

Year A 28th Sunday Ordinary Time
Is 25:6-10a; Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6; Phil 4:12-14, 19-20; Mt 22:1-10

Emilio G. Chávez, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary
<http://bible-explainer.com>

The theme in this Sunday's readings is the bounty of God for those who hope in him. "Bounty" comes from "bonus," "good." God is good and generous, God fills us with happiness and good things. The image of being with God is that of the banquet, a joyous feast where one eats to the point of satisfaction and a feeling of well-being. Thus the first reading from the prophet Isaiah describes the "eschatological banquet," a great feast prepared by God in the End Time. This is an image of "salvation," when all tears will be wiped dry and there will be no more suffering; or ignorance of God, because a thick veil or covering that prevents people from understanding what God is like and how they should behave will be removed. This is like the "revelation," the "un-veiling," of God, as savior. Then all those who hoped in him will realize that their hope was not in vain.

The image in the psalm is a bit different, that of God as shepherd, leading his flock to green, fertile pastures, so that it lacks nothing. Also God's rod and staff "comfort," strengthen, his faithful one, who thus need not fear. This faithful one knows only good things from God's hand; all things work for the good for him or her. And so St. Paul can, in Christ, adapt to the vicissitudes of daily life, to abundance and scarcity. Elsewhere he said that it suffices to have enough to eat and dress, that greed is idolatry (1 Tm 6:6-10; Col 3:5). How ignored and despised is this teaching today, in this country and in the world! People ruin themselves and their nations through greed and not sharing, not living this banquet of the Kingdom.

So Jesus in the Gospel portrays the Kingdom as a banquet, something Christ himself enacted in the many meals he hosted with sinners and other outcasts. In Lk 14:12-13, he had recommended that we invite not the rich, but the poor who cannot pay us back, to our banquets. Here Matthew seems to be addressing the situation with Israel: they were the invited guests of honor, so to speak, but refused the invitation to God's eschatological banquet for his Son. So "Plan B" was put into effect: invite everyone, good and bad alike, the banquet hall must be full. But lest anyone think that it is a "free

ride,” one crucial requirement must be met: one must “put on Christ” (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27, the garment of a baptism truly lived out), in order to participate in this banquet.