10.18.2026 Homily
Fr. Chris Calerdon, S.J.

Weeks ago, we heard a parable about a landowner who goes out and hires throughout the day, reminding us that God goes out and seeks us. The next Sunday, we heard the parable about the two sons; one who promises to do but doesn't. And the other, who says he won't but then does. Reminding us that faith is to be lived out. Last week, we heard the parable about the tenants who, losing sight of goodness and focusing on themselves alone, seized, beat, and killed the landowner's servants and son.

Jesus' parables cover the spectrum of the human experience. And today is no different. We have another parable. This time about a banquet. Not simply a meal. Not a hurried dinner. Not something we squeeze into an already crowded calendar. A banquet. A celebration prepared with care and generosity. A wedding feast for the king's son.

And the remarkable thing is that the banquet is already prepared before anyone arrives. The tables are set. The food is ready. The celebration is waiting. And the invitation goes out.

That, I think, is one of the most beautiful images of what God is doing in our lives. God has prepared something for us. God desires communion with us. God desires our joy. God desires that we know ourselves as loved, that we live in relationship with one another, and that our lives become a response to that love. And God invites us.

But God does not force us.

That is an important distinction. The Christian life is not fundamentally about trying to earn our way into the banquet. It is not about proving that we are good enough, holy enough, prayerful enough, or put-together enough to deserve a place at the table.

The banquet is grace. The invitation itself is grace. The love that makes us capable of responding is grace.

And that brings us to Saint Paul: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

We often hear that verse as a kind of Christian motivational slogan—as though Paul were saying, "With enough faith, I can accomplish anything." But that isn't really what Paul means.

Paul has just been talking about learning how to live with abundance and with need, with plenty and with hunger, with having much and having little. He has learned, through all of it, that his strength does not ultimately come from his circumstances. It comes from Christ.

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In other words: I can receive what God is offering. I can endure what life brings. I can respond to God's call. I can love when loving is difficult. I can forgive. I can begin again. I can give myself away. Not because I am strong enough on my own. But because Christ strengthens me. And that changes how we might hear the Gospel.

There is a rather unsettling moment at the end of the parable when the king discovers someone who has come to the banquet without a wedding garment. It can leave us wondering: Wait a minute. If the king invited people from the streets—people who had no reason to be prepared—how can he suddenly expect them to have the proper clothing?

But perhaps the wedding garment is not about arriving perfectly prepared. Perhaps it is about what happens once we accept the invitation. God does not ask us to arrive at the banquet already finished. God asks us to enter into the relationship, to allow ourselves to be changed by the love we encounter there.

The invitation requires a response. It asks something of us.

If we accept God's invitation to the banquet, then eventually that invitation begins to shape the way we live. We begin to notice the person we have been ignoring. We become a little more patient with our spouse. We call the friend who is lonely. We forgive something we have been carrying for too long. We become more attentive to the needs of our children. We make time for prayer. We become willing to say, "God, what are you asking of me?"

That is the wedding garment. Not perfection. A heart that is gradually being transformed by grace.

And Isaiah gives us another beautiful image of what God is preparing: "a feast of rich food and choice wines." But notice what happens at God's banquet. The veil that separates people from one another is destroyed. Tears are wiped away. Death is swallowed up. God comes to save.

The banquet is not simply about what God gives us individually. It is about God gathering us together and restoring what is broken between us. And so perhaps the question for us this week is not simply, "Am I going to the banquet?" We are already invited.

The deeper question is: How am I responding to the invitation? Because it is entirely possible to be invited to the banquet and still be too busy to notice.

We can become absorbed in our work, our responsibilities, our worries, our schedules, our screens, our plans. We can become so focused on what needs to be accomplished

that we miss what God is offering right in front of us. And sometimes we can even miss God's invitation because we don't feel worthy of it.

We think: *I should have prayed more. I should have been better. I should have forgiven sooner. I should have my life more together.*

But the Gospel tells us something different. God's invitation does not come after we have become worthy. It is God's invitation that begins to make us whole. God meets us where we are and invites us forward. And when we cannot respond on our own, Christ strengthens us.

So perhaps this week, take one invitation seriously. Ask yourself: Where is God inviting me right now?

Maybe it is an invitation to slow down and be present to someone you love. Maybe it is an invitation to forgive. Maybe it is an invitation to ask for forgiveness. Maybe it is an invitation to make room for prayer. Maybe it is an invitation to serve someone who needs you. Maybe it is simply an invitation to believe, again, that you are loved by God.

Whatever it is, we do not have to respond perfectly.

We simply have to say yes—and trust that the God who prepares the banquet is also the God who gives us the grace to come to the table.

"I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

Not because I am enough on my own. But because God's love and grace is enough.

The banquet is prepared. The invitation has been extended. And Christ is already strengthening us to say yes.