**Readings for October 15, 2023 – 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Am I Ready for the Feast?

*In this parable, Jesus is explaining the varied responses within Israel to his message. The invitation is issued, but some ignore or refuse it (religious leaders), so the invitation is offered to outsiders (sinners, Gentiles, etc). Jesus is saying that all are invited to the Kingdom, but the invitation comes with responsibility – a little preparation and readiness.*

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**Opening Prayer:** Good and gracious God, help us to hear your constant invitation to us. Open our hearts and minds today as we gather. May we be ready and prepared to respond to all that you want to reveal to us. We ask this, through Christ, Our Lord Amen.

**Reading 1** [**IS 25:6-10A**](http://usccb.org/bible/isaiah/25%3A6)

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples
a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.
On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples,
the web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever.
The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from every face;
the reproach of his people he will remove
from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken. On that day it will be said:
"Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!
This is the LORD for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"
For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

**Responsorial Psalm** [**PS 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6**](http://usccb.org/bible/psalms/23%3A1)

R. (6cd)**I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.**
The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.
R. **I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.**
He guides me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side
with your rod and your staff that give me courage.
R. **I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.**
You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

R. **I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.**
Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.
R. **I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.**

**Reading 2** [**PHIL 4:12-14, 19-20**](http://usccb.org/bible/philippians/4%3A12)

Brothers and sisters:
I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance.
In every circumstance and in all things
I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry,
of living in abundance and of being in need. I can do all things in him who strengthens me.
Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress. My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
To our God and Father, glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Gospel** [**MT 22:1-14 OR 22:1-10**](http://usccb.org/bible/matthew/22%3A1)

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people
in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king
who gave a wedding feast for his son.
He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come.
A second time he sent other servants, saying,
‘Tell those invited: “Behold, I have prepared my banquet,
my calves and fattened cattle are killed,
and everything is ready; come to the feast.”’ Some ignored the invitation and went away,
one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants,
mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops,
destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.
Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready,
but those who were invited were not worthy to come.
Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.’
The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike,
and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests,
he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment.
The king said to him, 'My friend, how is it
that you came in here without a wedding garment?'
But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet,
and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.’
Many are invited, but few are chosen."

Related Reflections

**Called to Joy**

The [First Reading](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/101517.cfm) says that the Lord of hosts will provide a feast for his people, a feast of choice wines and rich and juicy food. Rich food is the kind that our culture warns us against. Everything shouts at us that if we want to look good and be healthy, the one thing we should be sure to avoid is rich food. And what can we say about choice wines? They cost a lot of money, which could be better spent on other things; and nobody can exercise hard or work well who is full of choice wines.

Furthermore, almost everybody is dieting or has been dieting. But we all know that even successful dieters fail in the long run. Often, a person diets just long enough to get rid of excess weight and then happily goes right back to the old habits of eating.

We seem pressed, then, to give up rich and juicy things forever. And it isn’t just a matter of food. Work, marriage, children—all these things can give the same impression. Give unstintingly, labor ceaselessly; but, please, please, nothing rich and juicy! At least, not if you want to be healthy, attractive, and successful. This is a grim and grinding picture of human life.

But it is not the Lord’s picture. We are made by him to be fed till full on the very best, the most rich and juicy of all. The Lord himself will provide it for us in heaven, in the wedding supper of the Lamb. But, in this life too, the Lord feeds us with the best—and that is himself, in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. There is no choicer wine or richer food.

And so, as the First Reading shows us, we are not commanded to a life of grimness. We are called to joy.

* Eleanor Stump, St. Louis University (published on liturgy.slu.edu)

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**The parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22: 1–14)**

The parable of the wedding feast is a parable about universalism (the idea that no one person is more deserving of the Gospel than anyone else). Jesus teaches that the Kingdom of God is open to everyone, not only Jews.

This parable is told using the familiar setting of a wedding feast, however there are a few surprising events included.

A king was preparing a wedding feast for his son. He sent his servants out to bring the invited guests – but they did not want to come. The servants were once again sent out with the message, **“Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.”**

Their reactions were very strange and severe:

* Some guests ignored the servants and went instead to their farms or businesses.
* Others seized the servants, mistreated them and then killed them.

The king was furious and sent troops to destroy the murderers and burn their city. He then instructed his servants to invite anyone they found, so that both good and bad people filled the hall at the wedding feast.

