isaiah" (ch 25 – 27). In today's reading, with this vision of the great banquet, Isaiah also expresses a grand prophetic vision of the *universality of salvation*. This great banquet on the Lord's mountain, Mt. Zion, is a feast available for **all** people, doing away with death, wiping away tears from **every** face of those who have come to Jesus.

3. Heaven in the O.T. (over 200 occurrences). This illustrates that Isaiah and many in the O.T. believed in "heaven" as a place of fulfillment at the end of time (eschatological, apocalyptic). This is shown even more clearly in Isa 14:6, "How have you fallen from the heavens, O morning star (Lucifer)..."

While God offers the feast, ours is the responsibility to be worthy of it.

4. Our responsibility. In some ways, Isaiah's vision parallels Jesus' parable about the king's wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14). Let us remember that heaven with its great banquet is ours for the receiving. God the Father intends it for us, God the Son has earned it for us, and God the Holy Spirit is ready at every moment of our lives to assist us to obtain it. We must make the necessary preparations.

5. Warning. It would be, however, easy to misread these promises if only we read what has been selected for our reading today. Isaiah makes clear that much of humanity will be cursed because of its sin and refusal to respond to God. Read in Isaiah 6:9-13. Jesus also says, "Many are invited, but few are chosen."

One way to be worthy of the feast is to be a good steward, content with what one has.

6. The second reading: This is an example of "good stewardship." Of all his churches, this one was the most unified and generous. Here St Paul is thanking the Christians in Philippi for their assistance to him and the blessing God will give them because of this generosity. He says, "*My God in turn will supply your needs fully, in a way worthy of His magnificent riches in Christ Jesus.*" Here Paul is describing mature Christian "stewardship."

7. Key concept: "Stewardship" is discipleship, committing our whole selves to Jesus, represented by our *time, talent and treasure*. Here St Paul emphasizes his freedom to serve whether or not he has money and food. He knows the experience "*of living in abundance and of being in need.*" Because of his faith, it makes no difference to Paul whether he lives "*in humble circumstances or in abundance.*" This is key for why he always has enough. His whole existence has been transformed by his being joined to Jesus in His death and resurrection. "*I have learned,*" he writes, "*the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry.*" Paul reminds us of our need for a complete and unquestioning trust in God, and for the firm conviction that He is regulating the affairs of our lives.

These are the final parables of Jesus; final words have the greatest significance.

8. Gospel: The parable of the Wedding Feast: The context: In Matthew 21 is recorded the Entry into Jerusalem. Jesus then cleanses the Temple and gives a series of final teachings. Then follow three parables which criticize the religious leadership of the Jews, the scribes and the Pharisees. Our reading today is the third of these parables. The parable of the royal wedding feast is a parable about the Kingdom of God and about the

people who will eventually belong to it. It is also the last of three parables that challenge the legitimacy of the Jewish leadership, three parables of judgment or “rejection parables.” They all contrast the values and attitudes of the true Israel with the attitudes and lives of the Scribes and Pharisees. This parable was delivered by Jesus on his last visit to the Temple on the Tuesday of Holy Week and was part of his last confrontation with his enemies before his arrest.

Basic Question. Why would guests refuse to come to the wedding feast of their own king’s son?

9. Why would intelligent, successful people, knowing the power of the king, not come to the feast? That would seem to be utter foolishness. He did indeed “send his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.”

10. Why do we today refuse our invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb, the Son of the Father? Some reasons might be that people are discouraged, depressed, weighed down by guilt. But, perhaps more important modern reason is that many do not believe that God the Father, Creator, exists?

11. When we teach in Catechism Class that we believe in God the Father, Creator, maker of heaven and earth, that which our children learn now is attacked in 9th grade Biology class, where the godless, random, Darwinian evolution of life is almost taught as a religion.

12. But we should have confidence in our faith, specifically in God the Father, Creator. Lee Strobel, in his book, *The Case for a Creator*, cites many Nobel Prize winning scientists who argue that the evidence in the universe makes the case for “intelligent design”. If there exists “intelligent design”, then there must be an “intelligent designer” or God! Let me share a couple of citations:

The six feet of DNA coiled inside everyone of our body’s one hundred trillion cells contains a four-letter chemical alphabet that spells out precise assembly instruction for all the proteins from which our bodies are made. Cambridge-educated Stephen Meyer demonstrated that no hypothesis has come close to explaining how information got into biological matter by naturalistic means.

