

Responding to a Royal Invitation

Scripture: Matthew 22:1-14

Code: 2355

Responding To A Invitation

Open your Bible to Matthew chapter 22. And I want to read for you the first fourteen verses of this chapter which is the setting for our message today in our ongoing study of this great gospel of Matthew. Matthew chapter 22 verse 1:

And Jesus answered and spoke unto them again by parables and said, The Kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who made a wedding feast for his son and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding feast. And they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants saying, Tell them who are bidden, behold I have prepared my breakfast, my oxen and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready. Come unto the wedding feast. But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. And the rest took his servants and treated them shamefully and murdered them.

But when the king heard of it, he was angry and he sent forth his armies and destroyed their murderers...those murderers and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding feast is ready, but they who were bidden were not worthy. Go therefore into the highways and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast.

So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding feast was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Fellow, how camest thou in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth for many are called but few are chosen.

This parable is one of the most dramatic, one of the most powerful of all of our Lord's parables. It is a parable about a royal feast, a royal wedding feast. It is directed in a very specific way in its historical context and yet in general has far reaching complications.

First of all, let me establish in your thinking the historical setting. This is Wednesday of the last week of our Lord's life and ministry. Friday He will be crucified. Sunday He will rise from the dead. This is Wednesday. For three years He has been preaching and teaching the gospel of the Kingdom. He

has been proclaiming Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. He has been offering Himself and His Kingdom to the people of Israel, His own people, the very called people of God. And now the three years has ended and the people have rejected Him. And the leaders have rejected Him and are extremely hostile to Him and by Friday will turn Him over to the Romans for execution.

On Saturday, He had arrived in Jerusalem. He had arrived for the festivities of the Passover. He stayed in Bethany in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, dear friends. On Sunday when He awoke to greet the day, He found a great multitude of the pilgrims there for the Passover had come to Bethany to see Him and hear Him and He spent Sunday with them. On Monday He arose and riding the colt, the foal of a donkey, entered the city of Jerusalem through the eastern gate to the hosannas and hallelujahs of the people who were hailing Him as Messiah and Savior and believing and wanting to believe with all their hearts that He was the military Messiah they had hoped for who would overthrow the Roman oppression and free them from that bondage. And so, wishing with all their hearts that He would be that kind of military Messiah, they hailed Him as such.

That was Monday. And they waited for Him to attack the Romans. Monday night, He went back to Bethany and in the morning He came into Jerusalem. But He didn't attack the Romans. He went directly to the temple and attacked the Jewish religious system. On Tuesday He cleansed the temple. He threw out all the money changers and all the sellers of merchandise that had turned it from the house of prayer God intended it to be into a den of robbers. And He cleansed it. That was Tuesday. This is Wednesday and He's back in the temple. Now that it's cleansed, He has come there to teach. He has come there to preach again the gospel of the Kingdom, the good news of salvation. He has come to call men to Himself.

And as He teaches, He collects a tremendous crowd. The people are listening. And as the masses of people milled around the great courtyard of the Herodian temple, Jesus is the center of attention. And the religious leaders are tremendously threatened by this because He speaks of an internal righteousness, He speaks of a true salvation that they know nothing about in their external self-righteous religion. And He is a threat to their system.

And so, in the process of moving about the temple and teaching, He is confronted by these religious leaders. And in verse 23 of chapter 21, they stop Him in His tracks and they say to Him, "By what authority doest Thou these things and who gave Thee this authority?" In other words, show us Your credentials. Show us Your rabbinic ordination papers. Show us the approval that You have to go about saying and doing what You do. Who gave You authority to throw out all of the business in this place? Who gave You the authority to end all of the money changing? Who gave You the right to speak a message that is contrary to the tradition which we teach? Who gave You the authority to speak without any rabbinical authority? Show us Your credentials.

And they're angry. And they're bitter. And they're hostile. And they're already planning His death...the Bible tells us. And so He answers them. And He answers them with a trilogy of parables. The first one is in verse 28 to 32 of chapter 21, a parable about two sons. The second one is a parable about a vineyard that was leased out to tenant farmers in verses 33 to 46. And this is the third parable in the trilogy in chapter 22 verses 1 to 14. And each of the parables is alike in that their message is a message of judgment.

