

XX TRINITY 2018

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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EPHESIANS 5.15-20 ST. MATTHEW 22.1-14

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It's not about the clothes...it's about the disposition of our hearts.

Weddings are big events. A lot of planning goes into making certain things run smoothly...the wedding invitations get sent out in a timely manner...and the wedding and reception venues are secured.

When we receive an invitation to a wedding...it comes with the expectation we will RSVP yes or no. It's an honor to be invited to a wedding...our response shows how seriously we consider the invitation.

Jesus uses parables...short stories about real-life events...to make important points. The Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew is similar to the Parable of the Great Feast in Luke...with some significant distinctions.

What were weddings like in Jesus' time? In Jewish society...the bride and bridegroom would meet and their parents drew up the marriage contract. The couple was considered married at this point...but would live apart until the couple's home was ready...then the bridegroom would come for his bride without notice. Think of the great Advent hymn *Rejoice, rejoice believers...*the bridegroom (Jesus) is coming soon...get ready.

The wedding feast was a joyous occasion in Jewish Society and could last a week. In today's Gospel, Jesus says heaven is like a wedding banquet a king has prepared for his son. The invitations have gone out...now the king's servants are sent out to tell the invited guests everything is ready and they should get dressed and come to the feast.

The invited guests tell the king's servants they don't want to come to the wedding feast...not can't come...don't want to come. They are rejecting the king's invitation. When more servants are sent out...the invited guests ignore them and even kill some of them.

The king was very angry and those who murdered his servants paid a heavy price for their actions. But this was the wedding feast for his son...the king would make certain every table was full.

The king sent out more servants to invite everyone they could find...good and bad alike...to come and enjoy the wedding feast for his son. Why then...does the man who shows up in street clothes get thrown out of the banquet hall? Wasn't he one of those invited regardless of his character?

It was the host's responsibility to provide the invited guests with suitable clothes for the wedding feast. It would have been a major insult to the king to refuse to wear the clothes he provided. The man in the story gets thrown out into the darkness of the night...where he will "cry and gnash his teeth". Jesus concludes the story by saying many are invited to the wedding feast (in heaven)...but few are chosen.

The Gospel really isn't about the clothes we wear to a wedding...it's about who gets invited to God's wedding feast for his Son in heaven. Everyone is invited to the wedding feast in heaven...but we have no right to claim a place in heaven if we are unwilling to assume the responsibilities that come with the invitation.

The question today's Gospel poses is just how seriously do we take the invitation? Heaven isn't something we can earn through our good behavior...it's God's gift to us through Jesus...because he wants us to share in the heavenly wedding feast for his son.

What about the clothes? In his second Letter to the Corinthians...Saint Paul writes it is Jesus who clothes us with righteousness. Jesus provides us with the right kind of clothes for heaven...in himself...because he has freed us from sin and guilt and made heaven a possibility for everyone.

The invitation to heaven comes with the choice we make in our RSVP to embrace Jesus as the light of the World...to walk as responsible adult Christians. To reject those adult responsibilities is to reject God's love and choose not to be part of the chosen!

It's not about the clothes...it's about the disposition of our hearts...to answer yes to God's invitation to the wedding feast for his son in heaven...to walk as grown up children of the Light that is Jesus.

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