

XX Trinity 2021
Sermon - Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney

Ephesians 5.15-20 St. Matthew 22.1-14
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What do we have to do to get to heaven? First, we have to answer “yes” to God’s gracious invitation to join him at the Great Wedding Feast for his Son, Jesus. Second, we have to wear the right clothes...suitable for such an occasion.

This morning’s Gospel combines two separate but related short stories...and Jesus explicitly tells us this is what heaven is like.

In the first story...a king (God), has made a great wedding feast for his Son (Jesus). The wedding invitations would have included an RSVP. The first group of guests didn’t want to come. The second group of guests paid no attention and went about their business...one off to this farm...another off to his store...and still others murdered the king’s servants. The angry king killed those murderers and burned down their city. So the king sent out his servants to invite all the people they could find...the good and the bad...and every table at the Wedding Feast was full.

In the second story...the king went into the banquet hall to see how things were going. When he sees a man who was not wearing the right clothes for a wedding...he asks the man why he wasn’t dressed properly? When the man couldn’t answer...the king has him tied up...hands and feet...and thrown outside in the darkness...where he will “cry and gnash his teeth.”

Jesus concludes his story about heaven by saying, “Many are invited, but few are chosen.” So what is Jesus really saying here? Most of us have been invited to a wedding. It’s a great honor to have included on the guest list. We take the wedding invitation seriously...we don’t ignore the RSVP...we answer “yes”...or if we have a good reason we can’t attend...we answer “no”. The worst thing we can do...is not answer at all. We can understand how hurt and maybe even angry the person who invited us might be.

The people in today’s Gospel who didn’t take the king’s invitation to his son’s wedding feast seriously...showed great disrespect for the king. The invitation wasn’t important enough

for them to take action on. They rejected any future invitation to the king’s house.

What about the man in the Gospel story who wasn’t wearing the right clothes? It seems unjust to eject him just because he wasn’t wearing the right clothes. He received the invitation late...perhaps he didn’t have enough time to go buy the “right clothes”. So what exactly are the “right clothes” to get into heaven.

Salvador Dali’s impressionistic painting “The Ascension of Christ” depicts Jesus ascending into heaven...Jesus wasn’t wearing any shoes and he forgot to wash his feet. Apparently shoes and clean feet are not needed to get into heaven. What about the rest of our “right clothes”?

Saint John writes in the Book of Revelation...

... “The time has come for the wedding of the Lamb (Jesus), and his bride (the Church) has prepared herself for it. She has been given clean shining linen to wear. The linen is the good deeds of God’s people. How happy are those who have been invited to the Lamb’s wedding feast.”

We have all received God’s invitation to the Wedding Feast for his Son, Jesus, in heaven. The Gospel is really not about wearing the “right clothes”...God will provide us with the proper clothes. When we RSVP “yes” to the invitation...we are claiming the privileges that come along with a seat at the heavenly banquet table. That means we must be willing to assume the responsibilities that come along with the invitation.

What are our responsibilities? Saint Paul tells us we should watch how we live and not live like ignorant people. We should use every opportunity we have, because the days are evil. We should not act like fools; instead we should try to figure out what God wants us to do. We shouldn’t get drunk with wine; instead we should be filled with the Spirit. We should encourage each other through hymns and psalms.

We have God’s invitation to heaven in hand. When we RSVP “yes” we are choosing to be chosen...making a commitment to act like accordingly...always thanking God for everything...in the Name of his Son, Jesus.

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