

XX Trinity 2024
Sermon - Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Ephesians 5.15-20 St. Matthew 22.1-14

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We have the Invitation in hand. It reads...“You are invited to my Son’s Wedding...Great Feast to follow in the Banquet Hall. Special clothes will be provided.” Signed...God! Please RSVP!

It’s quite an honor to be invited to a wedding. The king in today’s Gospel reading thought enough of his many friends to invite them to the wedding and reception for his son. Imagine how he felt when some of them making excuses for not coming...even when the king’s servants were standing at their front door, wedding clothes in hand. In Jesus’ time, the host furnished the wedding clothes for his guests.

One man went off to work on his farm...another to open his store for the day’s business...while others beat up and killed the king’s servants. They showed contempt for the king and his son by going out business as usual. The king’s anger over learning his servants were ignored and some were beaten up and killed is understandable.

The king sent his servants out to collect people from the streets and alleys...the good and the bad...so all of the tables at his son’s wedding feast were full. The shocking element in the story is the man who shows up who wasn’t wearing his wedding clothes. The king has his servants tie him up and throw him out in the dark street...where he cries and gnashes his teeth. That doesn’t seem fair...does it?

Jesus tells us this is a story about heaven. In the story, the King is God and the Wedding Banquet is for his Son, Jesus. We are the invited guests. The man who shows up without being properly dressed rejected the king’s generosity by coming dressed as he pleased. We don’t get heaven on our terms...we get heaven on God’s terms...and he wants us to take our place in heaven...he doesn’t want to exclude anyone...people who don’t want heaven on God’s terms exclude themselves.

The standard Wedding Liturgy in this parish is the Nuptial Mass The Exhortation read by the Celebrant at the beginning of the Liturgy talks about the joining of the man and woman in the Sacrament of Marriage symbolizing the “mystical union between Christ and the Church”.

It’s often said the Mass is the where we experience heaven on earth. The Church...the Body of Christ (that’s us)...is the Bride of Christ. We receive an invitation at every Mass to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. That means we need to be properly “dressed” in a spiritual way. Our response to the Invitation to Confession is to say “yes’ to being in love and charity with our neighbors and walk in his “holy ways”.

Jesus concludes his short story about heaven with what seem like chilling words...“many are called, but few are chosen”. Everyone is invited to the wedding feast in heaven...but we have no right to claim our place in heaven if we are unwilling to assume the responsibilities that come with the invitation.

Ultimately the Gospel is about who gets to go to heaven. God doesn’t stack the decks against anyone...anyone! We are not pieces on a chessboard God moves around at will...some going to heaven and some going to hell. The invitation to the great wedding feast in heaven goes out to everyone. It is up to us to reply yes, or no!

And what about our wedding clothes? The Story about the Wedding Feast for the King’s Son isn’t about the clothes we wear to a wedding. Common sense tells us we should dress appropriately for the occasion. We can’t buy the clothes Jesus is talking about in any store here on earth. The clothes Jesus is talking about is himself!

In his Letter to the Romans, our friend Paul tells us we should clothes ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus supplies us with the spiritual clothes we need in himself. In hearing God’s Word and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar...we get fitted in our proper wedding clothes...we “put on” Christ...and he puts us right with God.

We who are the Church have been called...we have the choice to be chosen. We have the Invitation in hand. It reads...“You are invited to my Son’s Wedding...Great Feast to follow in the Banquet Hall. Special clothes have already been provided.” RSVP to...God! How will we respond to the Invitation?

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