

Dear Friends,

As we gather to celebrate the Lord's Day we hear again another parable from the lips of Jesus. Today's parable centers on a feast given by a king for his son. The image of a feast in scripture is often the symbol of the banquet of heaven, and the prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse of that feast in our first reading: "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" (25:6).

The key point of the gospel is the response of the invited guests. Two invitations are extended. In the first invitation some of the guests refuse to come, others abuse and kill the servants. The servants of the king represent the Old Testament prophets who were often persecuted. Frustrated with the reaction of the first group of guests, the king reaches out to a second group with an invitation, extending it to the poor and the marginalized. The point is made here that both the "bad and good" were invited to the feast. This prepares us to hear a "parable within a parable," the story of the man without a wedding garment. In this parable Jesus insists that coming into the kingdom is not a guarantee of salvation. Everyone, both bad and good, must respond to the invitation by coming properly dressed.

As with the previous three parables we've heard, today's parable serves as a warning. It is a warning not just to "the chief priests and the elders of the people," but to all of us. Each of us has been invited to the banquet of heaven, and when appearing at the feast we are to come before our heavenly Father in the "wedding garment." What does that garment look like?

In his sermon on this passage St. Augustine of Hippo wrote:

"So what is this wedding garment? The apostle Paul tells us: 'What we are aiming at . . . is the love that springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith' (1 Timothy 1:5). That is the wedding garment. Paul is not talking about just any kind of love, for one can see dishonest people loving others. . . but one does not see among them this love 'that springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.' Now that is the love that is the wedding garment. . . Examine yourselves: if you have it, then come to the Lord's banquet with confidence" (Sermon #90).

Peace and blessings,
Father John