

28A 2020 SML
MT 22:1-14

An Ethiopian . . . had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning to Gaza; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. The Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone explains it to me?" (AA 8:27-31)

Just as the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard read three weeks ago was not about wages, and last Sunday's Parable of the Tenants was not about tenants and produce, this evening's/morning's Parable of the Marriage Feast is not about proper wedding attire, which is a good thing, because at any wedding, at any affair that requires a suit jacket, I'm the second guy to take mine off. I look for one other guy to take off his jacket first, and I'm number two. All three of these parables are about salvation. And it is a very thorough parable because it encompasses almost all of salvation history.

1. God the Father invites each and every one of us to heaven, just as the king invited everyone to the wedding feast in the parable.

2. The first servants dispatched were Moses and Joshua and all the Judges just like the servants in the parable.
3. The invited guests were the Israelites, who refused to remain faithful to God, worshipped their golden calf in the desert and for 40 years they grumbled against God and against Moses – just like the invited guests who refused to come to the Marriage Feast in the parable.
4. The other servants sent to invite God's people were the prophets. But the Jews ignored the prophets with their worship of false gods, greed, hypocrisy and injustice. The prophets they killed, just like the servants in the parable.
5. The temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, just like the city burned in the parable.
6. The Apostles preached to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, to whomever they found, just like the servants going out to the main roads and inviting whomever they found in the parable.
7. Some of the Jews and the Gentiles converted to Christianity. They knelt to be baptized and they put on their baptismal garments, just like the invited guests who entered the hall in the parable.
8. The convert who knelt to be baptized but lived like the non-baptized is the man not dressed in his baptismal garment, just like the man not dressed in the wedding garment in the parable.

In the Rite of Baptism, the priest addresses the newly baptized:

You have become a new creation and have clothed yourselves in Christ. Receive this baptismal garment and bring it unstained to the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that you may have everlasting life.

What stains your baptismal garment is sin. What removes your baptismal garment is sin.

- a. Curses like a trooper: unbutton the collar.
- b. Doesn't have the time of day for his elderly parents. His sister takes care of them: unbutton the cuffs.
- c. Charges more than what is reasonable to the desperate customer during the pandemic: take your arm out of the sleeve.
- d. We don't need to go to Mass this week; the kids have soccer: take your arm out of the other sleeve.
- e. That particular concrete sin that stares you in the face each and every time you commit it: the garment falls to the floor.

There's no need to belabor the point. Each and every one of us has clothed ourselves in Christ and received the baptismal garment. Yet baptismal vows and Confirmation promises are broken every day. Each and every one of us slowly takes it off our baptismal garments.

This evening's/morning's gospel is a stark reminder to pray for the wisdom and the foresight to put the baptismal garment back on again because this gospel is clear. Baptism

does not guarantee salvation. What guarantees salvation is how well you wear your baptismal garment.

"Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked the Ethiopian. "How can I, unless someone explains it to me?"