

Text: Matthew 22:1-14

Title: The Parable of the Wedding Feast

Truth: Being invited to salvation is like being invited to a royal wedding.

Date/Location: February 19, 2017 and August 17, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

Let us start to focus on this message by asking ourselves what does God want us to "get" from this portion of His word? What are we to learn? What are we to put to practice? How are we to change? How should our affections be moved?

Other "banquet" passages occur in Matthew 25:1-13 (the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids), and Mark 14:16-24 (the parable of the great banquet).

In this particular parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a VERY IMPORTANT upcoming wedding that you are invited to attend. The story will demand you to consider some questions. Do you care about the wedding? The king? His son? Your own life?

I. The Story in the Parable

- A. A king planned the marriage ceremony and dinner for his son.
- B. The king invited a whole list of people.
- C. People refused to come to the wedding. They were "unwilling." Their refusal is very unreasonable.
- D. The king re-invites the same people, but this time by the hand of other servants. He gives more details about the

preparations that he has made, and commands them to come to the wedding. He is urgent that they must come.

- E. People made light of the invitation and most went about their business on their farms or elsewhere. What they did was highly offensive and disobedient, because this invitation was not from one of their peers. This invitation was from the king. An invitation from the king amounts to a command.
- F. But some of the invitees went so far as to abuse and kill the servants who brought the message. You would think they were summoning the invitees to appear before the king for some hearing at which they were in jeopardy of life and limb. In fact, he was just inviting them to a joyous celebration! Why would they treat the messengers so badly? It is just a wedding invitation! Even if those messengers were insistent, their irritation factor could never rise to the level of killing them.
- G. The king's patience runs its course and his interest in justice begins to take hold. He ends up destroying the murderers and their city.
- H. Now, some of those he had invited are dead; others had gone their way, so there was no one left. Now he tells his servants to go out and find anyone they can so that they will have someone to celebrate with. His invitation is widened to include almost anyone. All were invited, including bad people and good ones.
- I. Happily, many people came and the wedding hall was filled. What an exciting time that was! The original guests are out, but the new ones are in.

J. The king arrived to the hall after his servants had assembled everyone. As he was reviewing the crowd, he found a man there who was not dressed properly. He did not have on a wedding garment. This man was invited—he was not crashing the party. But when asked why he did not dress properly, he was speechless. He had no excuse.

1. This point requires some explanation because someone may wonder why the king is upset at the man. Perhaps he is poor? Maybe he had to come quickly to the wedding because of the urgency of the invitation?
2. What conservative commentators suggest, and I agree with, is that the king himself was providing the necessary garments for the wedding. This makes sense because of how unexpectedly he invited people, and where they were coming from—some traveling on the road. The guests were hastened to the wedding and had to exchange their grubby every-day clothes for something fit for the wedding of a king.
3. The fact that he did not have any excuse shows us that this understanding is plausible. Since he truly had no excuse, it must be that provision was made for him, and he refused it. Bad idea.
4. In any case, he knew what was expected, and through either apathy or more probably through open rebellion, he came "as he was." He was saying that the king was not important to him; the wedding was not important; the son was not important; the occasion or expected decorum was not important. He was all

about himself. He was not subject to the king. He refused the king's provision.

- K. In a second act of judgment (the first was in verse 7), the king commanded his servants to tie up the man and throw him out. At first, this may seem harsh. But consider what he did—he refused to be subject to the king's gracious offer. He behaved completely inappropriately in view of who the king is and what the king was offering. The man is thrown into "outer darkness" where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
1. I have heard this downplayed such that the outer darkness is not that bad; the weeping and gnashing of teeth basically represents some kind of regret at not being in the "inner circle."
 2. To the contrary! Recognize that this outer darkness is not the *inner darkness* or *good darkness*. It is as far from the light as possible. It is a place of torment, of loss, of punishment. It is not a place of blessing for this man who rebelled against the king. This is like the dungeon, only worse.

II. The Lesson of the Parable

- A. Very clearly we can see the explanation that Jesus gave in verse 14, that the kingdom of heaven is like this wedding feast in this respect: many are invited to the banquet, but only few are actually there after all is said and done. The situation is like sieve or a funnel, or an upside-down lamp-shade. Many are invited, but coming out of the other end of the invitation process are many fewer than are offered entry. See Matthew 7:13-14.