The parables reduced to a simple understanding say this: you have rejected Me, all of the Old Testament prophets spoke of Me, all of the miracles that I have done validate My claim to be the Son of God, the Savior, the Messiah, all of the words that I have said affirm that. But you have consistently and for three years repeatedly rejected Me and now God rejects you.

That's the essence of the parables. The table is turned and they are parables of judgment...parables of judgment. They climax in this third parable very dramatically. And I want us to see four scenes in the parable, all right? Scene number one we'll call the invitation rejected...the invitation rejected. Notice verse 1, "And Jesus answered and spoke unto them again by parables and said..." By the way, the word "answered" there doesn't necessarily have to refer to a specific question. It simply means He responded to them. He responded to them. He gave them the message that they needed to hear. And He gave it to them in parables.

Now parables are simply figures, stories, analogies used to convey spiritual truth. And any good teacher knows that you must teach in analogies if you are to convey an abstract thought or an abstract concept or a concept new to someone, the best way to do it is to start with something they're very familiar with. You go from the known to the unknown. And Jesus was the master of analogies and the master of figures of speech and the master of language and the master of articulating truth. He understood everything that His hearers understood. He knew what they knew because He had grown up in their culture. So He started with things they could understand and moved to things they couldn't understand...going from the known to the unknown. And Jesus used all the things of common life, all the things of culture, all the things of daily routine and turned them into spiritual messengers which conveyed profound spiritual truth. And He does so in this case. He draws for them a story which all of them would not only understand but which would set them up for the great spiritual truth it conveyed.

Now it is a story, verse 2 says, about the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus always talked about the Kingdom of heaven, didn't He? He never really got trapped into talking about anything else. I mean, they wanted Him to get involved in a lot of other things, but He never said anything except things about the Kingdom of heaven. Now what is the Kingdom of heaven? It is a sphere of God's rule. It is a dominion where God rules, where God is sovereign, where God is King. To simplify it even further, it is the dominion of redemption. It is the sphere of God's gracious salvation. The Kingdom is that

place where God rules, where God's subjects live. It is a spiritual kingdom. It is a community of people who are redeemed, who have come to salvation, who are under the rule and the guiding and the leading of God.

Some people when they come to Scripture and see the Kingdom of heaven want to assign it to a certain period of time. But it can't be that. Oh, there is a present aspect of the Kingdom. There is a future millennial Kingdom when Christ reigns on the earth. There's an eternal element to the Kingdom. There is even a past element where God ruled in the Old Testament through His patriarchs and His kings and His judges and His priests and prophets and so forth. It has different facets. But it is still the Kingdom, the sphere of God's rule by grace and salvation.

And so, this is about God's world, God's dominion. And He says it's like a certain king who made a gamos. Now that is a word from which we get monogamous, or bigamist. It has to do with a wedding or a marriage. But the word itself means a wedding feast...a wedding feast. The wedding was really inseparable from the feast. A wedding in those days was a big long feast. How long? Normal was seven days...seven days. You had the people come to your house for the wedding feast and you fed them and you cared for them for seven days. And if you were a king, it could go on way beyond that. And it wasn't until the very end of the time period that you put the hand of the bride in the hand of the groom and they went off to consummate the marriage. It was one great grand glorious celebration. It was the highlight of life as any wedding is today the highlight of family life. And a wedding made by a king for his son would be the wedding of all weddings. I mean, most of the world was tuned into the royal wedding some time ago, weren't they? And we would have given anything if we could have been there. Even in our culture we understand the grandeur and the majesty and the wonder and the spectacle of that. And so this is a wedding feast and not just a wedding feast but a wedding feast thrown by the king.

And what our Lord is identifying here is the greatest celebration those people could imagine in their culture. It isn't important that it was a marriage because nothing is said about a bride and nothing is said about the actual marriage itself or the wedding. What is important is the Lord wants to identify the greatest celebration that those people could ever comprehend in their culture. And He is saying the Kingdom of heaven is like the greatest celebration imaginable thrown by the wealthiest person imaginable for the most honored person imaginable. He wants to capture all the best that life could ever imagine to give. And so He says there was a king who made a wedding feast for his son. I mean, this was the blowout of all blowouts in that culture.

