

14th Sunday of Matthew

Matthew 22:2-14

The Lord said this parable, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

PART 1: The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a feast:

Isaiah 25:6: On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.

Revelation 19:9: And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Luke 13:29: And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

Matthew 26:29: I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

- When Christ dines with sinners on earth, this is an image of that heavenly feast when all penitent dine with him in heaven.
 - Matthew 9:11: When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
 - The Eucharist, of course.

PART 2: A Wedding Feast for the Son calls to mind Christ as the bridegroom:

Matthew 9:15: And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the **bridegroom** is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

- Why is Christ a bridegroom when he establishes a New Covenant with Israel?
- Because the first covenant is compared to a marriage between God and Israel.
 - Jeremiah 2:1—2: The word of the LORD came to me [Jeremiah], saying, “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, “Thus says the LORD, I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the first fruits of his harvest.”
 - Ezekiel 16:8: I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age of love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the LORD God, and you became mine. (Ezekiel 16:8,
- Pitre summarizes these passages with three points:
 1. The Prophets are describing the Exodus Covenant as a Divine Marriage
 2. Israel at the Exodus is a young bride
 3. The marriage is sealed by the covenant with God

PART 3: Sin as Adultery:

- (Hosea 1:2—3) When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: “Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the LORD.” So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.
- (Isaiah 1:4, 21) They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.... How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.
- (Jeremiah 2:32; 3:20) “Can a maiden forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number... . Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband, So have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel,” says the LORD.

PART 4: God promises to forgive his unfaithful bride:

- (Isaiah 54:5—8, 10) Your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name... . For the LORD has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer... . For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast

love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

- (Jeremiah 31:31—32, 34) Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Christ, therefore, as the Bridegroom, renews the covenant with God's people by dying and rising to new life, and granting that new life to his bride.

PART 5: People are called to the Wedding Feast.

- This is not an invitation, but a notice that the party is ready to which they had been previously invited -think of a world without clocks.
- This also makes the refusal that much worse – these are people who promised they would come, and now refuse.
 - **Matthew 21:** What do you think? A man had two sons; and he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹ And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he repented and went. ³⁰ And he went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first."
 - Matthew 21: Hear another parable. There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴ When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit; ³⁵ and the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them.

PART 6: When the King came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe.

Should we pity the man who was expelled from the wedding feast in today's Gospel reading? To our eyes, he might seem to have been rejected unfairly. But the man is expelled, not because God rejected him, but because he rejected God. How so? The Kingdom of Heaven is often compared to a joyous meal. When Jesus dined with the poor and downtrodden during his earthly ministry, he showed that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. These earthly meals symbolized the joyous meal that believers will share in heaven. To follow Jesus is to dine with him, on earth as well as in heaven. The King in today's parable is God the Father, who has invited people to dine with his Son. Whoever accepts the invitation has become a follower of Jesus. But being a disciple of Jesus and dining with him carries a further obligation. Judas, after all, was one of the 12 disciples who ate with Jesus even at the Last Supper. He seemed to be following Jesus, even as he plotted to betray him. The underdressed man in today's parable is not a pitiful soul who

was mistreated and wronged, but a traitor like Judas, growing like a weed within the healthy harvest of the Church. For the Church Fathers, the wedding garment that he lacked is the white robe that people would put on right after being baptized. Without this garment of righteousness, the young man has rejected his Christian identity. The hymns from the first three nights of Holy Week focus on this wedding garment, especially in the notable hymn that says, “I see your bridal chamber adorned, my Savior, but I have no wedding garment that I may enter therein.” Today’s parable admonishes us not only to be called Christians, but actually to be Christians.

Dale Allison:

- Because of Rev 19.8 (‘for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints’), the wedding garment has often been equated with good works or the doing of righteousness: to enter God’s palace one must have pious and righteous works.
- But one may also equate the wedding garment with the resurrection body or its garment of glory, which were typically imagined to be luminous and angelic.
- Matthew 13:24-30: Another parable he put before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷ And the servants^[e] of the householder came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?’ ²⁸ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants^[d] said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”