



## *The Banquet Is Ready*

*Matthew 22:1-14*

*October 8, 2017*

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. “The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find. So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*

## **Thought for the Week**

Scripture - Ezekiel 18: 25-28 • Philippians 2: 1-11 • Matthew 21: 28-32

I once heard it said that, given the evidence at hand and the limitations of our human mind, it is surprising that we ever do anything right the first time during our lifetime. Maybe, for instance former President George W. Bush now back at his comfortable home in Texas pursuing his avocation as a painter: he is might be saying to himself, “it was a mistake to invade Iraq; the Sunnis and Shiites are still fighting each other as they have for centuries. We lost too many of our young and brave young men to call this a victory or even a good decision.” Considering the state of the world today, it would be nice to know that we could make up for all those miscalculations we have made in our history.

I imagine it is true of most of us: as we reflect on our past life that there are probably lots of decisions that we once made and now wish we could change; sadly, however, it's now too late. The 14th Century English proverb still says it best: “Time and tide wait for no one.” (Author unknown)

Nonetheless, our life decisions are not set in steel or concrete. True, we may not always be able to radically change our past but we can still determine what the future will look like. Indeed, it may be said that we can determine the future by every mistake or every miscalculation we have made in the past.

The clue to making up for past mistakes lies in decision-making, in deciding that few decisions we make in this life are ever totally unredeemable; there are always ways for us to patch up the past. Of course, all this takes a little humility, admitting that we made a wrong turn or that we were too obstinate or too headstrong for our own good.

All this seems to follow from two scripture readings for this Sunday; The central idea seems to be this: The person who can change his mind can change the world. This may seem a bit excessive but I am sure that it has happened at many points in history.

In the first reading, the wisdom teacher, the prophet Ezekiel, places the issue of change into a moral context: “If the wicked person, turning from wickedness and does what is right he shall preserve his life.” Many of us who have celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation surely know the feeling of relief that accompanies a decision to put the past behind us, do a

course correction and start over. This is the very foundation of the Communion sacrament itself: the determination that we can change and start over.

In the gospel we find Jesus debating with the local scribes over the issue of a change of heart. He places it in the context of a story of two sons who are asked by their father to go into the fields and work. One gladly says "yes," but never leaves for work. The second son initially is reluctant to leave but after thinking it over, changes his mind. Jesus quickly uses the story to publicly criticize the scribes for failing to notice their own narrow-mindedness in the teaching of the Mosaic Law. Jesus makes the point that even the most common sinners shall be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven ahead of them. And why we might ask, simply because they were willing to change their lives and start over.

Again, as we mentioned above, only we, individually, can decide whether or not our past is set in concrete. Fortunately, for all of us, we also realize that our lives, and everything else in this world is in a constant state of flux. Nothing in this universe is static; there are innumerable opportunities for us to see further options and become the people God created us to be. When you think about that, it sounds like pretty good news.

*"Good News"*

*Happy Birthday Kurt (10/16) & Olivia (10/19)*

## The Banquet Is Ready

It was time to rejoice! The King was holding a wedding banquet for His Son. Weddings are indeed times to rejoice. You have a bride and groom committing their love to one another, you have God's promise of being with a couple and making their love complete, you have the memories of your own marriage and the love you have with your own husband and wife. Then, gathered with friends and family you celebrate with a meal together. What a wonderful time. Yes, the King in our text, was holding a wedding banquet for His Son. All the important people had been invited...but nobody was there. Even worse, those invited refused to come.

Where is the joy in this wedding feast? Everything had been prepared. The tables were set, the drinks were on ice, the food was hot and ready...but there were no guests. The King had sent out his servants to those invited but they refused to come. The King sent out His servants again. What a loving King. This time the people either didn't care or they killed the servants. Seems a little far-fetched for a wedding banquet doesn't it? People refusing to come and killing the messengers sent to invite them. But this is no ordinary banquet. This banquet is Heaven. This King is God the Father. The Son is Jesus and the servants sent out are the prophets, Apostles, teachers, and pastors.

The Old Testament is filled with prophecy concerning Christ. Yet the leaders of Israel, being knowledgeable in the Old Testament, still rejected and questioned Jesus.

They still didn't get it. In the Old Testament God's chosen people killed many of the prophets sent to them. At one point Elijah cried out that he was the last one and they were trying to kill him too. John the Baptist was beheaded. All of the Apostles except John were killed violently. Pastors of the Church would be martyred and continue to be killed for their faith to this very day. God was offering faith and forgiveness to His chosen people through the Messiah and they rejected.

The banquet is ready and we have been invited. God wants all people to be saved; he wants all people to come to the banquet. But many do not believe. We have been given the gift of Scripture. We have been given the gift of faith. We have been given the gift of the Lord's Supper a foretaste of the feast to come. But far too often we ignore our Lord and the wonderful gifts He offers us.