

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – October 15, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 25:6-10a

On this mountain the LORD of hosts
will provide for all peoples
a feast of rich food and choice wines,
juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.
On this mountain he will destroy
the veil that veils all peoples,
the web that is woven over all nations;
he will destroy death forever.
The Lord GOD will wipe away
the tears from every face;
the reproach of his people he will remove
from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken.
On that day it will be said:
"Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!
This is the LORD for whom we looked;
let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"
For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.

Psalm: Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. (6cd) I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
with your rod and your staff that give me courage.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Brothers and sisters: I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress. My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father, glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables, saying, "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. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 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.' The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests, he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. The king said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.' Many are invited, but few are chosen."



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Do you remember the movie *Babette's Feast*? Maybe you saw it or at least have heard of it. The Gospel parable reminds us of that movie. Babette, an impoverished cook, made her way into a small town where the religion of the area made people hard and cold to each other, afraid to enjoy anything or anyone. Babette was a top chef who had wandered up into their community. She had only a small reserve of possessions. But she prepared, over many days, a huge, delectable, superb feast, serving after serving, all for the uptight townsfolk. As they began to taste and enjoy they began also to communicate to each other in kindness. They even danced! I have heard people say that the movie promoted self-indulgence, but I would not endorse that view. Instead, it is similar to the huge feast we hear about in the First Reading. This is where we find the famous invitation from the Lord of Hosts, full of unstinting promise. Come to "a feast of rich food and choice wines." And according to the normal way of Jewish writing, Isaiah repeats the same in different words: "juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines." This is a great banquet, called in medieval England a "groaning board."

Then, Sunday's Gospel describes a sumptuous feast also. A king prepares it, fattens up his best livestock, seasoned and readied for cooking. Then he sends his servants out with invitations. If you thought the people in Babette's town were reluctant, look what happened. Some invitees outright refused to come. Others simply ignored the invitation as if it had not been given. A number "laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them." The king punished these. He invited street people in. Food was meant to be enjoyed, not refused. But how dare we stuff ourselves with lush food and every other kind of riches with so many people starving in today's world? Shouldn't we abstain and deny ourselves? Isn't the "First World" currently fattened on food far more lavish than the ancients ever dreamt of? "Who says you can't have it all?" advertisements insist. Can't we, we who try to be faithful to God and God's promises?

As you consider that question, remember that Jesus did both: he feasted *and* he fasted. Recall that he desisted from food for forty days at the beginning of his public ministry. But later on he had occasion to say, mockingly, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners'" (Mt 11:19). Which is it for you, then, fasting or feasting? The answer can be simply said but attained only with difficulty. Here it is: we are meant to receive, humbly, and also to give to others, humbly. The mistake is to adopt a stance of receiving only (getting, grabbing) or giving only (exist just for the poor). The readings invite us to enjoy what is there, all of it coming from God's hand. Jesus did this. When it was time to let go of it all—life, friends, peace and possessions—he did that too, with love. Receive and give. Receive his life. Then give it out to the world.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Does banquet imagery describe well the fullness we will have in the presence of God? How can a feast—juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines—be a sacramental vision of the universe?
2. "Will the Lord ever test you beyond your capacity? Will that Lord always be with you? When you face daily life, when difficulties arise, do you remember Paul's words, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me"?"
3. Besides answering God's invitation to the feast, what is our job? Are we the guests or are we also the ones doing the inviting? How does this banquet not only sustain life but also transfigure it?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

May your grace, O Lord, we pray, at all times go before us and follow after and make us always determined to carry out good works. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen