

St Peter's, Ealing
Sunday 11th October 2020
Trinity 18 YrA

Who let you in?

Philippians 4.1-9; Matthew 22.1-14

When I was a child I had to go to church. If mum could not take me because she was working my brothers had to. They would have been going to Sunday School anyway and they sang in the choir. When we went to church you always had to be in your Sunday best. Clean shorts, clean shirt and shining shoes. Saturday evening was bath night so that we would be nice and clean ready for Church on Sunday. We were not unusual. Everyone who went to church wore their Sunday best, Ladies in their hats and gents in suits.

I stopped going to church when my brothers stopped. Mum's job meant she worked most Sunday mornings. Each of my brothers, as they entered their teens rebelled and stopped going to church. My brother Raymond, who is next up from me in the pecking order, was the last and when he rebelled, I was let off the hook, after all there was no one to take me.

It would be a few years later I made my own way back to church. And by then everything had changed. My mum was shocked when she realised I had gone to church in jeans. She was even more so when I told her all my friends went to church in jeans and ladies no longer, on the whole, wore hats. Times had definitely changed.

However, would you consider ever going to a wedding banquet in scruffs? I doubt it. We get that wedding invitation and its suits and ties, new frocks, even a fascinator or two; best bib and tucker. If nothing else its an excuse to go shopping for something new. After all, we do want to look our best on such a lovely day of celebration. We want to make the effort.

What then is this story from Jesus all about? The King had invited all the gentry and they had rebuffed him. He invites those from the streets and the hedge rows. Now they won't have money or access to fine clothes so when one of them turns up dishevelled and unkempt is it really his fault he has not got the best threads? Is not the king a little too harsh, throwing him out to where there is a weeping and gnashing of teeth?

The point here is the interloper has not made any effort. All the other guests were from the same life situation. They were all poor and disenfranchised. Yet they had made the effort.

It is a story about complacency in faith. The King is God, his son is Jesus, the servants sent out are the prophets and the banquet is the eschatological banquet of heaven. The danger with such a story is complacency. If we are the elect, the chosen of God why should we worry about what happens now, after all we are in club. The man castigated and thrown out is the cure for that complacency. Nothing is certain and we have to make the effort in our life of faith. We cannot be passengers in Gods bus but should be players in the team. To be players we should actively engage with the life of faith, ensuring the spirit of God is part of everything we are and do, that the love of God clothes us in God's glory and honour and righteousness so that we are properly dressed for the banquet in God's gifts, for we are too poor in spirit to clothe ourselves.

So we are brought to the APCM Meeting after Mass today. Here is a way we can be players in the team. The game is mission and ministry in the life of the Christian faith. It requires lots of players who share in many aspects of the life of our Christian community. One way that this can be done is by being part of the work of the Parochial Church Council. Doesn't necessarily sound particularly exciting but this is about an active participant in the proclamation of the good news of Jesus in our small part of the Lord's garden. We, the people of St Peter's, sat in these pews or at home on Zoom cannot be passengers, else we chance being cast out for being improperly clothed in self-worth. We are all called to be players, encouraging each other, and those who have yet to hear the gospel, to a closer walk with God.