

COME TO THE WEDDING!

(MATTHEW 22:1-14)



Jesus' audience is once again the chief priests and elders, so we are aware that this is a hostile encounter. The wedding banquet is a common symbol in the Bible for the kingdom of God.

Matthew's parable traces the offer of a place at the wedding feast, and the way in which those who were first invited treat the invitation with contempt and actively reject it. The king then sends his servants on an arduous search to find people who will fill the banqueting hall. The destruction of the city represents Matthew's later reflection on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70. The idea of a Gentile nation being the instrument of God's punishing the people of Israel would be familiar to Matthew's community of Jewish Christians, from their knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures. The guest who turns up without the proper garment is more difficult to understand, especially if we imagine him being rounded up unexpectedly to come to the feast. Perhaps it is a warning that it is not enough simply to turn up: the person must be prepared to enter fully into the kingdom and take part in its life.

The emphasis in the parable is on the idea of invitation. Some reject, some accept. The leaders, who should have known better, rejected the invitation presented through the prophets and especially Jesus, whom they killed. It is they, according to Matthew's reading of history, who are thus really responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of the Temple. It is the despised people, tax collectors and the like, who accept the invitation and crowd into the banquet. ■

REFLECT

We find that the image of the wedding feast as representing the kingdom of God is frequently used in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. In the Synoptic Gospel narratives, the feeding of the five thousand anticipates the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist, which in turn foresees the banquet in the kingdom of God. One of the aspects of our celebration of the Eucharist, the Mass, is that it is the pledge of future glory, when God's people will be finally gathered into the divine presence in the heavenly kingdom.

As we saw with the person who turned up not properly dressed for the occasion, getting inside is no guarantee of being allowed to remain. We are expected to take a full part in the proceedings. One feature of the preaching of the biblical prophets is that they stress the idea of election, of Israel being the "chosen people". This may well be an undeserved privilege, but it also brings responsibilities with it. Other nations should be able to look at Israel and see the God they believe in reflected in the way in which the people of the Lord conduct themselves, the values by which they live. The same goes for those who claim to be disciples of Jesus. If we accept the invitation, then we should wear our wedding garment – figuratively speaking! ■

DO

When you next wash your clothes, think of the unfortunate wedding guest. Make a resolution not to take your relationship with Jesus for granted.

LEARN

Roman soldiers are shown carrying off the *menorah*, the seven-branched candlestick, from the Temple, in a carving on the triumphant Arch of Titus: this monument stands in the Forum in Rome.

The Synoptic Gospels are the accounts of Mark, Matthew and Luke.

The word "synoptic" originally means "seeing all together": the three accounts can be arranged in parallel columns and so easily compared.

SAY

For how could he deny me heaven, who here on earth himself has given?

(St Alphonsus Liguori)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you is found forgiveness,
O God of Israel.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

May your grace, O Lord, we pray,
at all times go before us and follow after
and make us always determined
to carry out good works.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 25:6-10

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

On this mountain,
the Lord of hosts will prepare for all people
a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine
wines,
of food rich and juicy, of fine strained wines.
On this mountain he will remove
the mourning veil covering all peoples,
and the shroud enwrapping all nations,
he will destroy Death for ever.
The Lord will wipe away
the tears from every cheek;
he will take away his people's shame
everywhere on earth,
for the Lord has said so.
That day, it will be said: See, this is our God
in whom we hoped for salvation;
the Lord is the one in whom we hoped.
We exult and we rejoice
that he has saved us;
for the hand of the Lord
rests on this mountain.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 22

Response:

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever.

1. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.

Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit. (R.)

2. He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your
staff;
with these you give me comfort. (R.)

3. You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. (R.)

4. Surely goodness and kindness shall
follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. (R.)

SECOND READING Philippians 4:12-14,19-20

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Philippians.

I know how to be poor and I know how to be
rich too. I have been through my initiation
and now I am ready for anything anywhere:
full stomach or empty stomach, poverty or
plenty. There is nothing I cannot master with
the help of the One who gives me strength.
All the same, it was good of you to share
with me in my hardships. In return my God
will fulfil all your needs, in Christ Jesus, as
lavishly as only God can. Glory to God, our
Father, for ever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Word was made flesh and lived among
us;
to all who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 22:1-14

(For shorter form, read between > <)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

>Jesus said to the chief priests and elders
of the people: "The kingdom of heaven may
be compared to a king who gave a feast for
his son's wedding. He sent his servants to
call those who had been invited, but they
would not come. Next he sent some more
servants. 'Tell those who have been invited'
he said 'that I have my banquet all prepared,
my oxen and fattened cattle have been
slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the
wedding.' But they were not interested: one
went off to his farm, another to his business,
and the rest seized his servants, maltreated
them and killed them. The king was furious.
He despatched his troops, destroyed those
murderers and burnt their town. Then he
said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready;
but as those who were invited proved to be
unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town
and invite everyone you can find to the
wedding.' So these servants went out on to
the roads and collected together everyone
they could find, bad and good alike; and
the wedding hall was filled with guests. <
When the king came in to look at the guests
he noticed one man who was not wearing a
wedding garment, and said to him, 'How did
you get in here, my friend, without a wedding

garment?' And the man was silent. Then the
king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand
and foot and throw him out into the dark,
where there will be weeping and grinding
of teeth.' For many are called, but few are
chosen."

>The Gospel of the Lord. <

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, the prayers of your faithful
with the sacrificial offerings,
that, through these acts of devotedness,
we may pass over to the glory of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The rich suffer want and go hungry,
but those who seek the Lord lack no
blessing.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We entreat your majesty most humbly,
O Lord,
that, as you feed us with the nourishment
which comes from the most holy Body and
Blood of your Son,
so you may make us sharers of his divine
nature.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.