

*Come, for all things are now ready.*

This morning we are presented with a parable that challenges our priorities. But perhaps this will be clearer if we put the parable in plain language, with an eye to the cultural context of Jesus' day. We hear that a rich man invited three men to a great banquet. They had agreed to go. In keeping with the etiquette of Jesus' day, all that now had to happen was that the rich man would send his servant to tell them all is ready. They had committed to attend the banquet, the banquet had been prepared, but now they have changed their minds and they give three poor excuses as to why they cannot come. To our modern American minds we are apt to think that this is not a big deal, these three men had only turned down an RSVP. But in Jesus' day, this is a great insult. They had already RSVP'd, and back then if you RSVP'd you committed to attend the party, there was no getting out of it. This is why the rich man is so offended, these three men have insulted him. However, the rich man orders the servants to go out and compel anyone and everyone to come into the banquet. The three men are no longer welcome, and are forbidden to attend the party.

Now to look at this parable through the lens of Scripture, we know well what Jesus is getting at. The rich man is God, the servant is Jesus, Jesus goes first to the Jews to tell them the Banquet, the Kingdom of God has come, and that all things are now ready. But they are too concerned with pride: the plot of land, with worldly goods: the new oxen, and pleasure: the newlyweds. They weigh these things against God and God's kingdom. These worldly things are more acceptable and fashionable than following after Jesus back then, and the same is true for us today.

We know well that the world puts fashion before God. Just fifty years ago it was fashionable to be an atheist. We find that this is still in fashion, and it is the fashion to replace any religious thought with science. What cannot be proved by the scientific method, historical proof, or reason alone, is not to be believed. It is the fashion to compare and weigh anything and everything against God. Fr. Austin Farrer reminds us though, *THERE is nothing, says the scripture, which can be compared with God. It is not simply that he outweighs anything that is weighed against him, it is that nothing can be weighed against him; it is meaningless even to think it. We can compare two of God's creatures, by asking which has more of God in it; if we compare any of his creatures with God, there is no common measure at all. Yet we are always comparing God with trifles, and preferring them to him. We consider whether we shall amuse ourselves, or pray to him; whether we shall obey his commands, or pursue our own game. Jesus let nothing, not his own*

*human existence, weigh against God, he sacrificed it. We are here because Jesus has added us to his sacrifice. By his grace we throw ourselves in, to testify that God is all.*

Are we as guilty as these three banquet guests? Have we weighed anything against God and preferred it to God? Do we have a habit of refusing our invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven because we prefer material goods, wealth, or pleasure? Are our priorities in order? Jesus teaches us reminds us this morning that we are invited to the banquet, we have a seat at the table, but if we continue to put Him last then we shall wear out our welcome. Thankfully though, the Lord is longsuffering and merciful, we have been given a lifetime to be compelled to come into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The rehearsal dinner for this banquet is this very morning. And this morning we repent of what we have preferred to God, what we have weighed and compared against Him. We accept His invitation into the Kingdom of Heaven, and to a life preferring Him above all others. Amen.