

Puzzling Parable

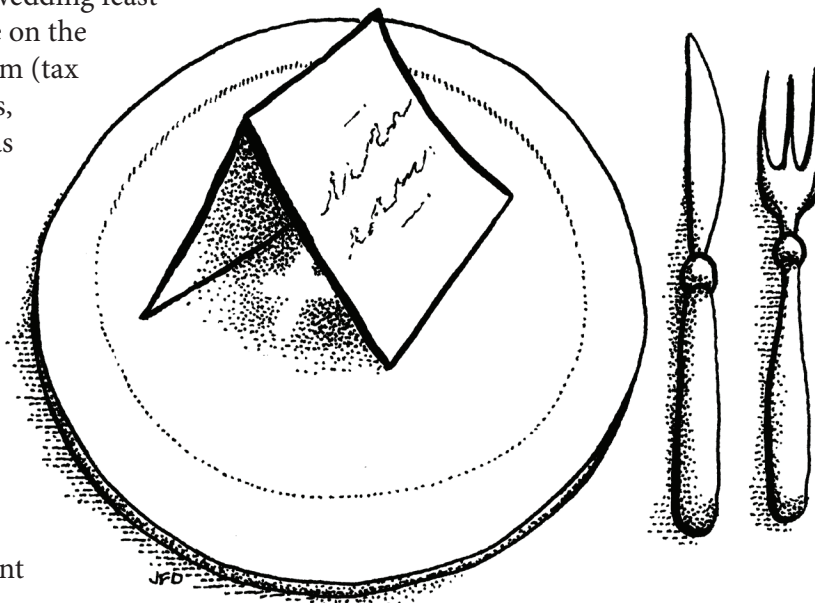
This Week's Readings at Mass

- Isaiah 25:6-10 • A feast for all peoples
- Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20 • Generosity
- Matthew 22:1-14 • The wedding banquet

Matthew's Gospel was written about 50 years after Jesus walked the earth, and it gives us glimpses into the issues of the early Christian community of the day. Jesus' parable of the wedding feast would have helped explain to Matthew's audience the reality that some people accepted Jesus and his message while others did not. God issued invitations to a heavenly banquet through the prophets in the Old Testament (the servants in the parable), but they ignored them. Then God sent Jesus, who again invited people to live in the Reign of God (not just in a distant afterlife, but here and now on earth). Jesus was "mistreated" and "killed" by some of the invited guests (the chief priests and Pharisees).

The reference to the enraged king sending troops, destroying the murderers, and burning their city is probably a reference to the Roman troops who burned down Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish temple in the year 70 AD, about a decade before Matthew recorded this parable. Matthew, and other early Christians, seemed to interpret this destruction as punishment for Israel rejecting Jesus and his Good News. The ones who accepted a belated invitation to the wedding feast represented those on the margins of Judaism (tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, etc.) as well as Gentiles. They became followers and received Jesus with joy and gratitude.

The final verses about the wedding guest without the proper garment



"My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

Sheepish Question:
What grace has God given me this week? What shall I do with it?

may have originally been a separate parable. The garment seems to have some symbolism that is lost to us today. We are left with the question of how someone who wasn't expecting an invitation to a wedding banquet would have the proper clothes on in the first place.

Questions of the Week

- 1 What is your first impression of this Gospel passage?
- 2 When have you experienced a joyous coming together of unlikely people responding to something good in life?

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