

14th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Dear brothers and sisters!

Today's Gospel parable about the bride and groom addresses the question: why are there so many unbelievers in the world? Why are so few people going to the temple of God? Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself gives the answer. He says, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14).

From the very beginning of human history, God has called man to awaken from sinful sleep and not to do evil. Through Moses, He gave the people the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. In the Commandments He addresses us, saying, "I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods besides Me." The commandments of God instruct us how we should live on earth. Keep these commandments, "that you may live and prosper, and may have long life in the land which you are to possess" (Dt. 5:33).

We hear the voice of God through our conscience. It calls us to live the truth of God, to love our neighbors, to sympathize with the needy, and to do no harm. Through the gospel we hear the voice of the Son of God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ. He calls all people to His Kingdom. And this is the Kingdom of love, peace and joy. God summons us to His Kingdom through the Church. In the Church man can always hear the voice of God, His call to good, to peace, to eternity, to light, to repentance. Yet, it is no coincidence that Slavic folk wisdom says: "No one crosses himself until the lightning strikes." In other words, we are indifferent to God's call and mercy until the storm comes.

In today's Gospel reading, the essence of the excuses of the indifferent guests can be reduced to three main points: changing circumstances, changing priorities, and lack of time. Centuries have passed, but excuses have not changed. Let's consider their excuses.

Changing circumstances: Each of the guests initially agreed to come to dinner, but circumstances suddenly changed. One bought land; the second bought oxen; and the third had gotten married. It is no different today, when pastors meet people on the street, we often hear: "Father, I wanted to come to the service, but"

Changing priorities: The guests in the parable refused because they had matters that seemed more important to them. One had bought land and planned to increase his own income. The second bought five pairs of oxen and had to test them. The third one had married and wanted to enjoy the warmth of family. And it is no different today. Work and concern for material prosperity is one of the most common excuses of indifferent Christians. Many also seek to justify their failure to answer God's call because of family commitments and obligations.

Lack of time: Notice the words of the guests in the parable. They never have time. The one who bought land claims "I need to go and inspect it." The one who bought the oxen doesn't have time because he has to try the new animals out. Lack of time is a universal excuse, because life passes on, and no one ever has enough time. Parents do not have enough time for children. And when children grow up, they do not have time to visit elderly parents.

Having examined our excuses, let's consider Jesus's words that "Many are called, but few are chosen." Why are few chosen? The reason lies not with God, but in human indifference.

There were also few chosen ones during the great flood, because people did not want to listen to the sermon of the righteous Noah, who for 120 years called the then-sinful world to repentance and to God. Only four people escaped the terrible fire in Sodom and Gomorrah, because thousands of people lived in terrible debauchery.

Those events were a long time ago, but how is it today? God invites us to His Kingdom in various ways. He calls to our minds, our consciences. He calls us through our sufferings and crosses. He calls us through His servants, the priests. In all these ways, God is calling and saying "Come, all things are ready for you in the kingdom of God!"

Unfortunately, many people reject the Kingdom of God. The voice of the Church bells every Sunday and holiday solemnly invites everyone to the church for worship, but many ignore this invitation and do not want to come to the Holy Liturgy, giving various unjustified reasons. Unfortunately, very few people seek comfort in Jesus, they seek it more in the news, whether on television and radio or on the Internet.

Dear brothers and sisters! The Lord calls each of us to His Kingdom. He calls us throughout our lives. The Savior turns to us and says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I enter his house and dine with him, and he with me "(Rev. 3:20).

Those who open the door of their hearts to God are blessed. They already feel, here on earth, the Kingdom of God. Such people can be sure that they belong to the elect. The Lord called them, knocked at their hearts, and they responded. Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us not be deaf to the knocking of the Lord in our hearts. And let us not close our ears lest we hear the voice of God.

Therefore, let us often ask ourselves: do we have a living faith? Let us pray to the Lord that the parables of the Gospel may touch the strings of our souls and our hearts more often. That they may make us think deeply about the true meaning of life, especially today, when there is so much spiritual indifference among people. Let us hasten to God's feast, which He prepares for us in the Divine Liturgy, in order to be not only called, but also chosen!