

Sometimes we just don't measure up. I went to the strawberry tea and bake sale yesterday at Colinton, and it brought back memories of many years ago. I was in my mid-twenties, and had gone out the night before to the bar. I wasn't a drinker, and am not really one right now – I may have a drink once every few weeks or so. I was contemplating a move at work, and had gone there to meet someone and discuss the move with them, get their advice. While there, he orders two jugs of beer...

When I got home, I remember walking down the hallway and the walls on each side were being very friendly, gently holding me up as I sort of 'slow-motion ricocheted' off first one side and then the other.

The next morning, I felt terrible. The slightest noise was a thunderstorm. My stomach felt like it was in a perpetual rollercoaster, with me ready to throw up at any time. Nausea was bubbling away, just waiting to eagerly burst the surface in a volcano of bleah. I was green. Benita looked at me and said “You're hungover! You got drunk!” Which I vehemently denied. I said “I was not drunk! I remember everything! I remember getting home, and bouncing off the walls ...” I did not help my case ...

She laughed and said “Have fun serving at the strawberry tea!!!”

I groaned. We went to the strawberry tea, which the men were serving at. So Benita, 'innocent' one that she is, told all the ladies sitting at the tables “David's not feeling well – he was out last night drinking.” Oh they were bad! WAITER! DAVID! CAN I HAVE MORE TEA??? THIS TEA ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH! CAN YOU STEEP IT LONGER? HOW ABOUT ANOTHER SANDWICH PLEASE? OH, YOU'RE NOT FEELING WELL? THAT'S REALLY TOO BAD! SHALL WE PRAY FOR YOU?

That is the only time I have ever found myself having drunk so much. I didn't enjoy it, and I don't want to repeat it. Sometimes however, we just don't measure up – either by doing something wrong (like I did) or not understanding something, or whatever – we just don't measure up.

The disciples in Jesus' time had a hard time measuring up – just like, dare I say it, we disciples today do as well.

I think Jesus is shocked that Thomas states “Lord, we do not know where you are going...”, and then angered that Philip follows up with “Lord, show us the Father and then we shall be content.” for Thomas and Philip would have been well versed in wedding ceremonies of his day. Jesus is probably thinking: “Three years! Three years I have been with this group, and they STILL don't get it!! What am I to do!!!!!!!!?”

Let me explain: In the time of Jesus, when a couple was to be married:

- 1.) The father pays for the bride and establishes the marriage covenant. To see if the proposal was accepted, the young man would pour a cup of wine for his beloved and wait to see if she drank it. This cup represents a blood covenant between the two of them: literally, “till death do us part.”
- 2.) If she drank the cup she would have accepted the proposal and they would be betrothed. Once the woman drank the cup, she was betrothed – it was her “I accept this offer.” The young man would then give gifts to his beloved, and take his leave. The young woman would have to wait for him to return and collect her.
- 3.) The son returns to his father's house and prepares the bridal chamber. Before leaving the young man would announce, " I am going to prepare a place for you ", and "I will return for you when

it is ready". The usual practice was for the young man to return to his father's house and build a room there. He was not allowed to skimp on the work and had to get his father's approval before he could consider it ready for his bride. If asked the date of his wedding he would have to reply, "Only my father knows." (Just as Jesus said in Mark 13: "But as for that day or hour no one knows it – neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son – except the Father.")

- 4.) At a time determined by the father, the groom fetches the bride to bring her to his father's house.
- 5.) A private wedding ceremony.
- 6.) In the privacy of the bridal chamber the bride and groom consummate the marriage.
- 7.) The celebratory marriage feast to which many are invited.

Now, let's relate that to Jesus:

Remember what Jesus said at the last supper with His disciples: 'And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many. I tell you the truth, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'" Once the disciples drank the cup that Jesus offered, they were accepting to be one with Him as the Father and He are one, just as a husband and wife are one.

That was part of step 1, and step 2. Now Jesus is at step 3: He is telling the disciples "I go to prepare a place for you, a room in my Father's house. I shall return for you when my Father tells me that the room is ready."

And just as a groom could tell his wife "you know the way that we will go", she would know, for even if she didn't know where the house was, the way would be with her husband – to walk with Him, to go back to the place he had prepared, to serve Him and His family and be one with Him all her life. She knew what she was getting into! Jesus is saying to His disciples: "we are now betrothed. I will come and get you, and take you with me. We shall be one, and you shall be part of the heavenly Father's family."

And Thomas and Philip effectively say "We don't have a clue what you are talking about!" So Jesus in exasperation replies: "How can you not know the way? I am the way! The way is a life with me! How can you say you don't know the Father? I am the Heir! I speak on behalf of, and with the authority of, the Father! If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father! We are one!"

After the groom takes the wife back to His father's house, there is a small private ceremony and then the two consummate the marriage – after which there is much feasting and rejoicing. And in that feasting, they again drink wine and rejoice in each others' presence. Just as Jesus promised, the next time He drinks will be at the great wedding celebration, when all are joined together in His Father's house, the kingdom of God.

Peter said "You once were not a people, but now you are God's people." -- and that's true. We were a collection of individuals, members of families, even of a tribe or nation – but we were not a people. Now, however, we are GOD's people – we are Christ's bride. Every time you come up for communion and eat of the bread and drink of the wine, you renew your acceptance of Jesus' offer, and in effect state to Jesus: "till death do us part." Did you know that?

Rich Mullins has a song which goes "You are on the verge of a miracle, just waiting to be believed in. Open your eyes and see..."

You are a miracle. No matter how much we don't understand it, no matter how much we don't measure

up – God has taken us for His bride. To be one with Him. To have His eternal love, to walk with Him. Jesus says “ask for anything in my name, and I will give it to you.” Well, I ask for, in Jesus' name, that you realize fully what it means to be the Bride of Christ, to be loved to the depth of God's heart – and that you live in the Fathers' house, and change the world.

Today is Mothers' day. We often get many of our traits and identity from our Mothers, and many of us have at times had our Mothers on pedestals and loved them dearly. In many ways, Mothers define a family more than Fathers do, for while Fathers are often out and about doing things, Mothers are nurturing, caring for the children, and raising everyone up. I ask for God to bless all you Mothers, and fill you with His love, healing, and wholeness. You are your Mothers children, yes – but even more than that, you are God's children. You are God's bride. You are God's people. You are God's love. So just as we would seek to please our Mothers when we were younger, let us strive to please our Heavenly Father. Walk with Him in that love, and as I said, see the world changed.

One more thing: “What was the Fathers' price that He paid for the bride?” you may ask – well, God paid a steep price. He paid with the very life of the Son, His life on the cross. But you know what? He still thinks it was worth it. YOU – you were worth it.

Thank you God.

Happy Mothers' Day everyone.