

“The Wedding Party”

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The word banquet is synonymous with food, party, treat, agape; It refers to an abundant table of delicacies where diners enjoy in a festive manner. The banquet in the Bible is used to demonstrate the abundance and generosity of God who from the beginning of creation cares and provides the necessary sustenance for his creation. God knows and understands the basic needs we have, and the biblical narrative demonstrates how throughout history food has been an expression of God's love.

For example, to describe the Promised Land to the people of Israel it is described as a place flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8). Also Jesus in his ministry affirms food as a place of encounter and communion with God and with others; He himself participated in numerous meals and banquets, and proclaimed himself as the living bread that came down from Heaven and gives life to the world (John 6:33).

Like any invitation, the banquet requires acceptance and participation. You cannot force anyone to participate in a party. Jesus, in telling the parable of the king's son's wedding banquet, emphasizes the urgency of responding and participating in God's plan. The invitation comes from the king who wants to share the special occasion with some selected guests. Participating in a wedding means witnessing the love and commitment that two people express publicly. A wedding is a celebration of love and a moment of alliances between families that become a larger family. The king wants his guests to participate in that unique moment and share the joy of the royal family.

The guests declined and rejected the invitation twice without taking into account the insistence of the king who sent his servants to call them after preparing the banquet. Instead of accepting, they rejected, mistreated and even killed some of the messengers. The parable shows the hostility and inability of the guests to recognize the generosity and attention that the king has towards them. It also emphasizes how we respond to the constant invitation that God makes for our own salvation. The fact that the guests gave priority to their lands, businesses

and that they mistreated the king's messengers to death indicates that they have exchanged the banquet for material things or do not want to be associated with the king.

The parable is presented in the last chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, where the moment of the final judgment is narrated in which God will call each person to be judged according to their deeds.

Since this is an invitation, it is up to us to accept and participate. When the king discovers that the first guests rejected him, they are replaced by all kinds of good and bad people. The king sent his servants to call and bring to the wedding hall everyone they found. The king's hospitality has no limits because the wedding is going to take place. This massive recruitment shows the inclusion and acceptance that the king has for all people when offering them the banquet. God's plan moves forward, even over indifference and rejection.

It is important to recognize that God's invitation is for all people. We all have a place at God's banquet. But the invitation must be received with the appropriate clothing: a "wedding suit." There are different interpretations of the "wedding garment." Some scholars speak of the baptismal garment, others maintain that it is "putting on" the teachings and example of the love of Jesus, the son of the king, whose wedding is celebrated on the cross. The new guests will receive all the attention and benefits of the first guests, but even if they come from the streets, they must wear the wedding dress and accept the protocol expected of the king. If they take the opportunity unprepared and without commitment, they will end up as the first guests.

We can say that every encounter with God is a banquet, a unique offering of abundance, forgiveness and grace. Every Sunday God invites us to the banquet of his Son, offers us the delicacy of his Word and delights us with the sacrament of the altar where the Lamb of God, the Bread of Heaven, becomes food for our sustenance. Even if this parable is a metaphor, it shows us the invitation and commitment all of us who God calls to his salvation must have. Accepting the invitation to the banquet and enjoying the king's hospitality is possible when we wear the wedding attire and witness the love of the Son with actions that give priority to God.

When we want to participate in the banquet with selfish behavior, the king will realize that we are not wearing the appropriate dress to participate in his son's wedding. Even if the servants

allow us entry, it is the king who observes and recognizes each one in particular. Therefore, the parable ends by saying that many are called, but few are chosen. We must then work diligently to be among the chosen, recognizing that the banquet to which God calls deserves all our attention and dedication. Amen.