

As it has been for the past several weeks, our Gospel reading features a parable that Jesus addresses to the chief priests and elders of the people. And, like those that have gone before it, it is a criticism of those who have rejected Jesus and the message that He brings. Like the others, it is also addressed to those who *do* believe in Jesus.

In this parable, there is a king who gives a wedding feast for his son. He invites all those whom you would expect to be invited to such an event, but they do not go. Some ignore the invitation, but some others mistreat and even kill the servants sent to notify the invited. In anger, the king has the murderers destroyed and their city burned. He decides to send his servants to grab anyone they can find and bring them to the feast. This the servants do, but there is one who is not dressed properly for the affair, and after he is interrogated by the king, he is bound and cast into the “darkness outside.”

In a culture where famous people are closely watched to see what they will wear on the “red carpet,” and some are even celebrated for wearing the most outlandish things, the punishment the king metes out to the improperly dressed guest doesn’t make any sense to us. What might this, and indeed the entire parable, mean for us?

The wedding feast can be seen as eternal life. The invitation sent out to anyone the servants can find is the invitation given to us to hear and believe the Good News of Jesus Christ. The improper dress of the guest can be seen as the response we can make to the invitation, even though we are believers. If someone were to meet us at a fancy restaurant and come dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, we may tease him about getting “dressed up” for the occasion. If he wore that kind of outfit at a funeral, for instance, we might even be offended. In either case, it would seem clear to us that either he was unaware about what kind of affair he was attending, or he didn’t think it important enough to make the effort to come properly dressed.

How important is Jesus’ invitation to us? I was thinking about the kind of excuses and reasons we give for not accepting a social invitation: “That’s too long a drive.” “I don’t want to get dressed up.” “I’m too busy.” “If they’re coming, I’m not going.” “It’s not going to be any fun.” “I’ll go the next time.” If we look at things deep down, do we have a similar response when it comes to our faith life?

Just as a wedding invitation requires an RSVP, Jesus’ invitation to us, made out of a love which we can never fully comprehend, requires a response from us. This response usually requires a change of heart, a willingness to have our lives altered by the love of God. Life in and with and for Jesus is too important for us to treat casually. The invitation to come to Jesus is not meant to be one invitation among others. It is **THE** invitation! All the other aspects of our lives, our family life, our work, our education, are meant to be lived with that one invitation in mind.

If we believe in Jesus’ love for us, and we believe that His Passion, death, and Resurrection were for our salvation, and that we now have the invitation to everlasting life, we need to respond with the same, or even more, conscientiousness we would have in response to an invitation from a close friend.

The love of God in Jesus Christ can change things. It already has. May it change us, and may we say “Yes” to the invitation!

May God continue to bless us all.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP