

A banquet / An invitation / No-shows / Another Invitation / Full House / Judgment

That's the story, barebones. It is a story Jesus tells twice – once in Matthew, once in Luke. But have you ever told the same story more than once . . . except, you told it differently each time? It happens. Some stories are adjusted to fit *where* it is told: in a living room, at a wake, in a Bible study. Sometimes the telling differs because of *who* you tell it to: your child, your friends, your pastor. Sometimes the same story unfolds differently because of *why* you choose, or risk, telling it: to create a laugh, to teach a lesson, to speak hard truths.

Some parables of Jesus appear in multiple gospels and are nearly (or entirely) verbatim tellings of the same story. But other parables told twice or more seem to be the same story . . . except, differences arise in the telling. What may account for that? *Where*, *who*, and *why* offer clues.

Consider this story in Matthew and Luke, identical in its barebones. But its details? Both gospels set the *where* of this parable very differently. We are barely halfway through Luke's gospel. The journey has a long way to go. In Matthew, the *where* is Passover in Jerusalem. Betrayal and cross are imminent. The *who* of Jesus' audience in Luke are Pharisees sharing a meal with Jesus. Matthew's audience are religious leaders who want Jesus arrested if not dead. And the *why* of these two tellings? As in other stories before and after, the details in Luke focus on who God's sovereign realm will include, ranging before from Samaritans and now to street people. Matthew is the most Jewish of the gospels. Its numerous Old Testament quotes reveal that, as well as imagery that portrays Jesus as a new and greater Moses. Given that: the *why* of this parable in Matthew's details may serve to grapple with what it means to be a Jewish-Christian community *after* Rome destroyed the Temple and a Judaism tied to temple rituals. And that includes the church of Matthew that had worshipped at the Temple. Why did this come to be; and what now?

Such parables as this bring a reminder and challenge to the Church's proclamation and mission. The gospel of Jesus Christ cannot afford to be monotone, one size fits all. Audience and setting and intent play major roles in discerning what word, and what act, is most needed. For so Jesus voiced the same gospel story in a multitude of ways, for the sake of a multitude of ones.

For Reflection and Action:

Which of Jesus' tellings of the banquet story most intrigue you; most disturb you; why?

What foundational stories of your own have you told in different ways; to what end?

Who, where, why: how might these questions inform the mission of Our Saviour's:

In terms of our public-directed words; in terms of our public-directed actions?