

**Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>. 2023. Trinity 19**

**Isaiah 25.1-9, Psalm 23, Matthew 22.1-14**

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Have you ever been to a banquet? I have been to wedding receptions, but that's about it. We may associate banquets with those held at the palace when foreign leaders come on a state visit, or events like that at the Guildhall, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer is invited to speak. For many of us, banquets seem to be the preserve of the rich and famous or people with status.

Today's first reading is a psalm of praise, which refers to the hostile forces of the world. The aliens are the presumptuous, and they are brought low. The poor and needy are the afflicted people of God, and they are raised and protected, as in the Magnificat. Like a king holding his coronation feast, the Lord of hosts gathers the nations on Mt. Zion for a rich feast. The hostile power is overthrown, and death can be understood as the power, which works for weakness and destruction, with the result that there will be a confession of faith and rejoicing at God's saving power.

Psalm 23 is about a journey, but it can be seen as a commentary on life. It is a song of confidence, in which a worshipper, grateful for deliverance from enemies, comes to Jerusalem to make a thank offering in the temple. He sees God as shepherd and guide and finally as host. God the shepherd guides him by the right paths to nourishment and rest. But the way is arduous and dangerous (valley of the shadow of death), but the sheep fears neither pitfalls nor enemies, as God the shepherd is there to protect him.

Finally, God becomes the host, providing for his guests with lavish generosity, like a banquet (my cup shall be full), and his protecting presence will be with the worshipper for the rest of his life and for evermore. So, it is a journey through life with the joys and sorrows, which present themselves.

In the Gospel, there are differences between Matthew's and Luke's versions. Luke depicts a man giving a banquet. Matthew presents a king giving a feast for his son.

Invitations were issued in two stages, a preliminary announcement that the feast was being planned, and a final notice when the preparations

were completed. Those invited did not take the invitation seriously, but went about the routine business of life. Others abused the servants.

The burning of the city is a reference to the coming of the Roman troops as the instruments of God's judgement on Israel and the destruction of the city in 70AD. The result is a wide response, and the people are of mixed nature, which is characteristic of Matthew's view of the Church.

Those, who haven't provided themselves with the wedding garment of righteousness are cast out. Matthew's intention is to contrast all those, who were invited, with the small number actually found worthy.

We are used to invitations, and it's usually thought to be polite to accept, unless there are serious reasons to decline. What do we do, about God's invitation? It is 'Come and see', come to the Eucharist, come and meet other people, who are invited. Do we take it seriously? Where does it come in our list of priorities? Do we think that we have a right to be invited? What about people outside? How welcoming are we? What this shows is that God's love is for all, regardless of status or financial circumstances. We have a mission and responsibility to bring the knowledge and presence of God beyond the walls of the church.

Many are called, but few are chosen, and it might not be us, unless we can be a loving and serving people.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.