

Sermon

- ◆ **First Reading:** *Isaiah 25: 6-10*
- ◆ **Second Reading:** *Philippians 4:12-14,19-20*
- ◆ **Gospel:** *Matthew 22: 1-14*

And so Jesus directs another parable at the chief priests and elders of the people, this particular group refused to believe in Jesus as the Holy One of God, so he decided to speak to them in parables. How is it they grasped that certain parables were directed at them, highlighting their obstinacy to believe in the Messiah there in front of them, and still continued to disbelieve?, as the saying goes **THERE ARE NONE SO BLIND AS THOSE WHO DO NOT WISH TO SEE!**

It's an interesting parable, the king has everything ready for his son's wedding feast, invitations had been sent to a chosen group, but they are not interested, they even killed the ones who went to deliver the invitations. The king, hurt and furious, decides to extend the invitation to just about everyone, another order is given **SO THE SERVANTS WENT OUT ON TO THE ROADS AND COLLECTED EVERYONE THEY COULD FIND, BAD AND GOOD ALIKE ; AND THE WEDDING HALL WAS FILLED WITH GUESTS**

Now let us move into the great wedding hall and observe, I would say, the most interesting part of this parable ; so there are all the invited people from all walks of life, they had arrived from the "crossroads" of humanity, from the greatest to the least, from celebrities to outcasts. The king comes along to have a look at the guests, he notices something that seems to upset him, one of the guests is not wearing a proper wedding garment, so the king says to him **FRIEND, HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE WITHOUT A WEDDING GARMENT?** Whoever it was had nothing to say, he remained silent, then something awful happens, the king orders the attendants to throw him out **BIND HIM HAND AND FOOT, THROW HIM OUT INTO THE DARKNESS, WHERE THERE WILL BE WEeping AND GRINDING OF TEETH**

Gosh!! What a punishment!! Just for not having worn the proper wedding garment. (..We miss the point completely if we think the parable is about wearing the right outfit for a wedding celebration..) so let's go exploring what that wedding garment represents, it has to be of significant importance because that guest was severely punished for not wearing one ; what we wear to cover our bodies, our style of clothing, the uniforms we put on, formally or informally("observe dress code") etc., these all say something of both our character and our social status, for example, police commissioners wear great looking uniforms, so also the monarchical outfit that Queen Elizabeth wears on special occasions, indeed very majestic ; but what should a "wedding garment" look like in the context of the parable? the consequences of not wearing one seemingly are dire, to the point of being thrown out hand and foot into the outer darkness ; that wedding garment symbolises the garment of love for God and neighbour, it symbolises a life of righteousness, sinlessness, innocence, generosity, a Faith tested and purified. The wedding garment may also be a symbol of a life in the footsteps of Christ, a life time of prayer, sacrifice and perseverance, and then admittance to the Great Heavenly Banquet is allowed ; that unfortunate individual in the parable remained silent when asked by the king **HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?** that "silence" represents unworthiness, indifference to God and eternal salvation, spiritual laziness, total neglect in preparing properly for Judgement day, denying help to the lesser well off when the opportunities arose, the "silence" may also represent a type of deep personal regret, as in, "I've nothing to say for myself, I had vast opportunities to prepare myself for heavenly glory but just didn't bother, I GOT DISTRACTED AND BUSY DOING OTHER THINGS, AND ULTIMATELY GOD MEANT NOTHING TO ME!!

The punishment he received by being THROWN OUT seems severe, but he has no-one else to blame but himself ; I wonder what it's like to be thrown out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth(".....God-between-us-and-all-harm..."..an old Irish saying!!!).....Though this parable was directed at the chief priests and elders of the people, we can pick up on it ourselves ; I see this parable, especially the issue of that wedding garment, as a **STARK WARNING!** No one can just saunter into the Heavenly Banquet having made no effort in the course of a life time to get there ; eternal salvation can't be just taken for granted, and a shallow sneery attitude will not be accepted "...if there's a hell, well!, I won't be short of friends for eternity, ha! ha!, and if there's a heaven, I can always get in thru' the back door**", ha! ha!, I'm sure the Man Above will understand....", says you "a bit tongue in cheek",

and yet many people DO NOT address their eternal salvation as an issue of importance, matter of fact, for many it's an issue of no importance ; yes! we are all FREE to choose what we want forever more ; if there is NO GOD, then of course it'll all terminate at the point of death(...get friendly with your local undertaker, he's sure to give you a good send-off, along with your buddies, they'll say wonderful things about you at your funeral, the undertaker will come forward and announce at your place of burial THIS NOW CONCLUDES THE FUNERAL and BURIAL OF JOE BLOGGS, afterwards drinks will be served in your memory, and that's it, all over.. ...!!!), BUT IF THERE IS A GOD, salvation and the existence of Heaven, and having made no preparation nor having that "wedding garment" in a state of immaculate purity, then BEHOLD! AN ETERNITY OF REGRET!!!
.....over to you.....stay healthy...God bless..

p.s. pray a Rosary this weekend for all workers in the cinema industry, cinemas all over the U.K. and the rest of Europe closed their doors last Thursday until March next year, due to the Pandemic ; over 5.500 are employed in this industry and are now entering into that awful stage of UNCERTAINTY FOR THE FUTURE ; PRAY also that a vaccine may be discovered for the Covid 19 "God-between-us-and-all-harm"stay healthy..... **there is no back door into Heaven!!!!

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