

**Jesus spoke to them again in parables. He said, <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent out his servants to summon those who were invited to the wedding banquet, but they did not want to come.**

**<sup>4</sup>“Then he sent out other servants and said, ‘Tell those who are invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and my fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet!’**

**<sup>5</sup>“But those who were invited paid no attention and went off, one to his own farm, another to his business. <sup>6</sup>The rest seized the king’s servants, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>As a result, the king was very angry. He sent his army and killed those murderers and burned their town.**

**<sup>8</sup>“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>So go to the main crossroads and invite as many as you find to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>10</sup>Those servants went out to the roads and gathered together everyone they found, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. <sup>11</sup>But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. <sup>12</sup>He said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without wearing wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king told the servants, ‘Tie him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.” (EHV)**

Theme: The Lord Calls us to his Heavenly Banquet

1. Many reject his gracious invitation.
2. He clothes his guests with righteousness.

A couple gets engaged. They’ve been busy planning their wedding; and one of the most important and difficult items on their agenda is to come up with a guest list. First of all, what is the budget—how big of wedding do they want? How are they going to decide who to invite and who to leave off the guest list? Once the RSVP’s start rolling in and more and more people say “No Thank you,” especially in this Covid-19 climate, do they go ahead and invite their back-ups? Setting the guest-list is one of the most important and yet stressful parts of planning a wedding.

In the parable that Jesus told in today’s text, a king had the guest list all figured out for his son’s wedding. And since it was going to be a royal wedding it promised to be a spectacular affair. No expense would be spared; it would have been the highlight of the year—a can’t-miss event. Except it was. It seems unfathomable, but no one wanted to go. When the time for the wedding the King sent out his servants to tell everyone the banquet was about to start, but no one showed up. So, he sent his servants out again telling them how great the wedding was going to be—the ox was roasted, the fattened calf was slaughtered. There would be great food, the drinks would be flowing, and everyone would have a great time.

But the people never came. They all had better things to do. The farmer had to get chores done; the businessman had business to attend to. Sure, the wedding may have been fun, but they had work to do. They had to have priorities and work always takes precedent over fun, even if it was the King who invited you. So they didn’t show up to this spectacular royal wedding, which they didn’t deserve to get an invitation to in the first place!

Jesus told this parable to the Jewish leaders on the Tuesday of Holy Week after they questioned his authority. This parable is about them and how they and the Jewish people in general had rejected the Lord and his gracious invitation. The King in this parable is God, Jesus is the Son. On the Last Day Christ will return and take all of his believers to live with him in heaven. Heaven as a wedding banquet is a common picture in the Bible. Christ is the groom and the Church is the bride, as in Revelation 21:2, **I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

The Jews were God's chosen nation. It was from them that the Savior of the world would come; but when he came, they rejected him. And when the time comes for his great wedding banquet, they won't be anywhere to find. Not only do they not want anything to do with the one true God, they also reject his servants. As the King sent out his servants, so God sent his prophets. The King's servants were mistreated and killed by those they were extending a gracious invitation to. In the same way, the prophets shared the gospel with the Jews, but they were mistreated, like Jeremiah; and some were even killed like John the Baptist.

The King had enough, he rejected those whom he had originally invited, and he sent his servants elsewhere. They were told to go to the main crossroads and invite anyone they could find. In the same way the gospel has been taken away from the Jews, for the most part, and it is now shared with us Gentiles. For the Jews, this parable was a warning—they were chosen by God, but they rejected his Word, his servants, and his Son. And so they were on the verge of missing out on his wedding feast!

But what about us? What does this parable mean for us—after all, we haven't rejected God or his Word. We believe in his Son for salvation; and we long for him to come again when we'll celebrate the eternal wedding feast! So, what does this parable have to do with us? We can certainly see ourselves in the responses of those who were originally called. Notice their indifference to the wedding—they all had better things to do; not one of them wanted to set aside their lives to attend. Yes, right now you are worshiping the Lord whether in person or online, but how often are you too busy for God and his Word. When you do come to worship, how much of the worship service do you actually pay attention to, or do you use the time to let your mind wander or think about everything you need to get done. Or when you worship online, how much of the service do you actually watch? Do you skip certain things? What about Bible Class—do you often find yourself too busy to go to Bible Study, or have other things to do? Or maybe you don't have better things to do, you have plenty of time, you simply don't want to go, no desire to sit for an hour and learn more of God's Word. Not to mention personal time at home reading the Bible, or a devotional book like Meditations. Those Meditations only take a few minutes a day to read, and we offer them for you—but we often have dozens of copies left. If we are honest with ourselves, we often show an indifference to God and his Word not unlike those in the parable.

