

Pentecost 18, 12/10/2014, Holy Trinity

Matthew 22:1-14

What do you think of Jesus' authority? From where does his authority come? Or have you not really considered it?

At the time of Jesus, the High Priests and the Pharisees certainly questioned Jesus' authority on a number of occasions.

In response to the question of his authority Jesus gave three parables that have formed our Gospel reading for three Sundays.

The first was the parable of the two sons and what constitutes obedience in relation to the father's instruction.

The second was the parable of the tenants that dealt with the rejection of Jesus' own ministry.

The third is the parable of the wedding banquet.

It consists of two parts: the first is the invitation that so many declined when the time came, then plan B, the alternative strategy to fill the number of guests for whom he has provided.

The second part concerns the badly dressed guest.

The assumption is that the invitation is given to everyone.

All are invited to feast at the banquet and to accept the invitation means that the person accepts the salvation that God offers.

This salvation comes through the cross, the death of Jesus and his resurrection.

The person who accepts the invitation and comes to the heavenly banquet is the one who accepts Jesus' call to repentance and has Jesus, his life, cross, death and resurrection at the centre of her/his life.

It is God's call to holiness, not some drab, boring holiness, not to a life of gloom, and harsh sacrifice, but to the joy, the happiness, the laughter and contentment that comes from a banquet with good food, good wine and good friends.

In the parable there are, however, those who ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business and the rest laid hold of the servants, mistreated them and killed them.

The servants are then instructed to go out to invite whomever they can find – bad and good alike.

The king wants a full hall – a great celebration.

There is room for those who make a response – no matter their previous state of life.

This surely is the Church, the Body of Christ – saints and sinners, all striving for holiness through repentance and having Jesus at the centre of his/her life.

This is your decision.

This is not looking back at what was or might have been but looking to the future and how it will be shaped by your response to God's call to holiness.

Now we come to the man not dressed in the wedding garment.

The wedding garment would be the best clothes that the man had.

Who would attend a wedding banquet in dirty working clothes?

Yet this is the one who wants to be part of the banquet but is not prepared to change his appearance, his life in accepting Jesus' call to repentance and having Jesus at the centre of his life.

This is a case of you have to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

No one is forced into the banquet hall.

God gives us human freedom to make both good and bad choices.

We are not forced like puppets on a string to embrace a life of holiness.

God's invitation is there to grow in holiness and the choice is for the individual.

In this parable we have three groups of people: first, the people who received the invitation and who rejected the invitation at the last moment having found better things to do: secondly, the newly invited people found in the street and thirdly, the person without the wedding garment.

Now for the questions for your consideration during this week:

Where do you put yourself in relation to these three groups?

Are there "urgent matters" in your life that prevent you from accepting God's invitation?

What is the wedding garment that God wants you to wear for you to take your place in the wedding banquet of God's Kingdom?