

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
 Trinity XX
 October 13, 2024
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“There shall be weeping
 And gnashing of teeth
 For many are called but few are chosen”

The Trinity Season Survey of Essential Christian Doctrine
 Reaches a climax with today’s Gospel.
 It begins with Jesus’ alert:

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . .”

So we know something big and important is coming.
 And it concludes with His dire warning:

“Many are called but few are chosen”.

Makes you sit up and pay attention doesn’t it.

Between the alert and the warning is a parable
 And we are compelled to learn its meaning.
 There may be a lot at stake.

The scene is a wedding feast
 But not any wedding feast
 This one is the wedding of the prince
 A Royal Wedding.

The elaborate preparations have been completed.
 Servants have been sent forth to invite the wedding guests.
 The feast is prepared
 The table set
 And all is in readiness.

But the guests make excuse
 Feeble excuse.
 A group of guests went so far as to murder the servant/messengers

The King was angry
 And sent his army to destroy the murderers and to burn their city.

This parable got serious all of a sudden.

The King next sent his servants out again.

This time to summon strangers,

The bad with the good.

And they came and furnished the feast with guests.

Before we go any further, let's pause and digest what we have so far.

The King in the story is God.

That would make his Son, Jesus.

The wedding can only be that of Jesus with His Church.

The feast is the celebration of the birth of the Church.

The servants of God are the angels and the prophets of the Old Testament.

Who delivered the invitation

The message of God

That there would be saviour, a messiah

Who would someday arrive and bring them

to the Wedding Feast,

To return to God

in the Church.

But the Jews reacted badly.

Some ignored the message

Some reacted violently and killed prophets

Only seeing them as blasphemers

Not the messengers of God.

God responded.

There are consequences for what we do.

Killing God's messengers brought harsh consequences.

The destruction of the murderers and even the destruction of their city.

Perhaps the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

People filled the tables at the Feast
People from all walks of life
All were bidden
All are welcome
The good and the bad.
That is true to this day
Of God's Church
Of this little miracle church; St Thomas.

So far so good.
But now comes a twist
A complexity
A perplexity.

The man who came to the feast unprepared
And who would not accept an offered wedding garment.
And who was cast into outer darkness
Because of his clothes?

Here we need to step aside and delve into the customs of Jesus' time
If we are to comprehend this part of the parable
And to receive the message Jesus is sending us
We must see it with First Century eyes.

Life was harsh in the Holy Land.
It was a daily struggle to put food on the table in the agricultural
Times.

A wedding feast was an anticipated, luxurious event.
People came from great distances
Over dusty trails.
They brought with them only what they could carry
But the occasion called for them to wear their finest.
Out of respect for the occasion
And for their host, relatives and friends.

They would arrive gritty and dusty,
Thirsty and hungry.

It was customary for the host to greet the guests
And to offer them refreshment
A place to wash up
And to usher them to a closet of suitable clothing
to wear at the wedding feast.

Because travel limited what they could bring themselves.

So returning to the parable:

A man arrived who was not prepared for the feast
But who also did not accept the fine garment offered by his host.

The metaphor of that garment is our key.

The garment in the story stands for

The robe of Christ

Or “putting on” Jesus

This guest had not accepted Jesus

Had not believed He is the Son of God

Not believed He is the salvation of mankind

Not believed He is the pathway to eternal life

The guest had come to the wedding feast and had come that far

Had passed through the first portal

But would not join in the Church

Would not “put on Christ”

And so could not be part of salvation

Could not be part of Heaven and eternal life.

And as a consequence the unrobed guest would suffer eternal death
when he leaves this life

He would be bound and cast into eternal darkness

Where he would remain in the void of darkness

Of emptiness

Of nothing,

Forever.

That is the cause of the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So the so very important lesson for all of us here is this;

We are here in God's House this morning

We have come to the wedding feast

We are guests at the wedding,

The joinder

of Jesus

and His Church

We have been called to become joined with Jesus

We have answered that call and entered the banquet hall

We have passed through the first portal

Those doors back there

But there is a second portal through which we must also pass.

Perhaps just as the Ancient Jews were called to leave Egypt

To pass through the baptism of the parted Red Sea

We are in a wilderness

Wandering

Looking for our promised land

The heaven of eternal life.

And like them,

We must choose and be chosen to take the final step

Like them,

We must also cross our Jordan river

And enter in to the promised land.

We who were called must now "put on Christ"

As St Paul puts it;

We must "put off" the old man

Put away the person who is disobedient

Who is steeped in sin

Who ignores the will of God in our lives.

And "put on" the new man

Become the new person; Obedient to God in our lives.

We must take the robe of Christ offered at the wedding feast
 Become one of His

Accept Him in our lives
 Make the sacrifices
 Follow the commandments
 Live the sacraments and doctrine of His church

That is the difference between being called and being chosen.
 The chosen are those who have accepted the wedding garment
 “put on” the robe of Christ
 and live the life of a Christian
 And who have accepted the sacrifices of being chosen.

The life led by Jesus Christ in this world.
 The life dedicated to the sacrifice of the Cross
 Was a gift to all mankind.
 A gift to those who would accept the garment
 Recognize and accept the sacrifice of the Christ.

It is one thing for us to agree with St Paul
 To “put on Christ”,
 And quite another to actually do that.

I am reminded of the story of the woman of Scotland
 A widow
 Who lived her life in dire poverty.
 She was asked by a well-meaning friend about her son
 The son who had gone to America.
 The friend asked if the woman had ever heard from her son again
 And whether he had remembered his mother
 And given her what help he could.
 The woman replied that yes,
 She had heard from him on occasion
 And that he had not given her any help
 But he sent her lovely little portraits.

Which she had kept in a box under her bed
 Because they were lovely to look at and reminded her
 of her son.

The friend was about to lash out at the ungrateful son
 But something made her
 ask if she could see the lovely little portraits.

The woman reached under her bed in the corner of the one room
 dwelling

And pulled out a dusty old wooden box.
 She showed the friend the lovely portraits
 They were portraits of dead American presidents on American
 money.
 Thousands of dollars worth.

She, who had lived a life of poverty, was wealthy beyond her
 dreams.

Many do not cash in the treasure that God offers to us.
 Simply because we do not value
 The gift that God extends to us.

Let us not be unwise.
 failing to respond to His Invitation
 failing to partake of that Great Wedding Feast.

So we have all been called.

But . . .

Have we put on the garment?
 Accepted what it means in our lives
 To live a Christian Life?

We, who have left our Egypt and passed through the baptism of the
 parted Red Sea

Have a second and final challenge remaining:

We must,
while we wonder in the wilderness,
eating of the manna of heaven
discerning the word of God

When we come to our River Jordan

We must

Pass through that second and narrower portal

The one few enter

And accept Jesus in our lives

That gift of God

--His Son

And be among the chosen.

If we don't,

there will be great weeping

and gnashing of teeth

Because many are called but few are chosen