And those who weren't indifferent, were hostile to the King's servants. Now I hope and pray that none of us are openly hostile to God and his Word, or to those who share it with us.

Nevertheless, we must remember that the sinful nature is hostile to God. And this often shows up, even in the lives of Christians, by how we react to certain biblical teachings. We scoff at certain teachings, offer excuses so as to reject them, or we downplay others as if we are embarrassed by them. So even we as Christians can and often are hostile to God and his Word. The gospel has been referred to as a rain cloud. A cloud sends rain down upon a land for a while, greatly blessing many; but then that rain cloud moves on to water other lands. So it is with the gospel—it showers God's grace on all who believe it. But many reject it, and don't see its blessings, and so God sends his gospel on to other places and showers his grace upon them. The Jews had the gospel and it left because they rejected it, the same thing happened in Europe—is it happening here too? Christianity is growing rapidly in parts of Africa and Asia—have the gospel's showers moved on from here because of indifference and hostility? So this

parable can serve as a warning for us, not to be indifferent toward the gospel, or even be hostile toward it. For if we do, the gospel will move on toward others.

But this parable is also full of God's grace. Just the fact that God invites others to his Son's wedding feast is a gift of his grace! For no one deserves such an invitation. And when the first guest list didn't come, he sends his servants out again to remind them. And he tells them how great the wedding feast was going to be! The King was patient and eager for his guest list to join him in the celebration.

And so God is eager and patient with us! He even was with the Jews! We sent his servants, the prophets, and others, to them again and again. They warned them to turn from their evil ways, to repent and live. He gave them multiple second, and third chances. He still sent his Son and Apostles to share the gospel to them.

After giving his first guest list multiple opportunities only to be rejected, the King graciously sent out his invitation to others, just as God graciously sent his gospel among the Gentiles after the Jews rejected it. The King told his servants to invite, as many as you find, and they gathered together many, both good and bad!

The gospel is for all people, just as God's grace is. God shares his gospel with all people, both good and bad. The gospel is not only for a select few. It's not for people of certain color or gender. It's not only for those who have lived a good life; no, the gospel is for all people. And that's a good thing, because if we were classified into the good or bad, we'd most certainly be part of the bad category because of our sin and wickedness.

Then there is the curious case of the man who gets into the wedding feast without wedding clothes on—instead of being dressed to the nines as is often the case for a wedding, this man was wearing his shabby, everyday clothes. It has been said that at times, a King would provide the proper wedding attire to his guests, so that they would be exactly as he wanted them to be.

And what a great picture that is of the grace of God! None of us are perfect as God demands us to be, we don't have a righteousness of our own. So the Lord makes us righteous through the blood of the Lamb, shed for us on the cross! In the work of Christ our sins are forgiven, our guilt removed, and his righteousness is given to us. It was through the waters of baptism that the Lord first covered us in a robe of his righteousness, clothing that we will wear into eternity!

Ephesians five gives us a great picture of this, **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless.**

What about the man who got into the wedding without wedding clothes? This points to hypocrites. They go to worship, they say all the right things, and appear good on the inside, but they don't really believe. They can fool us.

But they can't fool God. The King noticed the man right away and kicked him out. That hypocrite suffers the same eternal damnation as those who refused the king's gracious invitation. So it will be with all those who reject God and his gospel.

But the rest of us—what do we enjoy? And eternal celebration! Those of you who are married remember your wedding day fondly. You cherish that day, hopefully celebrate it one way or another every year. How joyful that day was! That exuberant joy is only a foretaste of the wedding supper of the lamb, the great feast and celebration—as is the Lord's Supper! Heaven is going to be that much better because we'll be with our Lord and Savior, and all our fellow believers in a celebration that will never end.

And many will be there—Jews, Gentiles, men, women, old, young from every nation, tribe, language and people—joining together in singing the praises of our Savior forever. We get a glimpse of this eternal wedding celebration in Revelation 19, **I heard what seemed to be the roar of a large crowd or the roar of many waters or the sound of loud rumblings of**

**thunder, saying: Alleluia! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, because the wedding of the Lamb has come. His bride has made herself ready, and she was given bright, clean, fine linen to wear. (In fact, the fine linen is the “not guilty” verdicts pronounced on the saints.) The angel said to me, “Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.” That is what you and I have to look forward to, by God’s grace! Amen.**