

**Christ the King—St. Stephen
Scripture Reflection
28th Sunday of Ordinary Time
2026—A Cycle**



What do I see?

“God’s kingdom,” Jesus said, “is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son.” Matthew 22: 1-14

When I reflect on the above image, what memories revive about my own experience of personal and family celebrations? What is my favorite way to celebrate a special occasion or happy memory? Can I recall any celebration that went sour for me? How did I deal with it?

Photo curtesy of [Gaelle Marcel](#) via [unsplash.com](#)

Opening Prayer

A Prayer of Thanksgiving in Hard Times

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

1 Thessalonians 5: 18

Sometimes, Lord,
when life gets me down...
it’s hard to find anything to be thankful for.
Open my eyes to see the gifts you’ve given me.
Thank you for loving me enough...
to come to earth and die...
so I can live with you forever. Amen.

Source: Crosswalk.com—adapted from an online article “5 Ways to Be Thankful When Life Isn’t Perfect” by Wendy van Eyck.

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 25: 6-10 “Here on this mountain, God-of-the-Angel-Armies will throw a feast for all the people of the world.”

Psalms 23: 1- 6 “I’m not afraid, when you walk at my side.”

Philippians 4: 12-14, 19-20 “I’ve learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances.”

Matthew 22: 1-14 “God’s kingdom,” Jesus said, “is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son.”

Introduction to the 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time

It’s party time! In this weekend’s Scripture readings, there’s an abundance of feasting and joy. We’ll see, however, that not every party has a happy ending for *some* guests.

Isaiah proclaims, “Here on this mountain, God-of-the-Angel-Armies will throw a feast for all the people of the world.” The prophet calls us to open our eyes and see there’s something to celebrate, even in our darkest moments.

St. Paul, writing to the community at Philippi, says with confidence, “You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need....” Based on his own experience, Paul says we can find God’s generous gifts, no matter how trying the circumstances of our lives. This grace, he says, allows us to *see in the dark*.

Matthew cites yet another of Jesus’ meaning-packed stories. “God’s kingdom is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son.” This cautionary parable contrasts the joy and celebration of a wedding feast and the fickleness of invited guests, who make excuses not to attend. So, what begins as a joyful, celebratory story turns ugly when these same invitees turn to violence in their refusal. There’s also the mystery of a chosen guest being thrown out for not wearing proper “wedding attire.” Let’s explore together what that’s all about.

Reading from the Book of Isaiah (25: 6-10)

“Here on this mountain, God-of-the-Angel-Armies will throw a feast for all the people of the world, a feast of the finest foods, a feast with vintage wines, a feast of seven courses, a feast lavish with gourmet desserts.

“And here on this mountain, God will banish the pall of doom hanging over all peoples, the shadow of doom darkening all nations. Yes, he’ll banish death forever. And God will wipe the tears from every face. He’ll remove every sign of disgrace from his people, wherever they are. Yes! God says so!

“Also at that time, people will say, ‘Look at what’s happened! This is our God! We waited for him and he showed up and saved us! This God, the one we waited for!’

Let's celebrate, sing the joys of his salvation. God's hand rests on this mountain!"

Personal Reflection

This unknown author wrote long after the original Isaiah died. He asked his fellow Jews—and us—to open our eyes to see beyond the hardship and suffering of the moment. He wants us to see and believe that our God is a giver of gifts, ready to offer us everything we need to be *truly* happy in this life. He sees deliverance from slavery as a mountaintop experience for the former captives.

"This is our God! We waited for him and he showed up and saved us!" These words exemplify Jewish piety in the hope-filled period following their return home from exile in Egypt.

— *How do I respond when frayed nerves cause friction between me and those around me? To whom do I turn for solace and moral support on my darkest days?*

Psalm 23 (1- 6)

God, our shepherd and host: a psalm of confidence

I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

God, my shepherd!

I don't need a thing.

You have bedded me down in lush meadows,
you find me quiet pools to drink from.

I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

True to your word,
you let me catch my breath
and send me in the right direction.

I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

Even when the way goes through
Death Valley, I'm not afraid
when you walk at my side.
Your trusty shepherd's crook
makes me feel secure.

I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

You serve me a six-course dinner
right in front of my enemies.
You revive my drooping head;
my cup brims with blessing.

I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

Your beauty and love chase after me
every day of my life.
I'm back home in the house of God
for the rest of my life.
I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

Personal Reflection

Over the course of years, the Shepherd-Lord took flesh and died for his sheep—thus he led the way through a dark valley to green pastures beyond. We follow without fear. If we sometimes falter like lost sheep, he will carry us home in his loving arms (see also Luke 15: 5-6). To such a shepherd we sing our hymn. The brim-ming cup he offers was dearly bought: “Drink! This is my blood that shall be shed.”

— *How confident am I that God is not off doing other things, instead of walking right beside me through the storms of my life? Who or what bolsters my confidence?*

From St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians (4: 12-14, 19-20)

“I’ve learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I’m just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I’ve found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am. I don’t mean that your help didn’t mean a lot to me—it did. It was a beautiful thing that you came alongside me in my troubles....

