

## MARK 2:18-20

## CELEBRATE

<sup>18</sup> Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. <sup>20</sup> But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

My experience with weddings, both as a minister and a father, is that "fast" can only be applied to two aspects of the event: the speed at which the preparation time passes, and the rate at which your bank account empties. The last thing you associate with a wedding is fasting or denying yourself food and drink. The marriage ceremony in the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, teaches that marriage between a man and a woman *signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church* (p. 423). Therefore, a wedding, as the celebration of the initiation of the marriage, which is the symbol of our relationship with Christ, is a reason for celebration. Likewise, at the time of Jesus, the coming of the bridegroom established the beginning of the celebration (Matthew 25:1-13).

As an Easter people, we know that Jesus was referring to himself as the bridegroom, who now present would later be taken away. There is a time appropriate for celebration and feasting, and a time which calls for mourning and fasting. Throughout the Old Testament, God describes his relationship with Israel in terms of a marriage, with God as the bridegroom and his people as his bride. So, here in the person of the Christ, the bridegroom has arrived, and he is gathering the guests. The great banquet of the kingdom is commencing, so the celebrating must begin. The religion centered on waiting and wondering, on preparation and purification, is replaced by the religion of acclamation and celebration – He is come, Alleluia, alleluia. It is a celebration that even the shadow of the cross cannot diminish, for the grave is empty and he is risen, Alleluia, alleluia.

**Lord God, you are the focus of my worship, help me to always worship you as you lead me to worship and not by blind and unthinking habit. Even during the seasons of my life in which fasting is appropriate, flavor my fasting liberally with the knowledge of the joyful hope that I have in you. Amen.**