- B. Why is this? Is there a reason we can discern in the king of the story that would make this the case? Nothing else is told to us about him, but in the absence of other data (like he is a mean and nasty ruler), his gracious offer of inviting people to his son's wedding stands open to many. He was willing to invite anyone who would share in his joy and the celebration of his son's wedding. As the king represents God, we *know* there is nothing wrong with the King!
- C. The funnel could be a straight-through tube without any restriction. But because of the wicked hearts of the people, the field is narrowed from those invited to the fewer that are actually called in and allowed to remain. There is no evil in the king that causes this narrowing. The problem is in the recipients of the message.
1. Go back and review verse 3 and 5-6. Some people were not willing; some also made light of it and counted their own business more important; and others killed his messengers. And in verse 12 we learn of one more bad response: no excuse for refusing the king's provision.
 2. In the book of Acts 17:32-34 we read of three responses to the good news: some believed, others mock, and other say they will listen some other time. But there are in fact many varied responses and excuses that are offered.
- D. Back up for a second and think of it this way; the invitation to the marriage is like the invitation to participate in the kingdom of heaven. Entry into the wedding is like entry to the kingdom of heaven. And how does one enter the kingdom of heaven? Jesus teaches us

the entry requirement in John 3:3, 5. In order to receive spiritual life, we must believe in Christ (John 3:15-17). He also teaches us that we have to await His arrival to earth when He will establish the kingdom. But once we have been born again, we are shoe-ins...we are actually citizens of that kingdom. So, receiving the invitation to the wedding in the story is like embracing Christ by faith. Doing that ensures our participation in eternal life.

1. A wedding is a festive occasion. Why would you *not* want to go? Especially for the king's son!
 2. Furthermore, the invitation of the king amounts to a command for his subjects. Do you think you can avoid the matter?
 3. The parable is closer to future reality than it may at first appear. This is because when Christ returns, there will in fact be a wedding supper. It is mentioned in Revelation 19:7-9, at which the bride of Christ will be presented to Christ. The bride is the church (Eph. 5:32 and context; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:9-11). So the invitation we Christians offer to you is to not only be an observer at the great wedding supper of the King's Son, but to also be a *participant*! This is amazing.
- E. The garment that was refused by the wrongly-attired man at the wedding pictures a garment called the "robe of righteousness" mentioned in Isaiah 61:10. This garb is not literal, but is rather symbolic of imputed righteousness, which is what God gives to every believer the moment they trust in Christ. It is this righteousness that makes us outfitted for heaven. It is this garment that we get in exchange for our sin. If we neglect this garment, we are behaving like Romans 10:3. We need to

be like Paul and shun our own righteousness and take that provided by Christ (Philippians 3:8-9). Else, if we refuse to admit our spiritual poverty and take that gift of God in Christ, we will be thrown out and into utter darkness and misery forever.

F. The "many called/few chosen" theme is found elsewhere in Scripture. In theology, we call this the difference between the general call and the effectual call. The general call is *providential*. It happens whenever the gospel is preached. The command to believe Christ goes out, and it is often resisted. The effective call is *supernatural*. It is when God draws an individual to saving faith in Christ (John 6:44). In this, the person is not convinced against their will, but by God's grace feels a deep internal desire and compulsion to obey God's invitation. It is the "I know I *have* to do that" kind of feeling when you know something is the right thing to do. It is the consequence of a miracle that God works on your heart, a miracle of opening your eyes to the desirability of Jesus, of His salvation, of new life, of regeneration, of sins forgiven, of freedom from sin.

G. We should also note that the parable shares a similar judgment theme as the one in Matthew 21:43. The initial invitees of the king are like the nation that will have the kingdom taken from them.

Conclusion

Christians worship the God of heaven. He exists as one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He made everything that exists. He deserves our obedience and worship because He created us. But we have turned away from God—humanity does not love God, does not

worship God, does not obey God. In short, we have sinned and fall short of God's expectation for us. The consequence of our departure from God is death—physical and spiritual—forever.

But God is very gracious. Even though we have departed from Him, He has sent messengers to invite us to come back. The basis on which we can come back is that His Son Jesus the Messiah came and took upon Himself the penalty that was due to each and every one of us. That's what the cross is all about—an exchange of filthy garments for pure and clean ones.

Jesus was the best revelation of God because He Himself is God the Son. After He died for our sins, He arose again from the dead. He tells us that if we are born again, we too will share in his victory over death. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You can respond that way, or you may choose to respond like some of the bad characters in our story. You are free to do the latter if you wish, but just be aware of the consequences.

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