**Parable of the Wedding Banquet**

 **Once more Jesus is talking to the people in the form of a parable. Just as he did in the last two weeks’ lectionary readings. Each of these parables has the same message said in different ways. Heaven is available to all of us who find God and serve him during our lifetime. We serve him on earth because he offers us peace and joy while we’re here on earth. Even in the hardest of times, those who find God can know a peace that passes all understanding. When we know we are loved and cherished, no matter what is happening in our lives, God’s love will always give us comfort and hope.**

 **This time the parable is about a king who gave a banquet for his son’s wedding. But none of his invited guests would even bother to come to the banquet. There’s also a banquet waiting for us in heaven, but we do have to want to attend the banquet. In Jesus’ time as in our time, some people simply may not want to go to heaven. There are probably as many reasons why people don’t want to go to heaven as there are people. Starting with those who don’t believe in God, thinking God is just superstitious nonsense. Other reasons can include people who find money so important, they can’t even hear the call from God offering them heaven. In any time, it’s always good to remember the love of money is the root of all evil. Other reasons why people turn away from God can include that some people feel God has let them down and they turn their backs on God.**

**They don’t even allow themselves to hear the Holy Spirit singing to them in so many different ways. Perhaps because the Holy Spirit doesn’t speak in words, some don’t take the time to hear how the Spirit does speak to us. Yet the Holy Spirit can be heard in moments of pure beauty. Go outside, fall is here, the leaves turn red and orange, it’s beautiful out there. Beauty in our trees is just one way the Holy Spirit can speak to us. Or the Spirit can speak to us in a thing as simple as a memory flying into our minds, bringing a smile to our faces. The sky can bring us joy, just because it’s beautiful when filled with wonderfully different shaped clouds. Music, art, poetry, a good book, all these things the Holy Spirit can reach out and touch our souls reminding us we are the children of God.**

**Many of us have gone to wedding receptions where there was dancing, food, and laughter. We might have even been to a wedding banquet. Imagine for a moment the kind of banquet God would provide for his invited guests. It would be far greater than anything our minds can even fathom. What we can fathom is the best wedding reception any of us have ever been to, and then multiply that wedding reception many, many times over. Just knowing there is a banquet prepared for us in heaven, one better that we can imagine, delights me. I like wedding receptions and to think there is one waiting for us when we leave this earth is a glorious gift to contemplate. There’s only one requirement to attend God’s banquet, to follow him on this earth and to love him with all our hearts, minds, and souls.**

**The reality is God never gives up on any of us; we give up on God. Just like the people in today’s parable refusing to go to the banquet the king had prepared for them. The people who were asked to the king’s banquet were probably like some of us today. A few of them may have refused to go to the banquet because they didn’t like the king’s guidelines. Or they felt the king was all the time asking too much of them. They might say to themselves, “If you’re the king or God why isn’t life perfect?” Yet the truth is God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit depend on us. Remember what Jesus said to all of us, you are the branches; I am the vine.**

**Look what God and Jesus and our close companion the Holy Spirit have given us. This earth, this beautiful earth is in danger, because some would destroy it simply for the love of money. Some people look away while the earth continues to be destroyed and keep on working toward destruction of our earth. Just as the invited guests to the king’s banquet walked away. Can any of us possibly imagine not wanting to go to a wedding banquet? A time of great celebration and the sharing of good food and wine and much love. God is offering a feast, a wedding banquet if we choose to follow him and accept the love he offers every single one of us. None of us can possibly describe heaven, yet it must be a place of supreme bliss and wonder. We do know about wedding receptions and the joy they can bring to us.**

**We need to want to go to the wedding banquet God offers us, by becoming the branches to Jesus’ everlasting vine. When we become a branch to the great living vine of Jesus, he offers us peace and joy while we’re here on earth. Yet remember we can’t sneak into heaven. The person who wore no wedding robe to the banquet was not allowed to stay at the banquet. The one sure road to the banquet feast in heaven is to serve more than ourselves, service to others is our wedding robe.**

**Servicing others means doing for another at least as much as we do for ourselves. It means being aware everyday of how each of us can help one another. A prayer helps me remember I am a branch while Jesus is the vine. It is The Prayer of St. Francis, an all-inclusive prayer, may it help each of us.**

**“Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.” Amen.**