

Reference Materials for leaders and parents

The following reflections are written by Catholic theologians specifically to help young people understand and process the Mass readings. You can find a full copy of all the Mass readings on the US Catholic Bishop's website (www.bible.usccb.org). The readings covered by this session can be found here: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/101120.cfm>

10/11/20 - Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Reflection – by *Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart*

What a story! It's not your typical wedding. The king is God. The first people invited are those who reject God's way of living. The second people are those who don't expect the invitation but are delighted when it comes, and they accept it wholeheartedly. And the person not properly dressed represents those who may say that they have accepted God's invitation, but whose life choices show that they have not yet really said yes to God.

When have you been among the first group—those who don't care about church, who don't want to be involved with anything “churchy,” and who don't think faith is relevant today? What do you think Jesus would say to you about this attitude?

When have you been among the second group—those who see that faith is important, who try to live their faith by doing works of service, and who aren't embarrassed by their relationship with God? What do you think Jesus would say to you about this attitude?

When have you been among the third group—those who say that faith is important and yet don't really practice their faith. What do you think Jesus would say to you about this attitude?

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Gospel Reflection - by *Greg Sunter*

Who you ate with in Jesus' time was very important—it reflected your own status. To share table with people who were regarded as “lesser” by nature of their lifestyle or illness was seen to lessen the status of other participants. Sharing table was as much a political action as it was a social one. This week's gospel is an important one for understanding Jesus' message of an inclusive kingdom. The king invites all the “right” people to attend his son's wedding banquet but they shame him by refusing his invitation and murdering his messengers. This would have been an extraordinary action in Jesus' time. An invitation to the table of your social superior would not be rejected lightly. To try to save face and regain some honor, the king sends his servants to bring in people off the street—the poorest and least socially acceptable people. The invitation to the people off the street, “bad and good alike,” is a reflection of Jesus' own attitude to sharing table. Jesus ate with those who were regarded as unworthy: tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. It was one of the harshest criticisms of Jesus made by the Pharisees and Scribes: “He eats with tax collectors and sinners!” One of Jesus' strongest messages was about the inclusive nature of the kingdom and he lived it day to day. His inclusive table fellowship was a powerful statement about the fact that the kingdom is an invitation to all—rich and poor alike, regardless of status in this world. This parable highlights the invitation to join in the kingdom of God that has been rejected by the Jewish leaders but taken up by the “lesser” people of society. The wedding banquet is a metaphor for the kingdom of God.

Historical Context

This gospel parable is a reflection of the way in which the message of God has been extended to people through time. The first invitation was extended to the Israelites who initially accepted the message of God but in time lost the focus. Jesus further extended the invitation to the Gentiles, viewed by the Jews as unworthy of such a relationship with God. Finally, within the early Christian communities there were some who, despite belonging to the community, failed to live appropriately and demonstrate their acceptance of the message of God.

Have you thought?—Inclusivity

This gospel parable reflects the inclusive way in which Jesus lived his life. In many ways, Jesus was a scandal in his society because he didn't obey the social boundaries. He was very clear in being inclusive and attentive to those who were normally shunned. Today, those boundaries are just as clear and easily identified but the methods of excluding people have perhaps become a bit more subtle. Who are the "shunned" and "left out" in our society today? Where do the boundaries lie? Who would Jesus be reaching out to and seeking to include in today's society?

Gospel Focus—"How did you get in here?"

In light of the inclusive kingdom metaphor in this passage, the final portion of the gospel may be a bit troubling to readers. When a guest is not wearing a wedding garment he is cast out of the banquet. We might say that being invited at the last minute the guest was unable to find suitable clothing. It is a sign that although he has been an unlikely inclusion in the banquet, he has not made any effort to respond to the generosity of the king and take up one of the cloaks that would have been provided and thus give due honor to his host. This is symbolic of those who refuse to change their ways and do not live as followers of Jesus even when they have been included in the kingdom.

Questions for Adolescents

- Q. In the parable, why do you think the original guests refused the call to attend?
- Q. Why did Jesus tell this parable to the Jewish Chief Priests and elders?
- Q. What is the message of this parable for a modern audience?
- Q. Today, who would be the equivalent of the people brought in to the banquet from the roads?
- Q. What is a practical way in which you can be more inclusive of others?

Questions for Adults

- Q. When have you ever excused yourself from an invitation because it was "inconvenient"?
- Q. What message was Jesus trying to convey to the Chief Priests and elders through this parable?
- Q. What is the message of this parable for a modern audience?
- Q. Who are the people in today's society represented by the guests brought in from the roads?
- Q. What does the expulsion of the ill-dressed guest tell us about responsibilities?

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Theological Resource Links: 9th Grade

- "Don't Be A Robot": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYNeTwWU1RE>
- "The Atheist": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HHc4PeCbs4>