

St Peter's, Ealing

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October – Feast Day of St Theresa of Avila

Trinity 18 Proper 23

## Repent and be ready

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Here today in our Gospel reading is another one of those parables where Jesus doesn't pull the punches. A King prepares a wedding banquet. His guest won't come and they see off his servants. He invites the poor and broken of society and they do come. The sting in the tail is the excessive response to some poor guy who doesn't come properly dressed. Our immediate response is poor guest, maybe he couldn't afford a posh frock. But then maybe I'm just making up excuses for him. The King has invited him to a banquet – shouldn't he have made an effort? What would you do if the Queen invited you to a banquet at the palace?

Let's get to grips with this story, which is about the Kingdom of God if you'd not got that. Hence the binding and throwing out into the outer darkness.

The King is God. The servants are those prophets and teachers God has sent through the ages, even today. The guests are those already of God's covenant; that's not necessarily to be solely interpreted as being the people of Israel, at least for our purposes, because it could be set as in the present and could very well refer to the people of faith today. They could be us if we reject the prophetic words God sends us through his church. We have been invited to the wedding feast – we can't be bothered, we are too busy and the banquet is not a priority for us. As is common in Jesus parables he uses extremes to make a point. Those who were invited are destroyed. As those who have heard the message have not answered the call the invitation to salvation and a place in the kingdom is offered to the least expected, the outcasts and broken of society.

Here's the rub. Even the broken and lost must get ready. Everyone is expected to prepare and respond adequately. Salvation is not a done deal. The guests are turning up to the banquet having made the effort and are welcomed. They may not be perfectly turned out, but they have tried. Whatever their best is they offer it at the door and are welcomed. In the parable this is expressed as

having the right robes, best bib and tucker. In terms of faith this is making the effort to study the scriptures, of saying our prayers and in receiving the sacrament – to live the life of faith. He who was inappropriately dressed, was he the one who hadn't bothered to say his prayers, hadn't opened his bible in a long while and didn't make receiving the sacraments a priority?

Where then are we in this story? Make no mistake, we are one of these characters, the question is which one? This is a difficult question for a professional Christian to answer for others. A cleric's yardstick is attendance at mass, enthusiasm for prayer or prayer groups or taking up of opportunities for prayer; or sharing in the ministry opportunities offered in the life of the church – either engaging in those already happening or starting initiatives that need to happen. Only you can truly answer for yourselves. It is you God is interested in, you he is inviting. Do you give prayer priority in your daily life? Do you regularly prioritise attendance at Mass, where we gather to share in the heavenly banquet? Do you respond to God's call to minister in the world – at home, at work, in your neighbourhood, in Church? Do you listen to how God is calling you to serve him and are you doing it? Are you ready for the banquet, are you ready for the kingdom of God?