

The woman was a single mom in the inner city. Her four year old son was her pride and joy and it hurt her to have to leave him at the day care center while she went to work and then picked him up at night on her way home. A week before his fifth birthday, she decided to invite some of his playmates from the daycare to a party in his honor. When the time came for the party, not one of the five children invited came. The mother was crushed because she knew how important this was to her son. He had never had a party before.

Thinking fast the woman ran across the hall to the apartment of an elderly couple and asked them to come. She called a coworker and asked her to come, too. At first the little boy cried when he heard his friends were not coming but after awhile he started to enjoy the people who had gathered.

In many ways this story is similar to the parable that Jesus told us in the gospel today. If we look carefully at the parable about the rich king we can recognize a trait that Jesus used in all of his parables. This story like the others has three levels of meaning.

First we have the **LITERAL MEANING**: The story is simple: a king holds a wedding feast for his son. When the invited guests don't show up, the king replaces them with substitute guests. Then we have the second level: The **INTENDED MEANING**. This would be the meaning that Jesus intended for the people he was instructing. If we take a closer look at the parable we see that the king represents God. The wedding feast is the Kingdom of God and the invited guests are the Chosen people, those who made a covenant with God. The substitute guests are the sinners and the Gentiles of Jesus' time. They are the people who

accepted Jesus after God's Chosen Ones rejected him.

This parable is telling the men and women of that time that the Kingdom of Heaven is now open to all people including the Gentiles. Understand that this is a very radical teaching for the Jew of that time.

Okay so we have the literal meaning and the intended meaning, the third and final level: The **PRACTICAL MEANING**. In other words how does this story apply to us in this day and age? To discover an answer to that question we need to skip forward to the surprise ending. Were you surprised by the way that the King treated the guest who was not dressed for a wedding feast? Most believers are. This man is expelled from the festivities because he is not wearing a wedding garment. One has to wonder why Jesus added this detail to the story. Who does the individual represent?

Many scholars have wrestled with this and the prevailing thought is that this guest answered the invitation to the banquet but decided to attend on his own terms, not the king's terms. He is someone who refused to conform to the expected etiquette of someone who would be in the presence of the King.

For us it means that if we plan to accept God's invitation to come and sit at his banquet table then we have to come on God's terms not on our own. That wedding garment represents the life that we bring with us at the end of time. The hope is that our garment which covers us in the Kingdom of Heaven is made up of the concern that we showed to others especially the needy, it stands for the service that we offer to our brothers and sisters while we are alive. If we want to enjoy the banquet and all that it will offer then we have to be hard at work now, here on earth

weaving the spiritual garment that we will be clothed in. It is a garment constructed of generosity, patience, and love. It will not fade, shrink or tear; its purpose is to reflect the goodness that we brought to this world while we waited to be called home.