By the way, the word "wedding feast" appears through here many times. It could be wedding feast, marriage feast, it's translated "marriage" very often, or "wedding." But sometimes...very interesting...sometimes it's singular and sometimes it's plural. It will go singular...it starts out plural, goes singular, goes back to plural. It alternates through the singular and plural and the reason is because you could look at it as one feast or you could look at it as a whole sequence. It was one

great feast in which there were many, many feasts. You were banqueting for days and days and days. And so we get a little insight into the culture just by the way the Greek language uses the singular and the plural. It was the event of all events.

Now, let's look at verse 3. "He sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding. And they would not come." Now this introduces us to a middle-eastern custom. In those days, people didn't have watches and they weren't as rigidly tied to time schedules as we are today. And they didn't have the ease that we have in procuring food and all that goes into a long festival for multitudes of people. And so preparation was very difficult. Time was a little bit latitudinous(?). And so what happened was this, notice verse 3, "Sent forth servants to call them that were bidden." Now the phrase "them that were bidden" means the already invited ones.

In other words, there was a preliminary invitation. Certain people had been given invitations to come to the king's wedding feast. And as far as we can tell from the text, they had accepted those invitations. In fact, they probably paraded around saying, "I don't know if you know it, but we've been invited to the wedding feast for the son of the king."

"You have?"

"Yes, we're honored guests. And as soon as the servants come to tell us it's ready to begin..." you know. So they may have sort of gloated about that invitation. We would assume that. So they are the already bidden ones.

Now when the moment is ready to begin, the servants are sent out to these people to say it's now that we begin. And the servants go out to collect the already bidden ones and unbelievably, it says in verse 3, they would not come. I mean, this is mind-boggling. And you can imagine when the Lord's saying this that there's certain gasps in the crowd. It's unthinkable. I mean, if you had been given an invitation to a week or two-week festival connected with the royal wedding, you'd probably go. I mean, you'd surely go. If you were invited in our own society, we don't have a monarchy so we would identify with being invited to the White House for a couple of weeks. We'd probably be prone to go.

They wouldn't come. It's inconceivable. And now we're beginning to see the parable have an impact because the people, including the religious leaders, are going to have to be saying, "That's ridiculous. Nobody in their right mind would do that...not go." For several reasons, one--you would spurn the honor the king was giving you. Two--free food isn't a bad deal. And the kind of food the king serves is pretty good stuff compared to the commoners. And thirdly--you don't mess with middle-eastern monarchs. You understand? You don't show...you may lose your head. I mean, everything said go. It was reasonable. They wouldn't go.

What was the king's response? He's a nice king. He was a kind king. "He sent forth other servants, said, Tell them who are bidden, tell the already invited ones, behold, I have prepared my breakfast." Your Bible might say "dinner" and I'll explain that in a minute. "My oxen and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready, come unto the marriage. I mean, I've got a tremendous extent to collect all this. I have my beef and my calves--that's oxen and fatling--it's all ready, it's all prepared." And he uses the term "dinner" which is ariston. There were two meals in the Jewish culture, ariston...Greek words are ariston and deipnon. Deipnon was the evening meal which was after sunset. Ariston was the morning meal that was between dawn and noon. The Jews only ate two meals a day...not a bad idea. We won't get into that. But it's not a bad idea.

But they only ate two meals. They got up with the sun and they worked and then about 9 o'clock they stopped for their ariston. That's why in John chapter 21 where you have the disciples fishing all night, they caught nothing, Jesus shows up in the morning says, "Try the right side of the boat." They dumped their nets and they got a whole lot of fish and they spend, no doubt, a couple of hours trying to get those fish in. By the time they get to the shore, it's time for that morning meal and it says the Lord said to them, "Come and have ariston," it's breakfast, it's their mid-morning breakfast.

And so, the wedding festival began with a morning brunch, if you like. And then they would have a post-sunset evening meal. And that's the only two meals they had. So it's kind of like the old English wedding breakfast that he invites them to. It's all ready. You have to come. Everything is prepared.

Verse 5, "But they made light of it." They made light of it? They treated it with indifference. The Greek word means to be unconcerned. They were utterly indifferent to that. How could you be indifferent to this? They were indifferent. "And went their ways." They just walked away from it. And you can know the people are saying, "Oh, they're stupid...these people are out of their mind...why would they ever do such a thing? This story is impossible to believe. No one would ever do this. This is a very far-fetched story." And the Lord is just setting them up, see.

