“Clothe Yourself in Righteousness”

Isaiah 25:6-10a
Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
Matthew 22:1-14

A man brought some very fine material to a tailor and asked him to make a pair of pants. When he came back a week later, the pants were not ready. Two weeks later, they still were not ready. Finally, after six weeks, the pants were ready. The man tried them on. They fit perfectly. Nonetheless, when it came time to pay, he couldn’t resist a jab at the tailor.

“You know,” he said, “it took God only six days to make the world. And it took you six weeks to make just one pair of pants.”

“Ah,” the tailor said. “But these are perfect pants, look at the world!”

Excerpted from “God and Jewish Humor” by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

It doesn’t take very long to look around and see that the world we live in is less-than-perfect. In fact, some might say it is completely messed up. Poverty, crime, injustice, ethnic, racial and international tensions, war, famine, selfishness, social alienation and so on, seem to be so prevalent in our world and country right now that we can wonder if God has given up on us. Have we finally pushed God to the point where he too is searching for or contemplating creating intelligent life somewhere else? Or could it be that our collective human will has pushed God aside for our own self-determined interests? I don’t believe for a second that God has given up on us! I truly believe that there is still SO much goodness, kindness, beauty and Love in the world to remind us, just as quickly, that He has not and WILL NEVER abandon us. Today’s readings affirm the goodness God has in store for us but they also remind us that it is up to us to desire it enough to properly prepare ourselves to receive and partake in it.
The first reading from Isaiah sets the table for us, if you will. Isaiah gives us a sense of what awaits us in Heaven and reaffirms God’s desire and promise to destroy misery and death forever: “the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and pure, choice wines. On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples”, “he will destroy death forever.” These are just some of the promises that God plans to fulfill for us, His creation.

Then in the responsorial Psalm, which I think many of us know by heart, God is telling us that it is Him that not only prepares all these gifts for us but also guides us and protects us from whatever might prevent us from receiving a share of the promises He has made. He is our shepherd and guide.

Finally, in our Gospel, Jesus tries one more time to set those who lead the Chosen People, out of error and back on the path to Heaven. For the last three weeks we have been listening to Jesus deliver parables to the Jewish leadership about the true nature of His purpose and mission. Jesus is trying to make them see that He is not simply a rabble-rouser attempting to usurp the Law but rather that He is the Promised One sent to fulfill it. He is challenging them to see that they are leading themselves and the Jewish people away from the will of God. Their desire to hang on to the power they wield in THIS life is blinding them from seeing and knowing and remembering and striving for the abundance promised by God in the next. And this, in my opinion, is what is happening today in our world. One of the greatest gifts God gives us is Free Will, the freedom to make our own choices in life. God did not create the problems in this world like the tailor at the beginning implies, we did, through our choices. Humanity seems more concerned about power, riches and self-interests in this life that we are forgetting that this world is temporary and transitory, that what is really important is given to us by the Father, through the Son with the Holy Spirit. The Banquet of God is in Heaven and is prepared and awaiting us if we wish to participate.

How many times does God need to search the world for people to invite to this banquet? How many of us find ourselves saying, “I can’t right now” or “I need to focus on my career right now,” or “I’m just not sure, I need proof, what if this is all there is?” God is calling all of us, all humanity, to this banquet because He created us to be with Him!!!! God has shown us and told us of our inheritance, what He has prepared for us. We as
humans need to understand that this offer is important and time sensitive! Nothing in our lives should get in the way or be more important than the banquet prepared for us by God! The choice to attend though is ours. But, if we accept this offer we must also be fully and properly prepared to attend. Acceptance of the offer is acceptance of the terms of the offer and therefore we must rid ourselves, with God’s help and mercy, of those things, like sin, apathy, laziness, selfishness and so on, that make us unworthy guests like the guest in Jesus’ parable without the proper wedding garments. We must clothe ourselves in righteousness in accordance with the divine will.

Throughout scripture, God has laid out His desire for us and the reward that awaits us. He took on our humanity and died for us in order to give us one final and eternal means to attain that reward and all He is asking from us to be properly vested and clothed in Him as a sign of our acceptance of this gift. Beginning in our baptism and in our reception of the sacraments we show God that His invitation is important and that we desire it despite our shortcomings. Gathering here today is one way that we show our acceptance of God’s offer and as such we are rewarded with a foretaste of Heaven here on earth in the Eucharist. This is why we have a penitential rite and listen to the Word of God at the very beginning of Mass, to help us prepare ourselves properly before we enter into the Eucharist: so that we can shed the dirty, ratty clothes of the world in order to put on the appropriate clothes of righteousness tailored for us by God for the Eternal Banquet of Heaven.