

The Parables

Part 3 – The Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1-14

As we consider this portion of Scripture, it is good to remember that strange things happen in parables. They use real scenarios, but are still made-up stories with a point. Part of the point of every parable is judgment. At this point in His ministry, Jesus has moved from didactic teaching to telling confusing stories as a sign of judgment upon Israel.

In this series of three parables, Jesus is quite clear about the judgment he is speaking. He says, “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.” (Matt. 21:43) He is not hiding the fact that He is speaking to the Pharisees. The Pharisees realize that Jesus is speaking these parables about them (Matt. 21:45) and they don’t like it (Matt. 21:46). In response, they try to trick Him into speaking against Caesar so they can get Him arrested (Matt. 22:15-22).

It is helpful that we have the Parable of the Sower fresh in our minds from last week’s sermon. The sowing of the seed in that parable informs how we understand the way “calling” or “inviting” is used in this parable. Here “calling” is not being used in the sense of the effectual call of God upon the sinner. We should not read predestination or irresistible grace into this parable. Rather this “calling” is akin to the sower scattering seed all over the place, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. It is the “external call” that is in view here not the “internal call” of the Holy Spirit.

Main Idea: “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The invited (verses 1-7)

- Verse 2 - This is a royal wedding. It is a big deal for the whole country. Invitations would have been coveted. To not go would have been a slight to the king himself and even seen as disloyalty to the country.
 - “The marriage image so powerfully expresses the union between Christ and his church that it is the capstone of the whole biblical revelation. Consequently, when Jesus tells a parable about the wedding of the king’s son he is dealing with the very pinnacle of history, the main purpose of all creation.
 - So if we hear when the king sends out his servants to invite people to the wedding that the invitation is refused, we are dealing with a rejection of the whole purpose of God. The patience of God is revealed in that when the first invitation is refused he sends out a second” (Mark E. Ross, *Let’s Study Matthew*).
- Verse 3 – This literally reads “invite the invited” in Greek.
 - There is an indication that these people know that an invitation will be coming. It is like they got the “save the date” for this royal wedding, but then decided they would rather not show up.
 - This could be likened to seed that falls on the path/hardened soil. Many hearers of the gospel receive no benefit. There is no internal call to respond to the external call.
- Verse 4 – See the marvelous grace of the king! He issues a second invitation. He sends out other servants to do the inviting in case there is some possibility that the message was rejected because of the servants.
 - Notice how the king has prepared the feast at a cost to himself. “My dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”

Cast of characters:

- ❖ King – God
- ❖ Son – Jesus
- ❖ Servants of the king – the prophets, John the Baptist and maybe the Apostles
- ❖ Those initially invited – the Jews, specifically the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees
- ❖ Those gathered from the streets – Gentiles (non-Jews) and Jews alike who make up the visible church
- ❖ Those clothed in wedding garments – the Elect. The Chosen who make up the invisible church who are clothed in Christ.

- He has made every provision for us in Christ to come. All we need to do is come.
- Verse 5 – The invitation to this royal wedding is met with indifference and violence.
 - Some of the invitees find farming and other business more pressing than going to the feast.
 - Violence against the king’s servants is violence against the king. Their treatment of the servants shows hatred for the king and for their country.
 - John 1:11 “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.”
- Verse 7 – Now we see the judgment of the king. He will not tolerate this rejection of himself and his kingdom.

The gathered (verses 8-10)

- Verse 8 - “If someone refuses the feast, he does not stymie Jesus. His feast goes on, for he issues more invitations” (Daniel M. Doriani, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew, vol. 2*).
- These gathered people are the visible church.
 - From the Westminster Larger Catechism:
 - Q. 62. What is the visible church?
 - A. The visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children.
 - The benefits of being a part of the visible church are the food and fellowship of the feast. We delight to feast on the Word of God. We have a steady diet of it. We also enjoy the blessing of our commonality – our communion – in Christ.

The clothed (11-14)

- Verse 11 – “When the king came in to look at the guests” carries with it the idea of the final inspection of God as He judges the visible church.
 - The same king who provides the feast at his own expense and gathers in people off the street would logically provide wedding garments for his guests. After all, it is a wedding!
- Verse 12 – The king addresses the man as “friend” as Jesus addressed Judas when Judas came to betray him in the garden (Matthew 26:50).
 - The man without a wedding garment is speechless. He does not plead his own merit. (“See all the good things I’ve done.”) He does not plead Christ.
 - The Evangelism Explosion question, “If God were to ask you, ‘Why should I let you into My Heaven?’ what would you say?”
- Verse 13 – “They do not come in faith, and thus do not come to the wedding in the ‘garments of salvation’ and the ‘robe of righteousness’ (Is. 61:10)” (Mark E. Ross, *Let’s Study Matthew*).
 - In light of passages like Colossians 3:9-14, “the garment seems to be both the righteousness we have by faith in Christ and the righteousness we have by living as disciples” (Daniel M. Doriani, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew, vol. 2*).
- “God the King will have a bride for his Son. His guests have been called and chosen from all the tribes on the face of the earth. The invitation has gone out, to good and bad alike. For those who come in faith, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, there is a place at the wedding feast. But for those who reject the invitation, and for those who come while trusting in something other than Christ, there will be the judgment of the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mark Ross, *Let’s Study Matthew*).
 - The invisible church are all those who are the elect, the remnant, those who are truly of the faith. Not only do they believe in Jesus, but His Word also provides the foundation for their lives and actions. These are people who have received the grace of God and are continuing to growing in it.

Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, I am aware that in different ways you have been seeking me. I believe that your claims are true; that you died on the cross for my sins, and that you have risen in triumph over death. Thank you for your loving offer of forgiveness, freedom, and fulfillment. Now – I turn from my sinful self-centeredness. I come to you as my Savior. I submit to you as my Lord. Give me the strength to follow you for the rest of my life. Amen.” (Daniel M. Doriani, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew, vol. 2*).