

## Sermon for 15.10.17

To put this gospel event in context - Jesus has begun his journey to the cross. He has entered Jerusalem and he goes to the Temple there.

The chief priests and elders come to him and ask him by what authority he does what he does.

Jesus responds to their question with his own question about their perception of John the Baptists identity.

Their answer is non-committal - *they don't know*, they say – Jesus responds to them by denying them an answer to their question about his authority.

Jesus then castigates the Jewish leadership for their lack of integrity.

He uses a series of 3 parables to drive home his point.

The first parable speaks about their inaction in the vineyard of Israel, the second parable points to their disloyalty in that same vineyard - and in the third parable - the one we hear today -

Jesus tells them plainly that in their present state- they have no standing at all in God's kingdom.

Now in this parable Jesus uses one of the images from Isaiah's poem of praise in ch25 to describe the kingdom of God – and we have heard that poem in today's first reading.

The poem provides 5 different images of God -

as one who destroys oppression, who vindicates the poor and the needy, who will swallow us death forever, who is like a gentle nurse maid, and as one who will provide the biggest banquet ever given.

Jesus uses the banquet image in his parable.

The sumptuous banquet of Isaiah 25 which celebrates the divine kingship, becomes a wedding feast for the king's son - which makes it even more elaborate and more personal.

Now Jesus audience would have been familiar with Isaiah's *poem of praise*.

They would have understood the analogy in the parable about the king's chosen guests for his beloved son's wedding.

They would have understood that Jesus was referring to them as those guests, and that it was their response that made light of the invitation and consequently they were replaced by all sorts of people – the good and the bad until the hall was filled with guests.

Now up till that part of the parable I think we all understand the intended meaning – and to be fair- it really belongs in the goings on of 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism.

But wait a minute - when we continue on with the parable, there is a twist at the end that takes the relevance beyond the 1<sup>st</sup> century and into every age.

There is a person in the crowd not wearing the wedding robe and he is noticed by the king and thrown out.

Now that **is** a bit of a twist, because we wouldn't expect our inclusive God, our God who destroys oppression, vindicates the poor and the needy who swallows us death forever, who is like a gentle nurse maid, and who will provide the biggest banquet ever given, to do such a thing. So what's going on?

We note in the parable that the other guests have committed themselves to be whom they are as wedding guests - they have dressed appropriately.

We might say that they have come prepared in respect and reverence to the host, and it is a good thing that they do, for to just breeze in any old way just doesn't cut it. It reeks of complacency. The host notices.

What this parable tells **us**, is that we have been invited to the Son's wedding banquet given by the father.

We have been provided for fully. The food is on the table the candles are lit.

We have been provided for in every facet of our lives and we are to respond in the same thorough way - In our joys and in our sorrows in our fears and in our confidences in our weaknesses, in our strengths – and in the areas in which we have given up.

Complacency in its many forms, has no place in our lives. God matters - in **all** of our lives.

I'm sure the psalter is writing about someone who knows this in Psalm 23. *The lord is my shepherd I shall not want - Even though I walk through the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me.*

And in the epistle we can hear this sense of *knowing* in Paul as he languishes in prison where his fate hangs in the balance between life and death - yet all he does is express joy for God who is with him there.

Paul writes: *Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say Rejoice. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

The Lord be with you.