"And one went to his farm, and another to his...and the Greek word is emporion...to his emporium, to his place of merchandising, to his store, to his business." It's inconceivable. "No, we're not coming to the great grand glorious royal wedding feast, we're going to go to the farm and over to the store." It doesn't make sense. Such indifference. Such selfish preoccupation with your own enterprises. Such a forfeiture of joy, such a forfeiture of grandeur and glory and beauty and celebration and such an insult to the king. Such an affront to his graciousness. For such an invitation was the highest honor in a country.

Now if you think that's bad, look at verse 6. "And the rest took the servants, treated them shamefully and murdered them." Now you say, "Boy, it's really getting foolish now. I mean, the parable is really ridiculous. They killed the guys who came to call them to the feast?" That's what it says. Outright hostility is added to indifference. And both reflect a certain rebellion against the king. Now we'll stop

there.

What does this mean? What really does this mean? The story's clear. The Kingdom of heaven is the sphere of God's rule by salvation. It's the community of the redeemed. It's the place of divine blessing. Salvation by grace. The king is whom? Who is the king? God. Who is his son? Jesus Christ. And the idea of a great banquet is a Jewish idea. You can read it in the Talmud that the Jews said that when the Messiah comes, God will put on a banquet to end all banquets and we'll feast with the Messiah. So Jesus even picks up a very Messianic concept out of the Jewish thinking. And God is calling people to His Son. He's calling people to come to His Kingdom and honor His Son.

And who are the invited guests? Who are these people that are called in verse 3 and called in verse 4? Well, they are the already having-been-bidden ones. You mean He's calling a people who've already been called? Let me ask you the question...who are the already called people of God? The Jews, Israel. You can start in Genesis chapter 12 where God called out of the loins of Abraham the people of Israel and said "I'm going to make out of your loins a great nation, a nation through whom the earth will be blessed. And anyone who blesses them will be blessed. And anyone who curses them will be cursed. And they shall be as the sand of the sea and the stars of the heaven." And God was going to multiply and all of this. And He called out that special nation. They were the called.

In Hosea 11, there's that wonderful wonderful word of the prophet Hosea in reference to Israel. It says, and we ought to be reminded of it, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him and called My son out of Egypt." They were in Egyptian bondage and God called Israel to be His people. He called them and carried them for 40 years through the wilderness and carried them into the promised land and gave them a land that flows with milk and honey. And God had a special design for that already called people. In Amos, the prophet writes in chapter 3, "Israel only, says God, have I loved, have I known." And then that great, great picture in Ezekiel chapter 16, it's just a dramatic picture, a picture of a baby torn from a womb and thrown bloody on the ground and left there destitute. And God comes by and sees this infant still bathed in its blood and washes it and makes it His own. Beautiful picture of the calling out of Israel to God's own heart. They're the already having been called. They were the unique people of God. They were God's channel to reach the world, God's point of contact with the doctrine of salvation and the truth of righteousness. And so, it was the already-having-been-called ones that were called.

Who are the servants that go out to call the already-having- been-called ones? Preachers like John the Baptist, like Jesus Himself, like the Apostles, right? Sent out two-by-two to preach the Kingdom...and so here were the already-having-been-called ones, the nation Israel, the Kingdom is offered to them. The King says, "Here's My Son, here's My Kingdom, come and honor My Son," and He sends out His preachers.

And what do they do? Some of the people treated them with what? Indifference. And some of the people did what? Murdered them. They killed John the Baptist, cut his head off. They killed Jesus Christ. James was the first of the Apostles to go, right? He was beheaded. And the rest of the Apostles is a list of martyrs, isn't it? They killed the preachers. I mean, there are some people who are indifferent and there are some people who are hostile. You want to know something? The indifferent people in the parable are the people who were preoccupied with the farm and the merchandise. Most people who are indifferent to the gospel...may I suggest to you...are secular people. Their preoccupation is with stuff...stuff. I mean, they're more into the physical than they are the spiritual. They're more into earthly possessions than heavenly realities. They hang around the stuff, the passing stuff that you pack in a casket and haul out with you, the stuff. That's the indifferent people. So interested in earthly matters, they had no time for heavenly issues. So swept up in material things, they had no thought for spiritual things. So busy with business, they couldn't understand salvation was offered to them. So trapped by the farm and the shop that they couldn't go to the celebration. Finding their satisfaction in the pursuit of gain, finding their satisfaction in wealth, seculars.

