

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Twenty-eighth Sunday Gospel Word
Ordinary Time Matthew 22:1-14

This is a parable where we have to read between the lines. The wedding feast in the time of Jesus was a popular image for describing what it would be like when the Kingdom of God began. It would be like a jubilant wedding feast. It would be joyful, exuberant, and everyone would have a good time. Surely, no one would decline an invitation to such an event. But apparently they did. It is suggested that the original list of invitees included the elite of society. After their refusals, a Plan B list was created. Same result. No takers. Finally the doors were opened to all, commoners though they may be. It didn't matter. A welcome was extended to every passer-by. Such is God's invitational style. All are welcome into God's kingdom. Now what about that wedding robe? Well, it's a way of saying that when you come to the banquet; you have to do more than just appear. You have to participate. Just being there was not enough. The guests had to act like wedding guests! It's the old stimulus and response pattern. Invitation (the stimulus) carries expectations (a response). God loves us, but we have to love God in return. Furthermore, love all that God loves, namely everyone. That is not easy!

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

Everyone loves a party, especially one that promises food and drink of the highest quality. In the time of Jesus, wedding feasts were major parties. No expense was spared to have the best. It was important to offer guests a good experience. Like today, back then the host would be forever embarrassed if the invited guests left the banquet grumbling about the cold roast chicken or the scanty dessert. People enjoyed the wedding feast. And most would welcome an invitation to participate.

So it's surprising to hear a parable from Jesus that describes a wedding feast where the invited guests chose not to come. They weren't even interested. The excitement of working on the farm or engaging in business was more attractive. So the feast was opened to anyone wandering around town or on the road nearby. There were no restrictions. Everyone was invited. Just like we are! It might be good to take this parable to heart and ask: Do I refuse the invitation? What keeps me from showing up at the celebration? What excites me more than an intimate relationship with God?

Prayer

God of Goodness,
Help us to feel the joy that you
promised to give us by being
part of your great feast of life.
Amen.