The original guests invited were the Jews. The Jews believed that because they were God’s chosen people that was all that was required to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (ie. to be invited to the wedding feast).

The Jews who ignored the servants were those who ignored the prophets who came to deliver the message of God, and perhaps those who refused to believe in Jesus. The Jews who reacted violently could be a reference to those who mistreated and murdered the prophets and messengers of God, and perhaps foretold of the rejection of Jesus.

The guests who were invited afterwards are the Gentiles. This parable shows that the Kingdom of God is open to everyone, not just the Jews.

At the end of the parable, we see an interaction between the king and a man who was not dressed appropriately. He ordered the servants to bind this man and to throw him into the darkness where he will cry and gnash his teeth. The unsuitably dressed man represents those who were not prepared for complete commitment to Jesus.

The parable concludes with the words: “Many are invited, but few are chosen.”

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zd76rj6/revision/6>

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Today, Jesus has a message for religious officials who think they have an invitation to the feast, and even more so, who think their seat is guaranteed! His message is: your seat won’t be held if you don’t reply. Not just a send-your-card-back-and-say-you’re-coming response, but an actual reply with your feet and your clothes When the invite comes, get dressed and go!

To ignore an invitation is the height of rudeness. The invited guests were saying that their own life, their own concerns of the moment, were more important than celebrating with the king. No wonder he reacted so strongly. There are a lot of ways to respond to God. We need to do it whole-heartedly, however, and not in a lack-luster manner. (Note: This is another reminder of last week’s – say yes for real theme).

*The Living Word, Sunday Gospel Reflections and Activities,* Liturgy Training Publications

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**Focusing the Gospel:** The king is adamant about filling the wedding hall with guests. His initial guest list has been carefully drawn up, but when these invited guests do not come, the king sends his servants out to invite anyone and everyone. The hall must be filled. The issue, therefore, is not who is invited, but who will choose to come. God persistently invites us to the royal banquet in the “kingdom of heaven.” But the gracious invitation requires our positive and definite response.

 From Center for Liturgy Study (liturgy.slu.edu)

**Invitation in the silence**

What was the disconnect at the beginning of the story when the king invited the guests to the lavish wedding feast and they refused to come? God has unique ways of inviting us in: a voice in the still and quiet, a conversation with a friend, and guidance through our emotions and contemplations.

Mother Teresa reminds us: “We need to find God and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass - grow in silence. See the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence. We need silence to be able to touch souls.” May we quiet our outside noise to the still, soft voice where God meets us every day and leads us on a path of growth, compassion and humility.

*—Rose-Carmel Goddard is a graduate of The University of Michigan and was a former intern at our parish. Her reflection was published on Jesuitprayer.org*

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**Related Scripture:**

*(On abundance) John 1: 16 -* ***“****For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”*

*(On preparation) Hebrews 10:22 - “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

Discussion Questions

Why do you think “feasting” imagery (or the banquet) is seen so much in the Bible? What does Jesus want to tell us about God when he uses these images?

Do I need to do a bit more preparation in tending to my faith? What do you think “preparation” might look like?

What might help me hear God’s invitation to a life of abundance?

And even if I’m hearing this invitation, how am I responding? What might be keeping me from responding properly?

Take a few minutes to think of the many ways in which God showers you with lavish and abundant gifts. Share a few of these with the group.

**Closing Prayer:**

Oh good and gracious God, you have invited all the peoples of the world to the wedding feast of your Son. Open our community to all who seek you. Let our world, our parish, our homes, bear witness to the banquet of eternal life, where all will be welcome. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

***Repeating our weekly focus prayer (adapted from St. Anselm):***

Oh Lord, teach us to love those who hate us, and pray for those who do us wrong. May we be the children of your love. Amen.

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***Thoughts for the coming week:***

**“I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”**

In the second reading, Paul mentions that he knows how to “live in humble circumstances” and “with abundance.” Does this seem like a contradiction? Rather, it points to an inner strength, a sense of self that doesn’t depend on others. Paul tells us how to achieve this: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”

Memorize that verse this week. Use it as a daily prayer each morning as you review your day’s schedule. At night, before going to sleep, think over your day and identify at least one thing that you accomplished with God’s help. Thank God for the strength you found to do that one thing – and for the strength we constantly receive in abundance.

 (Adapted from *The Living Word, Sunday Gospel Reflections and Activities,* Liturgy Training Publications).