October 18, 2020 World Food Sunday

Based on Matthew 22:1-14

* Guests invited were expected but did not come, they were too busy with other things to entertain an invitation from the King (Athena – I’m too busy)!
* The King is a metaphor for God, Jesus is the King’s son, those not willing to participate the elite (the wicked tenants in the previous parable), the destruction refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 CE and the “Good and the Bad” are Christian Missionaries who bring everyone into the church.
* People of Jerusalem did not accept God’s invitation
* Homiletical 167 good parallel, there are those members of our society who refuse the invitation from God (and do justice, kindness etc.) but want all the benefits anyway. But they can’t be found when its time to share the work of ministry. “They can always be counted on to share in a free dinner at the church, but they are not willing to serve a meal in the hunger centre or hand out a bag of groceries at the food pantry.”
* Invite folks to visit the food bank this next week and make a donation
* Remember to mention the Star Fish Program
* I have an email into Judy at the Foodbank for information
* Pastoral – 166, intimates that not all that believe themselves to be guests at God’s restoration banquet actually belong there – the undressed man (mine) and conversely all that don’t think they have a right to be there are in fact invited (always)
* Crux of the matter, fault of the owner? (original tenants) in the vineyard and the unrobed guest involves fruitfulness. God rectifies the situation in the first parable by transferring ownership of the vineyard to new tenants (mine, check). In this parable the unrobed guest does not show the fruits of living at a banquet of grace. When asked he has nothing to say. (Gospel begins with an invitation but cannot remain only an idea (168) Implies living in a new way, putting on Christ.
* Homiletical – people make all kinds of excuses for their absences. In the parable they decide to tend to their homes and fields or go about their daily tasks ( a big breach of protocol). What do we do, what are our excuses? 165
* The messiah entered the holy city of Jerusalem but in the end the people did not accept God’s invitation (Jerusalem fell)
* All are welcome, both good and bad are invited to the feast (inclusiveness, not like a university that is selective of who they accept). 166 theological
* Asserting our autonomy, living in pride, means we are clothed with ourselves (like the man at the banquet) rather than being clothed in Christ. 168 theological

“I too bissie,” said my granddaughter. She was sitting at the small table we have for her in our living room. She was so engrossed in colouring she had no time for her Dad’s question. I can’t remember what her Dad had asked her, but he recognized her focus and asked her just so we could witness her response. It was of course hilarious. I think if she was asked if she wanted an ice cream cone or a cookie, she still might have responded, “No, I too bissie.” She was just so distracted.

Life is like that isn’t it. We can all get so distracted, so focussed on a task that we sometimes miss out on something special. If we get engrossed in what we think is important, we might sacrifice an obligation or a responsibility. I know that I have done that over the years, spending too much time on what I thought was a priority, later hearing disappointment from the kids or from Lenore about time spent away from them. Looking back, it was similar to this morning’s gospel reading, I was offered a banquet but missed the opportunity.

Those originally invited to the banquet with the King in today’s gospel missed an excellent opportunity as well. On the surface, it seems as if this might have been an opportunity for a fabulous meal, a notable feast for sure with every comfort and delicacy one could imagine. Rather than taking part in such a banquet however, the invited guests, presumably the crème de le crème of society, decide they have other priorities.

One can imagine the King being outraged, how dare they! His wrath is understandable. Who would dare to refuse a royal invitation! When the King says jump, generally folks then responded with, “How High.”

 Matthew’s gospel today contains a lot of symbolism. When we peel away the layers, a few very interesting elements come to light. The King in this passage is a metaphor for God. The son, whose wedding is being planned is Jesus. Those that refused to attend the wedding are the Hebrew people who shunned and betrayed Jesus, who refused the offer of a new kin-dom, those that stayed within the political regime of the day. They were the status quo, the nonbelievers in a new time where Jesus preached justice and equality. Angry, the King sends in the troops and destroys the city, a reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

What of the stranger, the guest not wearing a wedding robe? Some oversight perhaps? But nothing is said, the man is speechless. And so, he is tossed out on his ear, and we hear as we have done in other gospel accounts, “there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.” That is not a great outcome for the unrobed guest.

This is yet more symbolism, the unrobed is not engaged in the banquet of grace. He is there for his own self-interest. We find this individual among us willingly taking part in a free dinner at the church hall, but unwilling to help wash the dishes.

Some are fixated on a quest for wealth or material things, some overly concerned about position or tenure, others choose just not to be involved, focusing entirely on self.

The parable ends with Jesus saying, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” That seems a fitting conclusion, the first invitees refused invitations. A guest comes only for a free meal. None are deemed worthy.

But in fact, all are worthy, it is not an individual’s value but their choice that makes the difference. We are all called, called by God to engage with our families, neighbours, and communities in covenant relationships. We are called into relationships which hold up the fallen and support the needy. We are all called to advocate for peace and justice.

Unfortunately, we are not capable of the doing when we wander too far off the path, when we get too busy and are distracted, distracted from our covenant relationship with God and with our brothers and sisters.

Today as we celebrate World Food Sunday I wonder what the hungry of the world would do if we were just too busy? If we were too preoccupied with everything else how would the local food bank survive? What about those local families that receive much needed food supplies over the weekend through the Star Fish program. We help to fund both those organizations through our church outreach work. We accept invitations to participate and help in the same way the King expected acceptance of his wedding invitation and that is the same invitation God gives us to participate in a Holy Banquet for those that need it most.

If we refused the invitation to the banquet, would there be the same response to racial unrest? Would the Black Lives Matter movement exist? Would women demanding that their politicians recognize gender equality be heard? Would there be recognition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two Spirited and other “Seekers,” in this country and would those children of God have a voice?

There are a lot of “what ifs” for God’s Kingdom reality if we don’t come to the banquet. A banquet where we will not only serve in loving ministry to those that need it most. We will ourselves be fed, and nourished.

Thanks for listening this morning, Amen