Concerning Darwin, Strobel realized that to accept Darwin’s hypothesis, he would have to believe that:

- Nothing produces everything
- Non-life produces life
- Randomness produces fine-tuning
- Chaos produces information
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- Non-reason produces reason.

Biochemist Michael Behe’s argument that “irreducibly complex systems are strong evidence of a purposeful, intentional design by an intelligent agent.”

13. Many other arguments in this book demonstrate that we have very substantial reasons for believing in God. For another line of argument, see my sheet on “Evidences for the Supernatural.” We should never be so foolish to reject Jesus’s invitation to the eternal feast of the Lamb in heaven.

14. The Wedding Garment: In those days, participants in a banquet were expected to dress in clothes that were superior to those worn on ordinary days. This was ordinarily white. It was customary for the rich hosts to provide their guests with suitable apparel. We need to wear our wedding garment for the Eucharistic banquet. The parable means that when one freely accepts Christ as the Lord and Savior, one must dedicate his life to Jesus. In other words, the Christian must be clothed in a new purity and a new holiness.

15. Jesus’s basic question is, “Are we ready with our spiritual wedding garment to come to the Supper of the Lamb? What help do you need? What work do you need to do to put things in order now?”

16. Our basic question this morning, in our secular and skeptical world, is whether we believe in God and his amazing promises for those who have faith? How is your faith in God the Father, Creator?

17. Make a list of five reasons that you think cause us not to take seriously God’s promises and requirements. Share them with a friend, with your family members and Father Paul.

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17. Make a list of five reasons that you think cause us not to take seriously God’s promises and requirements. Share them with a friend, with your family members and Father Paul.

In other words, while Jesus opens wide his arms to the sinner, he expects him to make some effort to repent. It is not enough for one simply to continue unabated in one's sinful ways. Although Jesus accepted the tax collectors and prostitutes, he demanded that they abandon their evil ways. This is why the Sacrament of Reconciliation is so important to us. If we have not repented of our sins and put on the clothes of salvation, we will be shut out, even if we are attending Church.

15. Warning: The parable ends on a sobering note: "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*" It is a sad fact that everyone is called to experience the love of God, relatively few will really try to follow His teachings, in spite of the fact that "God desires that all might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). According to St. Gregory, men and women who come to the wedding feast with hatred in their hearts do not wear the acceptable garment spoken of in the parable. Men and women whose faith and love are cold, who attend Church for social reasons, to show off their clothes and jewelry, or to visit with acquaintances are not dressed in a wedding garment pleasing to the King, Christ Jesus. Our wedding garment is made of our grace-assisted works of justice, charity generosity and holiness.

Application question: How is my stewardship of what God has given me? Have I given up all other attractions and demands in order to follow Him and serve Him?

only confirm our belief in the certainty of its Creator. I find it as difficult to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science."

16. The permanent and universal lesson taught by the parable has nothing to do with the clothes in which we go to church. But it has everything to do with the spirit in which we enter God's house. It is true that church-going must never be a fashion parade or an occasion of scandal for others, but the garments of the mind and of the heart we wear when we go to worship God are more important. They are the garments of penitence, faith, reverence, and charity. St Augustine interpreted the wedding garment to be *charity*.

To see how the Church understands various passages, one can look up the passage in the index in the Catechism. Then one can see how it is used, to what end, in what context.

This parable is cited in the Catechism in #546 and 796. The first is under "The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God" in which Jesus through his parables invites everyone to enter the Kingdom, especially the poor and lowly (544) and especially sinners (545). He poses a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything. Words are not enough; deeds are required. It raises the fundamental question, What use have we made of the talents we have received (Matt 25:14-30).

Article 796 shows the importance of the "Theology of the Body" in order to understand the parables of the Kingdom and to understand the Church. This article is titled, "The Church is the Bride of Christ." Our relationship with Jesus, communally and personally, is often expressed by the image of bride-groom and bride. St Paul speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride "betrothed" to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with him.

"I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

8. The objective of Jesus's parable: Along with *the parable of the landlord and the wicked tenants*, this too is an unfolding the whole of *salvation history*. Jesus hints in the parable that he is befriending the sinners and preaching the good news of God's salvation to them because the scribes and Pharisees have rejected him and his message, while the sinners have accepted him wholeheartedly. That is why he compares God to a king who

gives orders to invite the ordinary folk from the waysides as guests for his son's royal banquet. Jesus also declares that the source of his authority is God his Father who has sent His Son to preach the good news of salvation. Let us remember in the Communion liturgy the words, "Blessed are those who are invited to the Supper of the Lamb." Those are us! What a privilege here to be at the Eucharist, in the presence of Jesus.

Homily Notes for Sunday Oct 9th, 28th Ordinary A

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is represented as a lavish marriage feast, the marriage feast of the Lamb. Stewardship themes are prominent. God provides an extravagant banquet but we must open the door.

2. Key doctrine: What is an **apocalypse**? Apocalypse refers to a prophetic disclosure or a revelation, especially about the future and consequences of current life. This is why the last book in the Bible is known as “The Apocalypse” or “The Revelation to John. That which is condemned by God is described as is the benefits of faithfulness.

3. The first reading (Isaiah 25:6-10): The prophet Isaiah (742-700 B.C.) describes, under the image of a great banquet, the blessings and happiness that the messianic kingdom will bring. Our reading comes from a section of prophecy called “the Apocalypse of Isaiah” (ch 25 – 27). In today’s reading, Isaiah gives a graphic description of the great banquet that the Lord will prepare for his faithful people, expressing a grand prophetic vision of the *universality of salvation*. The imagery Isaiah uses is that of a great banquet on the Lord’s mountain, Mt. Zion: a feast available for **all** people, doing away with death, wiping away tears from **every** face of those who have come to Jesus, and removing their reproach from the earth. In some ways, Isaiah's ideal state parallels Jesus' parable about the king's wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14). Let us remember that heaven with its great banquet is ours for the receiving. God the Father intends it for us, God the Son has earned it for us, and God the Holy Spirit is ready at every moment of our lives to assist us to obtain it. We must make the necessary preparations.

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criticize the religious leadership of the Jews, the scribes and the Pharisees. Our reading today is the third of these parables. The parable of the royal wedding feast is a parable about the Kingdom of God and about the people who will eventually belong to it. It is also the last of three parables that challenge the legitimacy of the Jewish leadership, three parables of judgment or “rejection parables.” They all contrast the values and attitudes of the true Israel with the attitudes and lives of the Scribes and Pharisees. This parable was delivered by Jesus on his last visit to the Temple on the Tuesday of Holy Week and was part of his last confrontation with his enemies before his arrest.

8. The objective: Along with *the parable of the landlord and the wicked tenants*, this too is an allegory unfolding the whole of *salvation history*. Jesus hints in the parable that he is befriending the sinners and preaching the good news of God’s salvation to them because the scribes and Pharisees have rejected him and his message, while the sinners have accepted him wholeheartedly. That is why he compares God to a king who gives orders to invite the ordinary folk from the waysides as guests for his son’s royal banquet. Jesus also declares that the source of his authority is God his Father who has sent His Son to preach the good news of salvation. Let us remember in the Communion liturgy the words, “Blessed are those who are invited to the Supper of the Lamb.” Those are us! What a privilege here to be at the Eucharist, in the presence of Jesus.

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10. We need to wear our wedding garment for the Eucharistic banquet. The parable means that when one freely accepts Christ as the Lord and Savior, one must dedicate his life to Jesus. In other words, the Christian must be clothed in the spirit and teaching of Jesus. Grace is a gift and a grave responsibility. Hence, a Christian must be clothed in a new purity and a new holiness. This means we must come with both faith and works. In other words, while Jesus opens wide his arms to the sinner, he expects him to make some effort to repent. It is not enough for one simply to continue unabated in one’s sinful ways. Although Jesus accepted the tax collectors and prostitutes, he demanded that they abandon their evil ways. This is why the Sacrament of Reconciliation is so important to us. If we have not repented of our sins and put on the clothes of salvation, we will be shut out, even if we are attending Church.

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Application question: How is my stewardship of what God has given me? Have I given up all other attractions and demands in order to follow Him and serve Him?

The use of the Catechism in determining the interpretation of Scripture

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