

## Sunday Sermon - 11.10.20

Delivered by Rev'd Stephen Monsiegnur

### Reflecting the Gospel

One of the greatest challenges I have experienced in my life came with being a parent. As a parent and qualified adult it is my responsibility to facilitate and guide the training of my apprentice adult children so they are adequately prepared to take their own place as qualified adults in the community. There are times when they are easy students, but there are many times when they believe they know better, when they choose another path rather than one framed by experience. The outcomes vary, the need for reparation varies but what is always common is that my children reach a point where they have realised the link between their level of experience, the decisions they have made and the nature of the outcome. As a parent we must at times challenge the path our children choose, you might say dare them to try our path, but we are unable to force them, this is what Jesus has been doing.

Today and over the past few weeks Jesus with his experience and understanding has, just as a parent or guardian, been trying to prepare the chief priest and elders, he has been highlighting to them and anyone listening that they were misunderstanding Gods will. That the decisions they were making and the examples they were giving to those who looked to them for leadership were wrong and destructive.

Like a parent, Jesus realising the problem, knowing the solution and understanding the urgency of the situation was trying various methods to bring the chief priest and the elders to a more mature or enlightened level of understanding. Jesus was not being punitive, he was expressing the type of love a parent has for a child, a love that feels the pain when the child is hurting, a pain made worse by the anxiety as the parent must, after all their effort, simply stand by as the child makes the choice for themselves . . . even and especially knowing it is the wrong decision. Jesus is daring us to follow him.

Jesus has been telling anyone but especially those of us in places of leadership, those of us to whom others look to for examples and guidance, just how to respond to the word of God, how to live if we are to accept the invitation and attend the wedding feast, to share in the feast of eternal life in God.

#### Living the mystery

In reality, no matter what efforts a parent makes the child will at some point choose an alternate path. I suspect that all of us can reflect on our own lives and recognise a time when we experienced that very thing. It is a requirement of becoming an individual. For many of us it happened more than a few times. But this is what makes the love of a parent, a guardian so unique, for even when they are hurt by us they continue to love us, they continue to forgive us. My mother explained to me many years ago when I was being rather insistent that I was right, that she did not like the person I was becoming but that I was her son, her child and no matter what she could never stop loving me, especially when I was lost.

God so loves us that to make possible a new relationship, a fresh start, he sacrificed Jesus his son for us. Even when we continue to refuse the invitation, God simply continues to send it again and again. God regardless of our response continues to love us. When I reflect on my life I can identify increases in the intensity of the invitations correlating with the periods when I have been most lost.

Interestingly, how many people would honestly decline an invitation to dinner with a Prime Minister, or Governor General if we received one, You being here today at this service will shortly be invited to share in the great banquet, the Eucharistic feast, yet how easy is it to ignore or simply take for granted Gods invitation to salvation. The chief priests and elders certainly believed they were entitled to salvation and this arrogance blinded them. I feel that we sometimes lose sight of just where the invitations are in our lives, and we must be reminded to look in the most unexpected places.

Yes we are all invited to the Eucharistic feast and presumably by being here today it is your intention to participate, but do we truly participate, do we truly appreciate the invitation being offered to us?

We are invited to a feast of generosity through many opportunities to share our gifts with others who are forced to struggle more than ourselves. Do we respond to requests for help without care for the cost of time, energy or other resources?

We are invited to a feast of relationships with family, and all other acquaintance's yet, how do we truly respond to those whose beliefs or practices challenge our own? Are we willing to see past the differences and willingly share our values and spirituality?

Which is the feast you will choose? Will you come and am I invited?

Of course Jesus is not saying life will be easy, quite the opposite. Following him will require sacrifice, for some even death, but the reward is transformation, living in God at the eternal feast.

December marks the beginning of that great season known as World Series Cricket. Today marks the third test and the journey toward the end of the series for Jesus but not the chief priests and the elders of the community. However, unless they change their play the score will read Chief priests and elders -0; Jesus -1.

It is obvious by now to the all who are listening to Jesus, that they are being sternly warned of the risk of losing their birthright, their salvation if they do not come to follow Jesus.

It is obvious that in order to live in the "kingdom of Heaven" Gods kingdom of salvation we must heed Jesus and live by the message growing ever deeper in relationship through him with God.

We choose conversion when we face what keeps us from growing in strong relationships, when we examine our priorities and keep God at the centre of our lives instead of pursuing finite material possessions, when we put the good of other before our own desires. Through prayerful and reflective reading of the Gospels we deepen our trust in Jesus as we learn more of him and in turn recognizing his presence in those around us.

The World Series is not a single game but many and the effort is ongoing. Amen.