

Reflection - Trinity 18

Several years ago I was invited to a charity ball. I was told it was going to be black tie. "That's ok", I thought to myself, "I have a dinner jacket and all the gear" - purchased way back when I was a rather lean undergraduate. Fast-forward several years, and a decade of generous hospitality at parish socials had clearly taken their toll, as I realised to my horror that night when I put on said dinner jacket and looked like I was on my way to a Norman Wisdom tribute evening. I was not suitably attired for the event as I should have been.



This event has led me to have some deal of sympathy for our man in the story who didn't have a wedding robe. Perhaps his didn't fit any more either! Perhaps he didn't have one, perhaps he couldn't afford one. After all, in the previous few verses of this story we hear that the people on the streets were almost rushed into the banquet, perhaps the poor chap didn't even have time to change! However, to think like this overthinks the parable and misses the point of what Jesus is trying to tell us here.

This parable reminds us that all are called into God's kingdom - all of us are called to be part of that great feast which God has prepared for us. But when we respond to this call, we need to make sure we are properly prepared and take this call seriously. The fact that the man was not wearing a wedding robe suggests that he wasn't taking the event seriously, he wasn't respecting what was asked and expected of him.

When we too respond to God's call to come into his kingdom - his kingdom of justice, peace and love, we must be prepared for the fact that this will be a commitment, and sometimes a commitment which will be very costly. For many Christians throughout the ages, this commitment has cost them their friends, family, riches, comforts, sometimes even their lives. Even if this is not the case for us, we must still be aware of the fact that following Jesus is a commitment. Overall, it is a reminder that we must take our faith seriously, that our Christian faith is not a nice little added-extra that we do but is at the heart of who we are.

Now what this doesn't mean is that our whole lives have to be about the church. Some Christians are called to do more in the life of the church, sometimes as ordained or authorised leaders, sometimes in other kinds of ministries, all of which glorify God. And although I believe that we should all help in the life of the church and we should all work together, for many folk their call will be to live out their faith in the world, to be God's

servants, soldiers, messengers, watchers, holy ones, prophets, in the things they do throughout the lives. We must not limit God's economy to simply the life of the church. For many, if not most, people, the call to be serious about their faith will be focussed in the world. Remember, God is not only interested in us when we are on our knees or singing hymns, but is interested in all we do: our work, our recreation, our families. We certainly do glorify God in prayer and worship and in things we do in church, but we also glorify God whenever we do what is right and just.

I think there is a danger, though, that when we think about living our lives of faith in the world, we imagine that we must be like the rather clichéd uber-keen born-again Christian, where every single conversation, no matter how trivial, comes back to Jesus, where we feel that we have to convert every single passing acquaintance, where we feel we have to be shouting in the streets. But living our lives of faith in the world, being serious about following Jesus in how we live our lives is something which can be much simpler, humble and a true reflection on who we are. Being serious about our faith can be found in things like leading a good life, striving to be a good spouse or partner or parent or grandparent, giving to charity, doing voluntary work, helping people in need. It's about



evangelism in an open and honest way, telling our stories and how our faith helps us, inspires us and give us joy, but also telling of the challenges as well - it's about being honest in sharing the Good News.

As I've said before, we do this not to make God love us more, but as a reflection of the love and grace which God has blessed us with. And we find that when we do this, when we take our faith seriously and live it out in those wonderful ways, we become more fully alive, we become more the people who God has truly made us to be, and find that those wonderful words of Jesus from St John's Gospel "I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance" become more and more true.

Rev'd Tom