

14TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
AUGUST 20/SEPTEMBER 2, 2007

II CORINTHIANS 1: 21-2: 4

ST. MATTHEW 22: 1-14

Fr. Dr. Photios+ (W)

Gospel...And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Who Are The Players in This Parable?

The Father is the king, and the bridegroom is the Father's Son and Word; whilst the bride is the Church of God –“we, the people named after Christ”¹ The bride is the Church and soul.²

The marriage is the betrothal of the Son to the Church, and their union, through which we have become partakers of the divine nature. This connexion is called a marriage because of its greatness and because of the love which God has for us. He did not say, a marriage, but nuptials (see fn 3), thus showing the Church that (the ways of) relationship, union and connexion with God the Word are many and varied; for closeness to God and union with Him is not all of one sort, but is diversified. Some are joined to Christ, the immaculate Bridegroom, by virginity and purity; others, by many good works and silent almsgiving; some by teaching, and others by listening; some by action, others by stillness; some by going out (into the world), others by retiring (from the world) and being silent. Some bring forth fruit a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold; for the Master in His love toward man has given us many paths to salvation, not only one.³

We should ‘study’ the above quote and realise that there are a variety of paths to salvation. The Lord did not stipulate one path, although His is the sole route to salvation; that is, only through Him can one be saved. But our avenues paving the way to salvation within His sole route are multidimensional so-to-speak. We can use our own individual strengths; we don’t have to copy others’ methods. The laity can gain salvation by living God’s Way and Will as well as saintly monastics.

This parable is about the disobedience of the Jews. They were invited to the wedding but spitefully would not come. The servants are those sent by the Lord to announce His coming. First there was Moses and his associates, but the Jews were rebellious and “provoked God in the wilderness for forty years and did not want to accept the word of God and spiritual joy”.⁴

Other servants, the prophets, were sent out, but they killed some including Isaiah; they treated others spitefully as Jeremiah whom they threw down into the mire pit. Other less actively perverse simply refused the invitation to salvation:

Those who were less extreme merely declined the invitation: one went his way to his own field, that is, turned towards a life of pleasure and carnal pursuits, for one’s ‘own field’ is the body; another, to his merchandise, that is, to a life of acquisition and profit, for merchants are a type of men most greedy for profit.⁵

The Jews Have Been Invited Many Times

The Jews have been invited to the marriage many times by the Law through Moses, the prophets, John the Baptist, the Apostles and by all those who subsequently proclaimed Him.⁶ The Lord offered them the “abundant food of spiritual gifts” (the oxen and fatlings) with the fatlings meaning the “fatted Calf Himself (Christ), and the sweetness of spiritual vision, which is rich and most sweet, not weak and feeble”. The dinner means “every sort of spiritual food and nourishment”. The oxen and fatlings

are figures of the mysteries of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is indicated by the Oxen, since it is full of animal sacrifices, while the fatlings indicate the New Testament, for now we offer on the altar bread, which, being made of wheat, is called fat (or rich). God, then, bids us eat of the good things of the Old and New Testaments”.⁷

But the Jews would not come. They chose carnality, possessions, love of money and honour and “made light of the royal wedding” mistreating and killing those servants who invited them.⁸

The Consequences Of Their Rejection

The king sent his armies, the Roman legions, “who destroyed the disobedient Jews and burnt up their city, Jerusalem, as even the truthful Josephus says”.⁹ With these words, the Lord foretold the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian and Titus forty years after His Ascension. The king was wroth means that “those madmen had angered God the Father by not believing God the Son and by handing Him over to death”.¹⁰

Yes, The Jews Killed Christ

Lately, it has become quite the fashion for contemporary Jews to dispute their part in Christ’s persecution and crucifixion. The ecumenical heretics attempt to shift the responsibility, but it won’t work. That Christ was crucified by the efforts of the Jewish elite is beyond question:

