

## 12 October 2014 18th Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 32: 1-14

Psalm 106: 1-6, 20-24

Philippians 4: 1-9

Matthew 22:1-14

[Proper 23A/Ordinary 28A/Pentecost +18 October 12, 2014](#)

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There are some insights in today's readings that give us an opportunity to think again and more clearly see ourselves within the reality of being made in the image of God..

The reading from Exodus offers a dialogue between God and Moses that must surely call into questions much of what we 'know' and claim when we contemplate God and the Divine presence that forms our life orientation...

Before looking at that first reading however, let's explore the parable from the gospel for that also give us an interesting perspective, and also calls into question are religious 'knowing'.

The parable has a clear purpose; *"Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son."*

Jesus is providing an insight into *"The kingdom of heaven"* and before we look at what he says, we might register for ourselves what we already know about heaven, and the *"The kingdom of heaven"*. We will all have notions about heaven and there is a common 'Christian' view of heaven; however in today's enlightened world we perhaps have more doubts than 'knowings' about heaven; in fact we might well be left wondering if what we have been taught makes any sense at all.

So let's look at the reading again; in the gospel, *"The kingdom of heaven"* is compared to a *"Wedding feast"*; and that provides an overall reference point, so we can entertain the idea that *"The kingdom of heaven"* is a feast, a festival of abundance and a celebration of love.

The parable tells us that those who were invited to the *"wedding banquet"* *"would not come"* and instead they *"made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business"*.

In the first part of this parable we might become aware of what keeps us from the divine invitation to live our life in the celebration of Divine abundance and love. It is an important awareness for those who do not accept the invitation, those who are wedded to their homes and their work shall only find death and destruction.

The invitation in the first part of the parable invites us to contemplate life choices, and to discover for ourselves that which keeps us from the Divine wedding banquet.

Next, and here we can see the value of parables, the invitation is repeated; “9 *Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.*”

And in this second invitation we are made aware of **who** is being invited; and the confronting insight is that “*Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.*”

Everyone, both good and bad, receives an invitation into “*The kingdom of heaven*”; and that goes against the classical, inherited and orthodox understanding, for heaven is generally understood as a place for those who are good!

Now with that new insight into “*The kingdom of heaven*” we might look at the guest who turns up without wearing “*a wedding robe*”. Again, parables have a delightful way of underlining truths; the guest without a wedding robe is a reminder that we can’t just turn up as we are, we have to change.

Our movement into the wedding banquet, our invitation to live a life within the Divine abundance, requires an active change on our part.

Of course we could argue that God accepts us as we are, and the truth to be appreciated in light of this parable is that we are accepted, invited as we are, and ‘as we are’ is as a wedding guest, not in the disguises that our ego chooses for this world.

The active acceptance of the Divine invitation also goes against the passive idea of “leaving all in God’s hands”, those who ignored the first wedding invitation, and the one who couldn’t be bothered to change, are examples within the parable of those who do nothing to accept the invitation.

And that’s where there is a delightful link with the first reading; for if Moses had left it all in God’s hands, then the people would have been destroyed. Both Moses and Jesus share a common enlightenment, they both engaged in an active dialogue with the Divine and lived out an understanding that went beyond the common understanding of their respective traditions.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE Moses knew that he could change the mind of God; yet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as passive Christians we are still singing the Methodist hymn “Immortal invisible”:

*To all, life thou givest, to both great and small;  
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
and wither and perish, **but naught changeth thee.***

Within the scriptures there is a call to us, to each of us, a call and an invitation to bring into reality “*The kingdom of heaven*”.

When we are baptised we are invited, or received, into the Church with these words:

*God has called you into God's church  
We therefore receive and welcome you  
As a member of the body of Christ,  
As a child of the one heavenly father  
And as an inheritor of the Kingdom of God.*

We should therefore change into our 'wedding robes' and make real our inheritance; and perhaps even more important we should be aware of the inheritance we are planning to leave for others.

What we will leave behind as an inheritance for others is a sign of our life orientation.

Will we leave behind the family farm or the family business like those first invited to the banquet, or will we leave a reality that opens, and invites everyone into, "*The kingdom of heaven*"?

Everyone, both good and bad, receives an invitation into "*The kingdom of heaven*"; we have underlined that invitation liturgically in our baptism, we have been received *as an inheritor of the Kingdom of God*.

So let's think again, and look at changing, for Moses and Jesus give us an opportunity to realise ourselves as the guests at the banquet, we are sharers and participants in the celebration of Divine abundance....

We are, along with every 'other', the celebrators of creations unfolding.... And so let's get ourselves dressed for the occasion..... Leave our farms and our businesses and share the reality of life with all.

*20 Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; 21 nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."*

Luke 17:20-21