

Homily
October 15, 2023
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
24:19 -36:27

I'd like to begin with a moment of silence, a time when we can pray. Pray for the people of Israel. Pray for the people of Gaza. Pray for the Palestinians – Christian, Muslim and others. Pray for peace. So let's be silent for a moment in prayer.

Gracious God, it is so difficult to be so powerless, to feel so powerless and to watch violence and death. Help us to pray for those who have died, for decision-makers, and for a sense of peace in the hearts of those who hate. We pray this as we always do, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

There are three threads that run through our readings today. Some all, and some partly:

Abundance.

The universality of salvation.

And, Jerusalem.

We'll start with **abundance**. Every one of the readings, including the Psalm, speak about a rich banquet or a feast. Or an abundance of needs met, as in Paul. We heard of the feast on the Mountain, God's Holy Mountain – rich and sumptuous, provided.

We heard the Psalmist speak of "You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. You have anointed my head with oil. My cup is overflowing."

And then Paul, speaking to his beloved Philippians from prison, reminds them of his thankfulness for their sending abundant gifts to him in his time of need. Not only in prison, but before and after.

And of course, there is the great wedding banquet for the son in the Gospel.

It's a revelation of God's abundance, poured out upon his people who are in distress, who are in need, who are hungry. And it's a thread that really is here in this moment with us. But we'll come back to that.

Jerusalem. Jerusalem is mentioned in the Psalm with an allusion: *Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life...in the Lord's own house shall I dwell forever and ever.* Cared for with abundance and guidance, the Psalmist wishes to be in that place, which is Jerusalem, where the temple, the house of God was.

And then in the First Reading...It's a little hard to catch it, but when it talks about "The Mountain," it's talking about Jerusalem. It's talking about Zion, where the Temple was. Now this is from Chapter 25 of Isaiah, and we would think since it's in the first part of Isaiah, it was originally part of First Isaiah, not Second or Third. However, scripture scholars in looking at Chapters 24 through 27 have decided that the way it's written and in the themes that are there, it really is more about the need of those in exile.

And so, on this Mountain the Lord of Hosts will provide for all peoples. He will provide a rich food. Choice. Juicy. In their time of need. But they are in exile, and they need to be reassured with God's abundance.

Then there's the wedding feast in Jerusalem. That is what it's about, this wedding feast of the king. There is an allusion in the reading of, "when those who refused to come, and killed the servants," that their city was burned.

Now, Matthew's Gospel was written after the burning and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This is an allusion, then, to the destruction that took place. And yet, Jerusalem is still held dear by both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. And of course, throughout this, is the idea of Messianic Restoration. ***God will restore what has been destroyed.***

And the third thread: **the universality of salvation:**

One would suppose that Isaiah 25 was written solely for the Jews in exile. But listen to what it says. Three times it says, "**All** peoples..." Especially when it talks about the *web that is woven over all peoples: death*. Which began all the way back in Genesis Chapter 3, with The Fall in the Garden and the introduction of physical dying to humanity. They are tied.

All peoples.

Throughout that passage from Isaiah the hunger, the peril of death and all distress are focused on, "for everyone, all humanity."

And then Matthew picks that up very clearly in the passage of the first parable that we heard, where they go out and get the strangers, the aliens, the people on the streets – both good and bad alike – and bring them in. This kingdom is about humanity. Not just the Chosen Few. And not just those who feel they should be there, such as those Jewish leaders of Jesus' own time.

So, what are we to do with these readings and those threads?

I would suggest that we go to what Paul wrote to the Philippians and to the second parable, the one about the wedding guest without a garment.

Abundance. Paul found abundance through the care of the community, rooted in the abundance that Christ himself had offered and continued to offer to him every day. That is why he was able to do what he did, even in prison. And the people at the banquet, so wonderfully fed. In their time of need. In Psalm, First Reading and Gospel.

What is our response to such abundance? Paul's was thankfulness and praising and thanking those who cared for his needs.

What is our response?

Could it possibly be like the one who came in and did not bring the wedding garment? Which is a symbol of not only baptism, but also good deeds, the good deeds lived out by those who are even invited off the street.

What is our response to the abundance we have been given?

In faith. In family. In our possessions. That we can share and support not only family, but others.

What is our response to the abundance from God?

And secondly, we've heard of a gift that we have received in Christ Jesus through our baptism and our continued sharing in Sacrament, the Word...It just continues to pour out upon us, that the abundance of God's love for us reminds us that we are gifted with salvation in Christ. But it's not just ours. It is a gift that is offered to all humanity.

Have we embraced the gift we have been given? Would we refuse it to anyone else?

Three threads, stitching our readings together today. – To ponder, to think about this week. Especially the mystery of God's care for us. And the mystery of salvation.

I can't completely explain it. It's a mystery. But it is a gift offered to all.

So, let us be thankful. Let us praise God and ask God to help us receive what he offers.