

**“The Invitation”
Matthew 22:1-14**

Introduction

Jesus spoke to them again in parables. It says, “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them.” The Parable of the Wedding Banquet is the third of three consecutive parables in Matthew’s gospel. Each pointedly accused the religious leaders of refusing the fulfillment of God’s covenant with his people. These stories with a sharp point even show how the long-awaited, long-hoped for Messiah would bring judgment upon them.

As you listen to the parable, what will you hear? Who is the king? Who is the son? Who are his servants? Who are the bad and the good, the many invited, the few chosen?

Here we go. LISTEN to (read) Matthew 22:1-14.

- 1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying:
- 2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.
- 3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.
- 4 “Then he sent some more servants and said,
‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner:
My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready.
Come to the wedding banquet.’
- 5 “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business.
- 6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.
- 7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.
- 8 “Then he said to his servants,
‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.
- 9 So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’
- 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find,
the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.
- 11 “But when the king came in to see the guests,
he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.
- 12 He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.
- 13 “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside,
into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’
- 14 “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Do you get the meaning? Who is the king? God the Father. Who is the son? Jesus himself. Who are his servants? The prophets. What city? Jerusalem. Who are the bad and the good? Any and every one among the Gentiles. The chief priests and the Pharisees – they knew immediately what Jesus was saying.

I. Invitation Refused

“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.”

The invitation had gone out. You were excited to be invited to a royal wedding. Even the wedding clothes would be provided by the king. Back in the first century, the invitation was like a “Save the Date” card so commonly used today. But when it was announced that “everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet,” you paid no attention, even refused to come because you were too freakin’ busy.

“Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.” Our response to this story should be, “That’s crazy! Who would be dumb enough to stay away from a king’s banquet?” Yet, how many of our decisions are a refusal to come to Christ or a rejection of his presence with us?

Reminds me of a 1974 song by Harry Chapin that was mentioned at our Men’s Retreat last weekend. It’s called “Cats in the Cradle.”

My child arrived just the other day/ He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away/ And he was talking before I knew it
And as he grew he'd say "I'm gonna be like you, dad"/ "You know I'm gonna be like you"
And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon/ Little boy blue and the man in the moon

"When you coming home, dad?" "I don't know when"/ But we'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then
My son turned ten just the other day/ He said, thanks for the ball, dad, come on let's play
Can you teach me to throw, I said, not today/ I got a lot to do
He said, that's okay and he walked away, but his smile never dimmed
It said, I'm gonna be like him, yeah/ You know I'm gonna be like him

"When you coming home, dad?" "I don't know when"/ But we'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then
Well, he came from college just the other day/ So much like a man I just had to say
Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?/ He shook his head, and he said with a smile
What I'd really like, dad, is to borrow the car keys/ See you later, can I have them please?

"When you coming home, son?" "I don't know when"/ But we'll get together then, dad
You know we'll have a good time then
I've long since retired and my son's moved away/ I called him up just the other day
I said, I'd like to see you if you don't mind/ He said, I'd love to, dad, if I could find the time
You see, my new job's a hassle, and the kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, dad/ It's been sure nice talking to you
And as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me/ He'd grown up just like me/ My boy was just like me

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon/ Little boy blue and the man in the moon
"When you coming home, son?" "I don't know when"/ But we'll get together then, dad
We're gonna have a good time then.

Occupations easily become preoccupations. As someone said, “You can be so busy making a living, you fail to make a life.” Was that or is that like you when it comes to Jesus in your life?

II. Invitation Accepted

It says, “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business.” Some people say, “I’ll come to church when and after I clean up my act. Right now, I’m not good enough.” Some who do come to church say, “I come, but I still don’t feel good enough. I should be better by now.”

There are many people who say, “I am good enough. I’m a good person. So, I don’t need Jesus.” And, there are those who don’t care. “What’s the point of being good? It doesn’t matter. I’ll be whatever I want to be.”

So, what do you think? Are you good enough? That’s not the point of the parable. Notice how the king does it all. He gives the party; he sends servants to invite.

God invites everyone to a celebration, to celebrate salvation. The wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ, and unless you exchange your self-righteous clothes for it, you’ll miss the wedding feast. When the philosophies and religions of the world are stripped down to their basics, we either find people ignoring or flat out rejecting God. Or they are trying to work their way toward God. Or we find the cross of Christ. The cross is the only way to salvation. For his crime against the king, the improperly attired guest is thrown out into the darkness. For their crimes against God, there will be many who will be consigned to “outer darkness”—existence without God for eternity. Christ concludes the parable with the sad fact that “many are invited, but few are chosen.” In other words, many people hear the call of God, but only a few respond to it.

This story is really two parables in one. Those refusing to come are the Jewish religious leaders. Then, Jesus tells this: “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

Jesus may be projecting to the church, the sequel to Israel. The man was dressed inappropriately. He didn’t take the feast seriously. We would think that no one would do that – go to a wedding in cutoffs and a tee shirt while the wedding garments were right there hanging on the wall to put on.

Yet, Jesus would say, “Isn’t that exactly what you’re doing?” This man stood out like a sore thumb. And it was more than a sore thumb for the king.

The Bible speaks to the church: “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14).

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self. Be made new in the attitude of your minds; and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

“The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So, go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.” Do you deserve to come? Am I worthy enough to accept the invitation? Again, that’s not the point. The king says, “Go! Invite anyone you can find in the world, among the Gentiles. outcasts, failures, problem people, the unimpressive. And ever since, the church is filled with the good and the bad. In other words, are you receptive to Jesus or not? The kingdom of heaven, the banquet is open to anyone who will set aside their own righteousness and by faith accept the righteousness God provides in Christ. Put on the wedding clothes and come to the feast.

Conclusion

People can be too busy for the feast God offers. Here are some reasons you were too busy to pray today:

1. You wake up feeling rested, then realize your alarm should have gone off an hour ago.
2. Your spouse is away on a two-day business trip and it has lasted all week.
3. Your teenager shaved . . . the left half of his head.
4. Your bills are due and your toddler hid the checkbook.
5. You’re in charge of games for the church youth night tonight.
6. Your dog is throwing up.
7. Your toilet’s overflowing, but at least you found the checkbook.

Reasons you really should pray today? All of the above.

To summarize the point of the Parable of the Wedding Feast, God sent his Son into the world, and the very people who should have celebrated his coming rejected Him, bringing judgment upon themselves.

You can spurn the gift of salvation and cling instead to your own good works. People can come to church but not take faith all that seriously. But from the parable, we know where this leads.

Let us pray together.

Hebrews 4:12-16

The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are— yet he did not sin.

Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.