

The comic detective enters a dark and silent factory and finds in the beam of his flashlight a safety pin on the floor. He concludes that this must be a significant clue, but he doesn't realize that he is in a factory that makes safety pins. So much for his significant clue.

Today's Gospel story is one that is so rich in itself that we can easily focus our attention on any of its many themes and apparent teachings and never consider that it is part of a greater message being told in St. Matthew's Gospel. As Jesus begins today's parable of the Wedding Feast, he has already enter Jerusalem to the hosannas of the people, he has cleansed the Temple of the money changers, and this parable concludes his series of stories condemning the religious leaders of his day. First condemns them for not believing John the Baptist's message of repentance in the story of the two sons. Then he condemns them for not producing the fruits of the Kingdom, but rather abusing and murdering all the prophets and finally the son sent to point the way. This was last week's Gospel about the wicked tenants of the vineyard. Today's Gospel condemns them for hearing the invitation to banquet of salvation, but being too preoccupied with their own interests or even being hostile to the good news. Jesus goes on to tell them that while this is a sadness or even an outrage to God who made the Jews his Chosen People, God can choose others and call them to the banquet. It is significant, unlike the safety pin, that Jesus remarks that many are invited, or in some translations of the Bible, many are called but few are chosen. This is an identification for the Jewish people, that they are a people God has chosen as his own. The chosenness remains forever, for it remains our Christian belief also that once God bestows a blessing He never takes it back. We may refuse or reject it, but God doesn't take it back. As I said, the chosenness remains but God is often displeased with the leaders and leadership.

So Jesus condemns the Jewish leaders for the lack of true faith, their lip service, and their abuse of their authority, what does that mean to us today? Not much really, but Jesus' parables have much

more in them than just words for the scribes and Pharisees of his day. Thanks goodness, otherwise, what would we preach about?

In today's parable, we have that rather disturbing vignette in which the King is greeting the guests and comes on someone dressed inappropriately for the wedding feast. The man offers no explanation. That's important. It isn't that he is so poor he has nothing else to wear. It isn't that he was rushed in off the street and didn't have time to change. He has no excuse and is reduced to silence. He came in without the proper attitude and his cloths reflected his lack of respect. There are consequences for the lack of proper respect or bad behavior. This is true today just as it was in Jesus' time. A king could have a person bound head and foot and thrown in a dungeon. Our ways of letting a person know they have crossed a line aren't quite so direct, but we get the meaning across all the same. And the king made sure the man knew exactly which line he had crossed and gave him a chance to explain.

So, let's ask the difficult question. Is there any area in your life were you are not giving God his due respect? How might a person be disrespecting God like this? By refusing to take one of His laws or commandments seriously. I have decided it's okay to lie, cheat and steal in business. No it isn't, even if "everyone else is doing it" it's still wrong. I can be promiscuous sexually or view pornography and it's perfectly alright. No, it isn't. And if you are married, it's a breaking of your wedding vows. Those are only two example, but there are many, many more. We often surround such refusals of God's law with mental gymnastics to justify why it's okay for me to do what I want to do.

Another way we may not give God his proper respect is by wanting to take God's job away from him. The most obvious is when we judge others. Who are any of us to say someone else is right or not right with God? As soon as I do, one thing is certain; I, the one judging, am no longer right with God.

Another way of taking God's job from him is when we sit in judgment of God. Ever found yourself thinking, how can God let this

kind of disaster happen? Whether it's covid or hurricanes, floods or famines, if we serious abrade God for letting "this" happen, we sit in judgment of God as if we have a better understanding of how the whole universe operates than God does. To feel pain with those who suffer is not a bad thing and to wish that pain away is good and pray it away is a good prayer. And while in pain or grief to lash out at God, God understands and let's that go. He is a friend who lets us vent the emotion of the moment. But we must move past the hurt or grief and not let it become simmering anger at God. Nor can we allow ourselves to sit in judgment of God. We are never that wise and all knowing.

Like the man who got himself tossed from the wedding banquet, if we are guilty of these sins, remaining silent in our arrogant pride isn't going to help us one bit. Admitting our mistake and asking for forgiveness and help to change will meet with a much more favorable response. Remember, we know the king in this story. He's got a kind heart and he is quick to forgive, as long as your repentance is sincere and your willingness to change is genuine. The king, our God really does love you.