When they killed the protomartyr Stephen; when they killed James, the brother of John, with the sword; when they mistreated and drove out the Apostles; then was **their suffering and total loss set in motion** (emphasis supplied). (Some of) those who heard of these things from Christ were witnesses of what would eventually happen; John the Theologian was still alive, as also many others who had been with Christ, when all was accomplished as the Lord and Master foretold. Great and ineffable is His mercy; He

did many things to show His long-suffering, while He waited for the **foolish and ungrateful Jews to mend their ways** (emphasis supplied). He planted a vineyard; He gave **them** (emphasis supplied) time to cultivate it; He sent His (servants) to receive the fruits in their season. When they were killed, He sent other servants; when they, too, were put to death. He afterwards sent His Son. Even after the Son was slain, He still summoned them to the marriage, after His Resurrection and Ascension, yet **still** (emphasis supplied) they did not wish to come. Then He sent more servants, and they killed these **also** (emphasis supplied).¹¹

The Jews also slew St. James the Just (First Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem and step-brother of Christ) when he refused to deny the Lord and instead proclaimed Him. They threw him down from the Temple parapet, stoned and clubbed him to death as he prayed for them “I beseech Thee, Lord God and Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.”¹²

We should remember that the persecutors were not the common peasantry, very many of these were followers of Christ. As is many times commonplace the intelligentsia/elite led the onslaught.

The Reaching Out To The Gentiles

Now many who had not been called were:

He sends out other servants, the apostles, and they call the Gentiles who did not walk in the true way but are divided, some here, some there, separated into many ways and doctrines. Indeed, they are to be found along the lanes off from the highways, that is, in great error, delusion, and deviation.... So as the apostles went forth from Jerusalem to the Gentiles, they gathered all together, both evil and good, that is, those filled with every wickedness and also those less wicked whom He calls good by comparison to the others.¹³

The Church being holy does not mean that there are no sinners, quite the contrary:

Even to the present day people keep coming, both the good and the bad; and they are vouchsafed the mysteries and enjoy the divine gifts. Lest the nations trust in faith alone, and walk idly and carelessly, the

Master speaks to them also of judgement; He carefully directs His discourse to their life and deeds.¹⁴

Here we see, again, that faith alone is not enough.

Keeping Our Garments Clean

The bad and the good are now gathered at the wedding, but the king discovers that one person had entered without a wedding garment. We all enter called by grace without distinction as to who we are, but our lives after entering the wedding are subject to close examination by the king:

Let us tremble, then, when we understand that if one does not lead a pure life, faith alone benefits him not at all. For not only is he cast out of the wedding feast, but he is sent away into the fire.¹⁵

What is an appropriate wedding garment: a ‘clean’ soul. We should be “clothed with compassion, goodness, and brotherly love”.¹⁶ We must discard the robes of shame, “lust, impurity, passions, evil desires and greed, which is another sacrifice to idols”.¹⁷ If we do not have a pure soul, we will end up speechless before the Lord and render judgment against ourselves by our dereliction of spiritual duty. The “unworthy is cast out; for every man is condemned or acquitted according to his deeds.”¹⁸

It is critical to remember that many are called but few are chosen. Those not chosen have only themselves to blame. God gives all of us our salvation opportunity. He wants all to be saved, but it is up to us. There will be far fewer saved than called:

For few are saved and found worthy to be chosen by God. For it is God’s part to call, but to become **one of the chosen or not, is our part** (emphasis supplied). He shows, then that this parable was spoken for the Jews who were called but were not chosen, **as they did not listen** (emphasis supplied).¹⁹

Let us focus on what is not of this world for our salvation’s sake!

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

¹ *The Gospel Commentary (Lessons Taken from the Holy Gospel and from Many of the Divine Writings of Our Father among the Saints, John Chrysostom)* (translated from the Slavonic into English by Hieromonk German Ciuba), Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, Pennsylvania, 2002, p. 390.

² Blessed Theophylact, *Explanations of the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew, Vol. I*, (translated from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade) Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p. 187.

³ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 391.

⁴ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 392.

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 392-393.

⁸ *id.*, p. 393.

⁹ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-188.

¹⁰ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, pp. 393-394.

¹¹ *id.*, p. 394.

¹² Eusebius, *The History Of The Church*, Penguin paperback, London, translation first published in 1965, reprinted with revisions and new editorial matter, 1989, II. 23, p. 60.

¹³ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

¹⁴ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 395.

¹⁵ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

¹⁶ *id.*

¹⁷ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 397.

¹⁸ *id.*, p. 396.

¹⁹ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 189.