



Come and See!

October 15, 2017

The Word...

"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."' Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. ... Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.'
(from Mt 22:1-10)

Pondering the Word ...

This parable is pretty easy to understand. Jesus is comparing the elders to the invited guests that are too busy to come to the King's feast. But have you ever considered how amazing the premise of the parable really is? These are Jewish leaders who would drop everything and run to the Roman rulers when summoned. Jews were not supposed to dine with Gentiles, but the elders were so eager to keep the peace with Rome, I would bet there were times they knowingly violated that law and sought God's mercy afterwards. You just don't say no to the king.

Think about how this would play out today. Who are the kings in our world? I know lots of money is raised for good causes by auctioning off opportunities to have dinner with this sports figure or that Hollywood celebrity. How about if we were invited to dine with a king or political leaders? Those of us blessed to live in freedom may refuse that honor as a sign of protest, but we wouldn't likely have our house torched because of it (although we might get burned on Twitter ☺). For those who live under oppressive regimes, ignoring a tyrant's invitation could land you in prison or worse.

Christ himself is inviting you to the feast. I'm not talking about the Eucharist or your house of worship. I'm talking about the table of the world, the feast for all humankind. Do you refuse the invitation because you are too busy with other things? Are you fearful you might get stuck sitting next to someone who is different from you? Are you ashamed of your "garment?" Do you think you won't be accepted? How do you respond to Christ's invitation?

Living the Word...

It's easy to put God on the back burner, but as Confucius said, *"Too often we are so busy doing the urgent that we do not have time to do the important."* Spend time this week paying attention to how Jesus is calling you to join in the feast. Some things set before you at table might not appear appetizing at first. Don't be afraid to try new things or converse with someone you don't know. Don't ignore our heavenly King's invitation.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Oct 16: *"This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it."*(Lk 11:29-32)

We like signs. We like to know where we're going. It makes us feel like we're in control. We often pray to God for a sign to help us make a decision. Does this mean we're evil? Praying for God's guidance is a wise and good thing, but the trouble comes when we either ignore the signs we do get or lack the faith to follow where God leads. Maybe the signs point to something we'd rather not hear or consider. Perhaps the guidance we receive requires a leap of faith into uncharted waters. Sometimes, we choose to ignore the signs right in front of us because they don't quite match up to our expectations. Take a good look at your life. Are you ignoring "something greater" right in your midst?

Oct 17: *The wrath of God is indeed being revealed from heaven against every impiety and wickedness of those who suppress the truth by their wickedness.* (Rom 1:16-25)

There are people who see natural disasters and strife in the world as God's punishment for our wickedness. While God continues to take the rap for Mother Nature on insurance policies (i.e., "acts of God"), I don't pretend to have any idea how God works. But I do know that, when it comes to a lot of suffering, we surely do bring it upon ourselves. War, violence, poverty, abuse of the vulnerable...the list goes on of the things we humans can control and can choose to change if we really want to. But so often, the truth is suppressed by greed, the desire for revenge, or millennial-old grievances between ethnic groups and religions. We might feel there is nothing we can do, but that is when we need to stand tall and do what we can in our families and communities. Take the words from 1 Peter 3 and make them your own. *"Always be ready to give an explanation for the reason for your hope."* Do not be ashamed of the Gospel. Plant seeds of hope.

Oct 18: *Your friends make known, O Lord, the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.* (Ps 145)

Is God your friend? Do you consider yourself God's friend? If you have trouble with this image, perhaps it's time to get to know God on a more personal level. For those whose experiences with God have been difficult, consider a book like, *God's Passionate Desire*, by William Barry, S.J. For those who count themselves among God's friends, what will you do today to let the world know of the Kingdom's glorious splendor?

Oct 19: *"Woe to you who build the memorials of the prophets whom your fathers killed... Yes, I tell you, this generation will be charged with their blood!"*(Lk 11:47-54)

Well, this is topical! There's been a lot in the US news recently about monuments and memorials, particularly those of Confederate generals from the Civil War. We've seen images in history books of citizens from nations around the world destroying statues and walls that represented oppression and tyranny. There's a lot of debate and angst, but the important point is found in Jesus' words: "This generation will be charged with their blood." Seems harsh, but the reality is that we repeat the same sins over and over again. We have done little or nothing to remedy the sins of the past, and we still choose to oppress our fellow human beings, so we too will be held accountable, not only for our own sins, but because we refuse to learn from the past. It's high time we stop getting so caught up in the idolatry of symbols of nationalism and start heeding the symbol of the cross.

Oct 20: *I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation. I acknowledged my sin to you, my guilt I covered not. I said, "I confess my faults to the LORD," and you took away the guilt of my sin.* (Ps 32)

Turn to God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Allow God to fill you with the joy of salvation!

Oct 21: *(God's promise to Abraham) depends on faith, so that it may be a gift, guaranteed to all his descendants, not to those who only adhere to the law but to those who follow the faith of Abraham, the father of all of us.* (Rom 4:13, 16-18)

The context of this passage has to do with circumcision, but it does make me reflect on what rules, rites, and rituals I think are "required" to receive the gift of faith. I know many people--often those who are poor--whose faith in God's promise puts my own faith to shame. Do they dot all the I's and cross all the T's?" This is worth reflecting upon in prayer if we think our adherence to "the rules" is what makes us righteous.