“The gifts you sent with Epaphroditus were more than enough, like a sweet-smelling sacrifice roasting on the altar, filling the air with fragrance, pleasing God to no end. You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need, his generosity exceeding even yours in the glory that pours from Jesus. Our God and Father abounds in glory that just pours out into eternity. Yes!”

Personal Reflection

In this passage we encounter Paul at his best. He has reached the end of his beautiful and touching letter to the community at Philippi. He has experienced everything in his lifetime (before and after his conversion). He sums up his life experience in these telling words, “Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.”

Anyone who has lived long enough to reach their “senior years” has known times of want and plenty, hunger and satisfaction, riches and poverty (maybe not in cash, but in life experience). Too often, we sell ourselves short, focusing on what we can’t do, rather than what we can. Paul rejects that sort of dismissal, affirming for himself, “You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need.”

“Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.”

— *At what point in my life did I think, “I just can’t do this,” or “I just can’t do it anymore.” What happened next? If I fought my way through that dark place, how did it turn out? How much credit did I give to God? Or did I say, “Wow! Look what I just accomplished!”*

The Gospel According to Matthew (22: 1-14)

“Jesus [told] still more stories. ‘God’s kingdom,’ he said, ‘is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son. He sent out servants to call in all the invited guests. And they wouldn’t come!’

“‘He sent out another round of servants, instructing them to tell the guests, “Look, everything is on the table, the prime rib is ready for carving. Come to the feast!” They only shrugged their shoulders and went off, one to weed his garden, another to work in his shop. The rest, with nothing better to do, beat up on the messengers and then killed them. The king was outraged and sent his soldiers to destroy those thugs and level their city.

“‘Then he told his servants, “We have a wedding banquet all prepared but no guests. The ones I invited weren’t up to it. Go out into the busiest intersections in town and invite anyone you find to the banquet.” The servants went out on the streets and rounded up everyone they laid eyes on, good and bad, regardless. And so the banquet was on—every place filled.

“‘When the king entered and looked over the scene, he spotted a man who wasn’t properly dressed. He said to him, “Friend, how dare you come in here looking like that!” The man was speechless. Then the king told his servants, “Get him out of here—fast. Tie him up and ship him to hell. And make sure he doesn’t get back in.”

“‘That’s what I mean,’ Jesus said, ‘when I say many get invited but only a few get in.’”

Personal Reflection

When the king came in to greet his newly invited guests, he noticed “a man who wasn’t properly dressed.” In telling this fictional story with a message (parable), Jesus had something in mind that went *deeper* than society’s expectations for proper attire. But what?

Gaining entrance to the wedding reception still depended on their coming with an attitude of openness to change in *every* way. That was their “ticket” to an otherwise free admission. These guests, like each one of us, needed to clothe their *interior* lives and prepare their hearts through generous acts of loving service, as modeled and demanded by their host. In other words, the new guests had to leave their sins and any long-held vices at the banquet room door. This particular guest failed by lacking that interior resolve.

— *What is my own personal “ticket” to eternal life? When in my life did I come to this realization? This very day, how am I “paying the price” of my future entry into a blessed eternity?*

For Inspirational Listening and Watching

Watch

Gospel reflection on Matthew 22: 1-14, the [28th Sunday of Ordinary Time](#) (Cycle A) by [John Michael Talbot](#) (2 min.)

Listen

[Psalm 23](#) like you've never heard it before (Outlaw Gospel Blues) by [Christian Paramedic](#)

Read

[A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#) by [W. Phillip Keller](#)

Written by a lifelong shepherd this book gives new meaning to this ageless shepherd psalm, enriching your trust in and love for the Lord who maintains constant watch over you. Keep in mind, too, that King David started life as a lowly shepherd. (Currently free for Amazon Kindle Unlimited members.) *[Note: I read this book and came away with a whole new understanding of this cherished psalm.—AJG]*

Preview of Next Weekend's Scriptures

Readings for the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 45: 1, 4-6 "I am God, the only God there is."

Psalm 96: 1, 3-5, 7-10 "Sing God a brand-new song! Earth and everyone in it, sing!"

I Thessalonians 1: 1-5 "I, Paul, together here with Silas and Timothy, send greetings to the church at Thessalonica."

Matthew 22: 15-25 "The Pharisees plotted a way to trap Jesus into saying something damaging."

Closing Prayer

(edited, abridged, and adapted for use here)

I Come to You

Father God,

I come to you worn and weary...

from the hard times I'm walking through.

I come to you seeking shelter.

I know I will find security and rest in your shadow.

Father God,

my circumstances are no match for your great power.

Thank you for being my safe place.

Thank you for being a fortress I can trust.

Father, I patiently wait for you to help me work things out.

Let me rest in your faithfulness.

Amen.

Source: No longer available online

Unless otherwise indicated, the Sunday readings are from *The Message* Bible
translated by Rev. Dr. Eugene H. Peterson (Catholic Edition)
Peterson's translation of the Bible is a highly interpretive paraphrase,
celebrated for its readability.
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