

Why Do We Flee the Banquet?

The parable of the wedding banquet is one of the most difficult stories in the Gospels. A king prepares a feast for his son. Everything is ready. The tables are set. The food is prepared. Yet the invited guests refuse to come. Their rejection of this invitation and their reactions make no sense. Who would turn down a royal wedding feast? Let alone mistreat those bearing the invitation? In this parable Jesus exposes one of the deepest spiritual struggles of the human heart: ***We are more comfortable earning our place than receiving a gift.***

The Overlooked Spiritual Trap: Resisting Unearned Love

One of the greatest and most often overlooked spiritual traps is ***our struggle with unearned love... We cling to the illusion of self-sufficiency.*** We want to grant ourselves our own self-worth, believing that true value lies in what we earn, achieve, and acquire on our own. We treat money, status, or personal achievements as tools to keep us independent. Never having to ask anyone for help.

The tragedy is that we can be so busy making a living that we forget to make a life. The second best things in life can and often do shut out the best things. Things that are good in themselves blind us to the things that are supreme.

The Empty Backpack

There was a young woman, a devout Catholic who carried a backpack everywhere she went. Her name was Maria. Inside the backpack were notebooks, planners, reminders, goals, and lists. Maria was successful, organized, and admired. Friends joked that she had it together... They believed that her whole life was packed inside the bag she carried on her back. Yet inwardly she was exhausted.

Maria believed she had to earn everything: success, friendship, respect, and even God's love. One evening after a particularly difficult week she decided to visit Church. As she sat before the Blessed Sacrament... She felt like a failure. Plans had fallen apart. Her relationships were strained. The future seemed uncertain. All the focused attention to detail, planning, organizing, and controlling left her lost, alone and frustrated.

She shared these fears and anxieties in a quiet whisper: "Lord, I don't have anything left to give You." For several moments she sat in silence. And in the silence God spoke to her heart...

"Maria, I never asked you to bring Me anything. I only asked you to be with me."

She began to cry. For years she had treated her life and her relationship with God like a performance review. She always arrived with achievements, promises, explanations, and resolutions. That night she came only with her weakness. She began to realize that the most important relationship was with God. That was the supreme good. It was never about accomplishing more. It was about learning to receive.

God's Relentless Pursuit

The Gospel also gives us a powerful insight into how ungrateful the human heart can be. That ingratitude invokes a firm reaction from the king. The king's reaction is startling... but it calls us to look deeper and take note of something. Something that tells us all we need to know about our God... Despite the rejections, the king does not give up on inviting people to celebrate with him.

Our God, does not give up on us. ***He always stands at the crossroads of our life.*** His relentless pursuit of us moves him to send his servants to the crossroads. These places are turning points in our lives where competing priorities clash, uncertainties unfold, and life-shaping choices are made. God – through His servants – waits for us at these life-changing junctions, extending his hand to the lost, desiring to invite them once more, without sorting them into the good and the bad, to share the feast.

The Wedding Garment

The wedding garment symbolizes our right to enter the banquet. Christ himself is our wedding garment. To possess the wedding garment is to put on Christ through holy living (Thomas Aquinas on Romans 13:14). Paul reminds us that we can do all things, in Christ, who strengthens us.

Something to think about

So here is something to think about... We do not have to prove ourselves to God. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Receiving His gifts requires our willingness and the courage to stand before Him empty-handed. The great spiritual secret of the Gospel is that ***hands that are empty are hands that can finally receive.*** So let us pray for empty hands so that God can fill us.

And let us bask in the wonder of God's love... A love that is constantly pursuing us... even when we ignore the invitation, even when we become distracted by the busyness of life, and even when we run from His grace. Thankfully, we have a God who keeps sending messengers, keeps

setting places at the table, and keeps hoping for our arrival. A god who simply wants to be with us. May we seek to desire the best things... the supreme good... which is to be in his presence for eternity.