

## October 15, 2017

Is 25:6-10a; Phil 4:12-14, 19-20; Mt 22:1-14

Who likes to pass up a good thing? Most of the time we are looking to get the best things. We agonize about missing a good deal, and will pass up many other good deals if we think we can get a better one. Is all that worry really necessary? Does it really matter if you get the best thing every time - especially if we sometimes find out that we picked wrong? Today Our Lord asks us to trust in God's power to provide, and to let go a bit of our trying to provide for ourselves - we don't always pick the best things.

In our second reading we heard: *My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* God does provide for what we need, not necessarily for everything we want, but for everything we need. It is a tragic thing when the things that God gives to provide for others are entrusted to people who don't distribute them. This is part of the reason for poverty and hunger in the world - God supplies, and people hold onto for themselves to make their good life even better rather than share with others. We can easily choose to over spend, make ourselves very comfortable and well fed, and forget our duty in stewardship to share this with others. We can become so focused on providing for ourselves that forget that we can trust God to provide what we really need. God invites us to follow in the way of discipleship, to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world, and to receive the benefits of accepting that invitation. But what does it mean to accept the invitation?

In the Gospel today Jesus tells a parable. He speaks of a king who is giving a wedding banquet for his son. Of course the king is God the Father, the Son is God the Son Jesus Christ. The wedding imagery is used thorough scripture to refer to the relationship of God to the people, and in the New Testament, Jesus to the Church. Jesus says that an invitation is given to all to come and join the marriage feast. Come be part of this wonderful union of God to people in Jesus Christ, to come and share in the action of God providing what people need through a great banquet. The twist in the story is that those who are invited first refuse to come. Why? ... Why? ... Were they so focused on providing for themselves that they didn't want to give up a little of their resources to buy a wedding present? Did they think that maybe the food they were going to have at a restaurant they planned to go to would be better than that at the banquet? Maybe they thought that whatever they had to do, whatever activity on the schedule was more important than honoring the invitation of the king. For whatever reason, in the end, after repeated invitations, they refused to come.

However, the generosity of the king will not be stopped, and he invites more people, he opens his invitation to those that others would not think were worthy, Jesus says *the bad and the good alike* were invited till *the hall was filled with guests*. The price of admission was not tied to high status, past life, or giving a good gift - I'm sure in their gratitude for this invitation they gave what they could - it was tied to a willingness to come. All who came, all who accepted the invitation, were admitted - the king does not discriminate in who is called. But Jesus throws in another twist into the story. There is this guy who does not have on a proper wedding garment. Although he was invited, although he accepted the invitation and showed up, he missed an important thing. A proper wedding garment was an expectation of such a feast in Jesus' time - and the people listening would have known this. I remember someone telling me that back then such a rich host would have provided garments for anyone who didn't have one. But this guy comes in and does not follow the expectations, he does not think he has to follow the custom, he doesn't accept the garment given to him, he presumes that the generous host doesn't care what he does - the invitation means come and get something and there is nothing required. He is like the guy who comes to the wedding reception in ripped jeans and a tank top figuring "hey you invited me, I can do what I want - when do we get to eat." Such a guest does not get to stay at the banquet says Jesus. Accepting the invitation is about more than showing up, it is about respecting the honor of the king, it is about following through with what it means to be a good guest.

The people who refused to come to the banquet didn't choose the best thing - even if they think they did. They provided for themselves and missed the generosity of the king who would open his banquet to all. The guest who came in singing "I did it my way" and was going to take the gifts of the king on his own terms was also just trying to provide for himself, without giving what was expected. Neither of these groups get to share in the banquet. Can we be like the good guests? Can we hear the invitation that God gives to all to join in the life of the Church? Can we accept the invitation ourselves and participate in the feast, while freely giving of the resources God has given us trusting the God will provide? We can also remind others that they are welcome to share in the life of the Church (and by the way, are welcome here in this church), yet we can also realize that God has placed some expectations on this invitation. In the end, God wants us all to join in the feast of heaven (which we don't get to share in by simply doing it our way) and be a good guest here on earth. The prophet Isaiah speaks about looking to the Lord for our needs and trusting in God rather than our own resources, or relying on our own will for salvation. Let us look to the Lord, and follow the invitation and its expectations then we can say with the prophet: *This is the LORD for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!*