

# You are Invited

## *Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

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One of the things often said to us when we were in Africa when we visited people who were eating, was you are invited. It was the concept, that even though the meal had not been prepared for you, you were most welcome to share in it. How much in contrast this is to the invitation only mentality in our society. The uninvited guest is seen as unworthy to share in the feast - we call them gate crashers and this term is seen as one of denigration.

The Jews, in Jesus' day, understood that they were God's invited guests - God's Chosen people, a people for whom God would prepare the Banquet. They, like in our society made a sharp distinction between the invited and the uninvited.

The story from today's Gospel has reminded me of when we were sending out invitations for our big day. Perhaps you can remember the process as well. Talking with couples now, it is still the same. Do you remember. You began with setting the target - the absolute maximum that you could afford then you began with the guest list - first, you started with the families. This Aunt and Uncle must be invited because your parents had been to their children's wedding and if you invite them well then you had to invite .... The list grew. Then came your parent's friends, with same sought of logic.... The list grew... Then you had your friends... how many spots were left. Some were singles, but some were couples... The complexity of it all... Do you invite the vicar?

We thought we had it made, as I was from Victoria and so the Bass Strait would stop them. Letter after letter came back - We haven't been to Tassie for ages - We would love to come down for a holiday.

You see there is something about a wedding that makes it seem important to be there, it was no accident that Jesus chose this image, as the Wedding Feast was the time of greatest festivity in the life of the community.

How then would it have sounded, that these things were in the way?

Actually, I've just got married so I can't come. I have business to attend to... I can't come; I want to try out my new tractor... I can't come; ... I can't come; ... I can't come.

What an insult? The obstacle was not they couldn't afford to come but that they couldn't be bothered coming. All good reasons, but a question of priorities.

Chosen they might be, but they forgot the privilege that this was. How would you have felt if no-one could be bothered coming to your wedding? One person told us that he couldn't come to our wedding because he had to fix his car!!

Now Jesus told this story as a warning to religious people of his day, that they might miss out if they weren't careful. Others who seem to be unworthy of an invite would take their places if they took things for granted. But like most of Jesus teaching, it is equally applicable today. In our culture, we do not have scribes and pharisees, but when Jesus was talking to the religious people of his day, he is also talking about the religious people of our day as well. It is my practice to share a meal with the happy couple. One time, we shared a meal with a most unlikely couple of young people. She an ex-druggie, he a drop out, but they are so focused in working for God. I was tempted to invite them to come incognito into the church, to test your reactions, but I know how welcoming you are, but I know there are some churches, where their appearance would cause them to be treated as outcasts. In the images of the story, they would those on roadside brought in later, but in as much as you can guess, they have accepted their place at the marriage supper of the lamb. But have we - Have you and I also take the step to make that our top priority.

Now I know that some preachers interpret this as being about attendance on a Sunday - coming to church, but I am not happy with this. Christianity is more than just the church attendance. Our acceptance to the Marriage Supper is not just about prioritising Church on a Sunday, but it is about living each day, each hour, each moment focused on God. It is that quality of Life that has God in the centre, with everything about the relationship with him. It is being so connected with God, that all our words, our actions and our decisions put his Kingdom first.

Matthew adds a little tailpiece to this story compared with its rendition in Luke. Here he shows, the party afterwards. As the king surveys the scene, there is one guest in his ordinary street clothes. He had not put on the fine robes that were provided for the guests. His fate was to be cast out, even though had thought to accept the invitation.

Jesus was reminding his listeners, and us today, that responding to the invite is not enough. The man in his ordinary clothes was not fit for the wedding feast, in the same way, that we in ourselves are not ready for Heaven. Our heavenly Father will provide us with the clothing necessary - the wedding robes of righteousness. They are ours to accept. What we have is not good enough - we do not merit heaven, but we can through God's Generosity partake of the marriage supper of the lamb, as he himself will cloth us with righteousness.

Where are you and I at the moment - Are we too busy for God? Have too many other things that get in the way? Or are we trying to think that we merit an invitation? Wearing our own clothes? Or have we happily accepted the invitation and are celebrating at the Supper?

God like our African brothers has said "You are invited!!" The choice is ours to respond.

**AMEN.**