Sunday 11 October 2026

For further Contemplation

"You are invited"
From this week's reading that Rev Steve Orme focused upon was Matthew 22:1-14 The parable of the Wedding Banquet. Professor Lance Pope suggests that this parable is not a realistic story as hearers we are invited to appreciate its absurdities. Pope says: "No doubt this is a disturbing story — inflammatory, even". "With the stakes of realism lowered a bit, we can start to answer some questions".
Who is the one depicted as the King and who is the son? You may want to look at the Greek meaning of kaleó noting this kind of invitation is normally to a feast or banquet. So, who is invited and who accepts?

What is going on with the one who hasn't worn wedding clothes? Remember it's not a realistic story, so of course having only just been invited at the last minute they don't have the right clothing. Matthew intended to emphasise that all are invited but once we accept the invitation it is expected we shall live differently. Most commentators speak of the clothing as a metaphor for righteousness. Look at Romans 3:21-24 how does the passage on righteousness relate to the parable? The other passage set for this week is Philippians 4:1-9 which repeats much of what we have read in Philippians 2 & 3 over recent weeks. Read again 3:8,9 which speaks of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ and his righteousness.

Again, Pope gives us another insight to verses 11 & 12. "The story, pushed down and contorted by allegorical demands for too long, rises at the last to assert its own delightful possibility. Within the world of the story as told, the problem with this guy is not that he is not taking things seriously enough. No, his problem is a failure to party. The kingdom of heaven (verse 2) is a banquet, after all, and you've got to put on your party dress and get with the program. The kingdom music is playing, and it's time to get up on the dance floor. Or, as the slightly more sober, but no less theologically astute Barth put the matter: "In the last resort, it all boils down to the fact that the invitation is to a feast, and that he who does not obey and come accordingly, and therefore *festively*, declines and spurns the invitation no less than those who are unwilling to obey and appear at all." Reflect on this possibility.

Blessings,
Stuart

[Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, II/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 588, quoted in Jarvis, Cynthia A., "Matthew 22:1-14: Theological Perspective," Feasting on the Gospels: Matthew, Volume 2, Chapters 14-28, WJK, 2013, 186. Professor Lance Pope, Granville and Erline Walker Assistant Professor of Homiletics, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas]