

[Spirituality](#)



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Some of you may remember way back at the beginning of the liturgical year, we had a Gospel where Jesus is just beginning his public life and he declares to the people, "The reign of God is at hand. Change your lives." Jesus indicated by that his commitment to proclaim this reign of God, and then to show us how to change our lives so that we can join with him in bringing about that reign of God.

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 25:6-10A

Psalms 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Matthew 22:1-14

[Full text of the readings](#)

Today's Scripture lessons help us to first of all, understand what Jesus means by the reign of God, but then also, how we might have to change our lives to make that happen, to bring about this transformation of our world into what we can call the reign of God. The reign of God — what we mean by that is God's love guiding, directing everything, all of us living according to the way of God's love.

Our first lesson from the book of the prophet Isaiah describes what the reign of God will be like when our world is transformed. It will be a time when everyone has a full human life, all that we need to live. No one is starving, being deprived. Isaiah declares, "On this mountain God will prepare for all peoples a feast of food and choice wines. On this mountain God will destroy the pall cast over all the peoples, the very shroud spread over all nations. Death will be no more. God will wipe away the tears from all cheeks and eyes. God will take away the humiliation of God's people everywhere. The whole human family will live in peace; for God has spoken, "On that day you will say, 'This is our God. We have waited for God to bring God's saving love to us. Let us be glad and rejoice in that saving love.' "

The reign of God — that's what God holds out for us if we change our lives. A couple of Sundays ago we had a passage from Isaiah where God was speaking through

Isaiah and declaring, "My ways are not your ways; my thoughts are not your thoughts. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my thoughts are above your thoughts, my ways above your ways," reminding us through those words of the prophet Isaiah that the change we have to make in our lives is going to be profound. It's going to change our lives dramatically so that we live in a way according to God's ways, God's thoughts, not according to our ways, our thoughts.

Just last Sunday we had Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi urging us, "Have this mind in you (this mind, this attitude, this way of thinking), which was in Christ Jesus, who though he was God, did not think his divinity something to be clung to, but emptied himself to enter into the human family to become one like us in every way, even giving himself over to death and even the ignominious death of the cross." He taught us one of the hardest things about God's ways — to give up hate, give up violence because on his cross, Jesus reached out in love even to those who were putting him to death. No hatred on the part of Jesus, only love.

That's a profound change. It's a change, though, that Jesus had taught us during his preaching. He taught us that you must love your enemy, do good to those who hate you. That is extraordinary, and yet that is what Jesus taught and how Jesus acted throughout his whole life. So when we hear this call, "Change your lives according to God's ways," we look to Jesus for our model and find all of the ways that we must change.

Yet, when we listen to today's Gospel and we hear Jesus saying to us as he does in the Gospel, which I share with you now. (This is the last week of his life and he has demonstrated in a dramatic way the evil of the church leadership buying and selling in the temple. Remember how he knocked over the tables? "You must not make my house a den of thieves; it's the house of God." And Jesus, during that last week of his life, enters into discussions with the religious leaders trying to show them that God's ways are not our ways; God's thoughts are not our thoughts.)

Here is a parable that Jesus says: "Here is another story that shines light on the reign of God. A king celebrated the wedding of his son. He sent his servants to call the invited guests to the wedding feast, but the guests refused to come. Again, he sent other servants ordering them to say to the invited guests, 'I have prepared a banquet, slaughtered my fattened calves and other animals and now, everything is ready. Come to the wedding!' But they paid no attention and went away, some to

their fields, some to their work. Others seized the servants of the king, insulted them, killed them. The king became angry. He sent his troops to destroy these murderers, burn their city. He said to the servants, 'The wedding banquet is prepared, but the invited guests were not worthy. Go instead to the crossroads and invite everyone you find to the wedding feast.' The servants went out and at once in the streets they began to call people together, gathered everyone they found, good and bad alike, so that the hall was filled with guests. And the king was pleased."

Jesus concludes the story, "Know that many are called, but few are chosen." That story of today's Gospel is very important for us as we reflect on this call to change our lives. Those who were invited began to make excuses. Some went away to their fields, some to their work. Others even seized the servants of the king and killed them. This causes us to reflect on what has been our response to this call to change our lives, to follow Jesus, to try to follow, as Jesus shows us, the ways of God, the thoughts of God. Have we been quick to follow or do we find ourselves maybe not explicitly making excuses (maybe sometimes you do), but probably more often, we just kind of hear this word of God and then instead of taking it in, absorbing it, letting it change our way of thinking and our way of acting, we go on as we were.

The teaching of Jesus doesn't really influence how we act in our everyday life. So the call of the Gospel today is a repeating of the call to change our lives, not to make excuses, not to be indifferent to the word of Jesus, but to think about how we change our lives. Maybe what we can do today is at least pledge ourselves during this week and every Sunday when we hear the Gospel and then the week following to commit ourselves to think deeply about what Jesus has spoken, what he has taught us, how he has acted, what he has shown to us of how to be a disciple and gradually to begin to change.

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There are so many ways in which we need to change our lives, to reach out, to become real proponents, active workers for justice, for peace, for reconciliation, to bring love wherever we go, to help influence our national policies so that even as a nation, we contribute to the wellbeing of the whole world. To nurture our planet — the gift that God has given to us, try to spread wealth and goodness and peace throughout the community of nations that we be, yes, a leader of nations, but not a leader threatening war, a leader of nations trying to work through diplomacy and

love to make peace happen instead of threatening to destroy another nation with bombing that would be in excess of anything we've ever known.

We've heard that threat; we must act against it. There are so many ways in which we have to try to change our lives. But again, start at least with this commitment to listen to Jesus, to look at how Jesus acts, and try to follow him in every aspect of our life individually and as a parish family, as a community, as a community of nations. Once more we've heard this call, "The reign of God is at hand. Change your lives." Perhaps this time we will be serious in following out this command of Jesus, and the reign of God will break forth gradually until it's fully present in our world.

[Homily given Oct. 15 at St. Leo Church in Detroit. The transcripts of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton's homilies are [posted weekly](#) to NCRonline.org. [Sign up here](#) to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.]