

**SPIRITUALITY**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

cf. Eph 1:17-18

R<sup>1</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, so that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call.

R<sup>2</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel** Matt 22:1-14; L142A

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables, saying,

“The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast,

but they refused to come.

A second time he sent other servants, saying,

“Tell those invited: “Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast.””

Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business.

The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.

The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

Then he said to his servants, “The feast is ready,

but those who were invited were not worthy to come.

Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.’

The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests.

*Continued in Appendix A, p. 303, or Matt 22:1-10 in Appendix A, p. 303.*

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

Now we come to the third of three parables in three weeks. After learning about the two sons and the evil tenants, we now hear about the royal wedding feast. This parable, like the one from last week, is addressed to the chief priests and elders. Care should be exercised to remember that Jesus is not talking about all Jews; he speaks to the leaders in a particular time and place. And

the parable he speaks to them is harsh, especially the end.

If we choose the shorter gospel reading, the last four verses will not be read—and it might be easier for the preacher if they weren’t! Many problematic issues are avoided by simply reading the shorter version of this gospel.

In the shorter reading, the parable is fairly straightforward. The king sets a banquet, but the guests do not come. The first servants (prophets) are ignored, as are the second set (the apostles). Indeed, the invitees kill the messengers! The king enacts his vengeance on these people, killing them and burning their city before extending the invitation to others. (The fact that the king burns a city between setting a table for guests and serving the dinner tells us clearly that we are in

the realm of story.)

This parable, then, is read like last week’s, in Christian-Jewish terms. The people whom God had chosen ignored his invitation both when the prophets announced it and when the apostles were sent. We recall that Matthew is writing at a time after the destruction of Jerusalem. So the parable’s mentioning of the people being killed and the city burned quite literally happened when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. The original audience of Matthew’s gospel did not need much imagination to get the point.

The last four verses conclude on a troubling note. When the new guests arrive, the king sees someone not properly dressed. For that he is bound and thrown out. Again, we might wonder what kind of king this is! But the image of a king in Jesus’ time certainly had the power of life and death over his subjects. It makes for an apt image of God, even if the behaviors of the king in this particular parable sound off-putting. We recall earlier Matthean parables like the weeds and wheat. Matthew knows the church is a collection of the good and bad. Some quite literally need to be tossed out. (These Matthean themes of violence are often seen as problematic today and the subject of many scholarly works.)

Those invited to the feast, and those who attend, should not be smug. There is no guarantee. An invitation does not necessarily mean attendance, and attendance does not necessarily mean celebration. There are expectations that need to be met. “Many are invited but few are chosen” is a sober reminder for us all.

**Living the Paschal Mystery**

In a story filled with such violence as we have today, it might be easy to forget we are dealing with a merciful God! God calls a people to himself and desires that they come to him. The destruction of the city of Jerusalem with its temple was interpreted at the time by Christians as God’s judgment on Judah. A violent world saw stories of violence. Though we may wish to minimize the violence,



unfortunately it has been part of human history from the beginning and continues to this day.

It might be difficult to strip away the violent imagery and focus instead on the kernel underneath it all. Matthew's church has the wisdom and experience of decades since the death and resurrection of Jesus. It has learned that there are some in the church who do not belong, as indicated in several parables. Sadly, our modern experience reflects this too. Simply being in the church does not make one holy, God's chosen, or a paragon of virtue. There are weeds within the wheat. Only God has the authority to definitively and eternally expel such a person. The sobering reminder that "many are invited but few are chosen" should cause us to pause, reflect, and reexamine our lives.

### **Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** "[C]ome to the feast."

**To the point:** In today's parable a king issues an invitation to come to the wedding feast for his son. After those initially invited refuse, he sends his servants out "into the main roads" telling them "invite to the feast whomever you find." The invitation to be part of the kingdom of God is not reserved for a select group but is a blanket invitation to all people. Despite the generosity of the invitation, there are some things we must do as invited guests. The most important one seems to be to simply to show up. But after that we must also come clothed "in a wedding garment," as today's gospel tells us. Multiple meanings could be deduced about what this wedding garment might symbolize. One could be that if we are invited to the greatest feast of all, we can't just wander in because the door was open; we must be ready to truly enter into the celebration.

### **Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** Despite the harshness of today's gospel, the first reading from the prophet Isaiah joyfully lifts up how God desires to "provide for all peoples / a feast of rich food and choice wines." These words hearken to the king's invitation in today's parable: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, / my calves and fattened cattle are killed, / and everything is ready; come to the feast."

**to experience:** We know that our God is an abundant giver of gifts who provided manna for the Hebrew people when they wandered in the desert, fed the five thousand through the miracles of Jesus in the gospels, and ever feeds us in the Eucharist. The invitation of the gospel is issued to us: "[C]ome to the feast."

### **Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** In today's psalm, God again is the host of a sumptuous banquet. The psalmist sings, "You spread a table before me / in the presence of my foes; / you anoint my head with oil; / my cup overflows." We see this feast God invites all people to in the first reading and again in the parable prepared by the king in Jesus' parable. The Bible often lifts up the value of hospitality. But it is important, too, to consider the duties expected of the host. In the gospel parable the first set of guests ignore the invitation and do not attend. In contrast, not only does the psalmist gratefully sit at the table, but the Lord, he also anticipates dwelling "in the house of the Lord for years and years."

**to psalmist preparation:** How do you experience the abundant gifts of God in your own life?

### **PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING**

Isaiah prophesies, "The Lord God will wipe away / the tears from every face." Where is there suffering or sadness in your community? How might God be calling you to be a source of comfort for others?

St. Paul tells the Philippians, "I know how to live in humble circumstances; / I know also how to live with abundance." What do you think is the key to living well in differing situations?

St. Paul writes, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Where are you in need of God's strength to take on a new challenge?

## **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 11, 2020**

### **Gospel (cont.)**

Matt 22:1-14; L142A

But when the king came in to meet the guests,  
 he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment.  
 The king said to him, 'My friend, how is it  
 that you came in here without a wedding garment?'  
 But he was reduced to silence.  
 Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet,  
 and cast him into the darkness outside,  
 where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'  
 Many are invited, but few are chosen."