

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Oct 12th 2014

In today's readings, the theme of invitation draws us into the freedom that Jesus offers us.

The first reading from Isaiah promises the beleaguered people of Israel that not only will their lives be filled with food and comfort but "the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from every face." This offered the hope that Israel would someday be able to say to God, "let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"

Psalm 23 is universally beloved with God as our shepherd, carrying us with gentle love, guiding us through green valleys and refreshing waters. It paints a picture of a life with God where "only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life."

Paul's letter to his close friends in the Philippian community is a counterpoint to the abundance of the Isaiah reading. Here, Paul assures them that he knows "how to live in humble circumstances." He writes that he has learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. And in a poignant personal note he adds, "Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress." His secret for bearing any suffering is his faith that "my God will fully supply" whatever we need, "in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

In Matthew's Gospel we hear the parable of the king who gave a wedding feast for his son but his invitations were spurned. When he extended the invitation to the people in the streets, "they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests." But one of the guests did not dress in a wedding garment – perhaps as insulting to the host as today coming to a wedding in a bathing suit. When he refuses to answer questions about his dress, the king orders, "Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth."

I couldn't help thinking that this king's response to his guest was a parallel to the way Jesus cares for us and invites us through the story of Lazarus. His beloved friend had died and Jesus stood in the doorway of the tomb comforting Lazarus' sisters. Then he called, "Lazarus, come out!" and Lazarus responded immediately to Jesus' invitation. He came out from the tomb.

Where the king in today's gospel ordered the guest's hand and feet be bound and he be cast into the darkness, with wailing and grinding of teeth, Jesus does the opposite with Lazarus – and with us. He

calls for Lazarus to have his hands and feet unbound from the burial cloths and to come out of the darkness of the tomb into the light with Jesus. Rather than a wailing in the darkness, Lazarus was met with the rejoicing cries of his sisters and all of those who loved him as he came to life again.

Jesus invites us to that summoning back to life, the invitation to unbind ourselves from the things that tie us up. Today we can become aware of how much God longs for a deeper relationship with us, one where we realize that God is not in our minds, but deeply settled in our hearts, just waiting for us to notice. And if we really take the time today to listen, we will hear Jesus say deep in our hearts, “Untie him and let him go. Untie her and let her go.”

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