

Am I Willing to Cooperate With God?

Is. 25: 6-10a; Phil. 4: 12-14, 19-20; Matt. 22: 1-14

God is always calling. He invites everyone to partake of a sumptuous banquet. Isaiah describes it this way: ‘...a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.’ (Is. 25: 6) Not only does God provide good food and drink, but He lays out the very best.

Isaiah goes on to say that God’s banquet is in heaven where He will provide everlasting life in His company: ‘He will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; He will swallow up death forever.’ (Is. 25: 7, 8). God will destroy the shroud; the sheet that is used to wrap a corpse before burial. This is even better. Who would turn his back on everlasting life in the presence of God?

Although God calls everyone to salvation, like the wedding guests in Jesus’ parable, many people reject the invitation. (Matt. 22: 5, 6) They think that whatever they are doing is more important so they go on about their own pursuits rather than accept God’s call. They may put the pursuit of money or power or pleasure ahead of God’s invitation. In some cases, not only will they ignore the message, but also they may be abusive toward those who try to deliver God’s invitation. In any case, they refuse to cooperate with God and reject His invitation to the heavenly banquet.

Many of these people may be the religious ‘insiders’; those who are baptized Christians who receive the sacraments regularly. In Jesus’ parable, if the ‘insiders’ do not accept the call, some of the ‘outsiders’, such as: prostitutes, substance abusers and dealers, thieves, and other criminals, may be only too eager to accept God’s invitation.

But Jesus says that some of these people will not be chosen to attend the banquet because they are not wearing wedding robes. When we are preparing to attend a big feast, we change into our best attire; clothes that are fitting for the occasion. If we arrive at the banquet improperly dressed, we are likely to be asked to leave. Those invited to God’s heavenly banquet must prepare by changing not their clothes but themselves. They need to undergo a transformation of repentance; a repentance brought about by love; love of God and love of neighbour. Then they will be fully ready to accept God’s invitation and to enter into His feast.

By willingly undergoing this transformation, the attendees at the banquet are cooperating with God. What is cooperation? It means working together to the same end. Nothing worthwhile can be accomplished without cooperation.

Winston Churchill is considered to be a great wartime leader. But he would be nothing without a legion of followers in Britain who were willing to make the sacrifices necessary to carry out his mission to preserve Britain’s sovereignty and to win the Second World War. All of us can think of great leaders but there are no great leaders without cooperative followers.

If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is the fact that we are all interconnected. The fact that we have been isolated in our homes or in our limited ‘bubbles’ for great periods of time has shown our spirit of cooperation and our willingness to sacrifice for the common good.

God wants to lead all people to salvation but He does not force us. He wants us to willingly enter into the great feast that He has prepared for us. The question for us is: are we willing to cooperate with Him?