

Today's gospel reading from Matthew, continues with Jesus using a parable to make a point. Like last week, the story might seem a bit extreme and you could argue the similar parable to this in Luke's gospel is a bit more realistic, but it certainly gets the listeners attention.

A king gives a wedding banquet for his son and he sends his slaves to call those who have been invited. What a privilege to be invited to the king's son's wedding! Surely those who have been invited will be delighted and will be there in a flash. 'What shall I wear for this?' some might say. Well as we hear, that clearly isn't the case and those on the guest list do not come. Again the slaves are sent out to ask them to come to the wedding banquet, but they make light of it, see to their own interests and some of the invited guests even seize the slaves and kill them. The king is rightfully angry and gets his revenge.

Well, what a bunch! How stupid of those on the invite list to decline the call to the wedding banquet! How awful of them to spit in the face of the king, who wanted them so much to be at the banquet! Well they had their chance and now it was time to invite in all those on the streets who hadn't previously been on the guest list. All those out on the streets, good and bad.

Once again Jesus is making the point to the Pharisees and priests that they as God's people of the covenant, were on the guest list and had been invited to God's banquet in the kingdom of heaven. But they had declined the offer. Even reacting aggressively to it, rejecting the call of John the Baptist to repent because the kingdom of God is near. And now they are rejecting Jesus, who is God himself in flesh and as we know they will reject him even more harshly.

The invite to the heavenly banquet is thus given out to all people, as God invites us to his table in the kingdom of heaven. What great news for us all! So do we accept God's invite? Well surely we can't refuse an invite like that?

But of course we know we can and we do. God's call for us to be with him in his kingdom, is not always appealing to us. Because it means we have to live in a certain way and that's not always easy. It's much easier a lot of the time to see to our own interests. Do the things we want to do and not turn up to the banquet. The people of Israel in our reading from Exodus today had their own banquet, and it wasn't with God or with Moses, the servant he sent!

So yes, as we know, other invites in this world of ours can seem much more attractive and we often readily accept those invitations. But when we get there we might not like where we are. The superficial appeal does not last. We then might wish we had accepted the invite to the heavenly banquet. The invite to be with God in his kingdom. God in his Son Jesus, even walked around on this earth talking about this special kingdom, inviting us to the banquet. But still many refuse it.

However, the good news is. It's not too late. God loves us so much he allowed his Son to die for our sins. Jesus in his crucifixion had his arms outstretched, still gathering us, still inviting us into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus loves us so much, he won't let us go without a fight.

And so, if don't like where we are in life. If we are in a bad place of our own making. If we regret we accepted the wrong invite that has took us to the wrong places to live in the wrong way. Let's remember that other invite of a different kind. It's still there and the invite still stands. Listen out for the call! The more we listen, yes, the more we give God the time of day, the more we will hear and the more we hear, the more we might think, 'Yes what shall I wear? Something new? A new me perhaps?' If we do this we will find ourselves responding to the invite. The invite that takes us to a better place of God's making. And once we take our seat at table with him, we will wonder why we wanted to be anywhere else.

Amen.