And I would like to suggest to you that secularism is usually indifferent. False religion is hostile. Secularism is usually indifferent. False religion is hostile. You look at the history of persecution around the world and the persecutors of the truth are the purveyors of error, inevitably. And that is why in Revelation 17 when you see the final world system of religion that comes together in the end times, it says that final world religious system is drunk with the blood of the martyrs because it is false religion that stamps out the truth in hostility. Secularism is indifferent. It's not interested.

And so, when Jesus came and God called His people Israel, the already-having-been-called people to a glorious celebration, there were the secularists, they were indifferent...they were indifferent. And there were the religionists and they were hostile.

It's still so...it's still so. I just came back from Israel. I found there the secularists there, many of them wonderful people...just as people go. And I enjoyed so much meeting them. And when you speak of Christ, they're completely indifferent. But you talk to those who are firm religionists and you mention the name of Jesus Christ, they become very angry. That's always been because error seeks to stamp out the truth.

So the parable is simply understood. The invitation was rejected. You say, "You think those Jews knew that He was talking about that? You think they got the message?" Go back to 21:45, Matthew 21:45, "And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He spoke of them." Sure they knew. Sure they knew. Couldn't escape it. No way could escape it.

Let's go to the second point, the rejectors punished, verse 7, "When the king heard of it, he was angry." He had been gracious. The first group of servants and the second group of servants

shouldn't be distinguished as if one was Old Testament prophets and one was New Testament preachers. It shouldn't be distinguished as if one was John the Baptist and Jesus and second group was the Apostles. It isn't that that's the point. The point of sending out group one and group two was only to show not some kind of distinctiveness in the two groups, but to show the generosity kindness, forgiveness, grace and mercy of the king, right? It's only meant to demonstrate how gracious this king is. And how willing he is to call again and again and again as Jesus did, as John did, as the Apostles did, calling again and again over and over day after day, month after month, year after year, for the duration of ministry...even for the duration of time until the great devastation and destruction came in the land of Israel.

So, the first group, the second group, I don't think we need to pin down to some specific group. I think all of them have to be New Testament preachers because they're pointing to the Son and calling to the Kingdom of the Son. So I see them as New Testament preachers. And the reason there are two groups is to demonstrate to us the grace, the kindness, the mercy, the patience of the King.

But his patience has a limit. His patience has an end. And when they have killed, he responds in anger. And it is justified. For unrighteousness has slain righteousness. And any man who understands good and what is right would react as he reacted. "He sent forth his armies." The word in the Greek strateumata really troops, it's not like he had massive armies as we think of huge armies of nations, but troops, a smaller group than perhaps armies conveys. "And destroyed those murderers and burned up their city."

Even in our society today we understand that murderers pay with their life. For the most part we understand it, even though we struggle with that capital punishment issue. At least it's enough of an issue to indicate that many people feel it's right. And, of course, the Bible articulates that it is. And so what was done was just. The murderers were destroyed. And their city was burned up. Very dramatic.

The order was given for the burning of their city. Why? Verse 8, "Then he said to his servants, The wedding feast is ready, but they who were bidden were not worthy." They weren't worthy. Why? Why weren't they worthy? Weren't they worthy because they weren't good enough? Because they weren't moral enough? Because they weren't ethical enough? Because they didn't do enough good deeds? No. They weren't worthy because they wouldn't accept the invitation. Did you get that? That's all it says. Worthiness is not dependent on moral virtue. They would have been worthy if they had just accepted the invitation. You understand? It's a very important point. You see, when he goes back to call another group in verse 10, he calls those that are bad and good, it says. So it isn't that he's looking around to find the most noble and the most moral and the most self-righteous people in the world and say, "Ah, they're worthy...they're worthy." No, no, worthiness is tied to saying yes to the invitation. They weren't worthy because they wouldn't come. And that which makes a person worthy to enter the kingdom and commune with the son and celebrate at the wedding feast is

not some self-designed morality, but saying yes to an invitation. They weren't worthy. Because they refused salvation in the Son, they couldn't come. There's a limit to God's patience...to His endurance. And they had reached the limit.

Back in chapter 21 verse 43 in the prior parable, He said very similarly, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it." It's going to be taken away from you, and the word "nation" means "people" and given to a people who will appreciate it and demonstrate its fruits.

In other words, here you have historically the casting off of Israel as a nation in the unique place as God's called people which they had enjoyed. Why? Because they rejected the Messiah. They rejected the Savior. And they were set apart...set apart. And He says your city is going to be burned. Boy, was that prophetic. Seventy A.D. it happened. Titus Vespasian, the Roman general came to Jerusalem, conquered the city, murdered one million, one hundred thousand Jews, threw their bodies over the wall, slaughtered beyond that multiplied thousands, all around Palestine. And Josephus, who was an eye witness to the whole thing, wrote in his history of Jewish war these words, translated, "That building the temple at Jerusalem, however God long ago had sentenced to the flames, but now in the revolution of the time periods, the fateful day had arrived, the tenth of the month Loos(?), the very day on which previously it had been burned by the king of Babylon, one of the soldiers neither awaiting orders nor filled with horror of so dread an undertaking but moved by some supernatural impulse snatched a brand from the blazing timber and hoisted up by one of his fellow soldiers, flung the fiery missile through a golden window. When the flame arose a scream as poignant as the tragedy went up from the Jews. Now that the object which before they had guarded so closely was going to ruin. While the sanctuary was burning, neither pity for age nor respect for rank was shown. On the contrary, children and old people, laity and priests alike were massacred. The emperor had ordered the entire city and sanctuary to be razed to the ground, except only the highest towers and that part of the wall that enclosed the city on the west." And that's why today remains the western wall, the rest of the thing was burned. Jesus said the king burned up their city.

It hadn't happened, but it would. It was prophetic in a parabolic form. Objectors to the Son, rejectors of the Son are judged in a fiery judgment. So accurate is our Lord's statement here.

What was He saying? He was saying because Israel has rejected the Messiah, God rejects them. And those who hostilely killed the Son will be severely judged by God and their city will be burned. It was.

The third facet of the parable in verses 9 and 10 we'll call "new guests invited." We've seen the invitation rejected, the rejectors punished and now the new guests are invited. "Go therefore into the highways and as many as ye shall find, bid to the wedding feast." I mean, everything is ready and there's nobody to come. So something new has happened. It's been taken away from the nation that

I got a letter this last week, it was a Christmas card, it came late, opened it up, had about 50 signatures from all the guys in Cell Block...somewhere...who listen to the tapes and are growing in the Lord. I thank God for that...for bad people called into God's festival in honor of His Son. He calls the worst of people and the best of people. Everybody everywhere who will come.

And then finally, the last little scene in this parable is very, very important...the intruder expelled. We've seen the invitation rejected, the rejectors punished, the new guests invited and now the intruder is expelled. Now watch this, verse 11, "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment." I mean, this is pretty tacky...a seedy character. You go to a wedding at the king's place, you've got to do what's right.

You say, "Well now wait a minute. When you just go out in the highways and byways and start sweeping in people off the street, you can't expect a whole lot." But the point that's interesting to make here is that there was only one guy who wasn't properly garmented. Now we don't know whether they get...had time to go home and get a garment or whether the king provided garments. There's a big debate. Sometimes people say, "Well, they had time and they went home and got their Sunday best and wore it." And others say, "No, the king gave them a garment." The parable doesn't say anything. So you're better off not saying anything. Jesus intended to say what He said, not what you think He didn't say. And so the best thing...the best thing is to assume that everybody had access to the proper garments, whether they went home and got it, or whether it was provided for them or whatever...they had access to it.

And one guy comes in there and he's...he's not properly attired. And there was a proper way to be attired. And you know something? He was easy to spot, right? I mean, you've got a whole mob of people all in their best and then a guy in rags. The king saw him. He can't hide. Listen, there are no gate crashers in the Kingdom. That's right. No party crashers. They're going to stick out.

"The king goes to him in verse 12 and said, Fellow, how camest thou in here and not having a wedding garment?" What do you think you're doing here without proper clothing? "And he was...what?...speechless." You'd think if he had an excuse he would have given one? Sure...he would have said, "Hey, you know, my wife took the deal to the cleaners, it isn't coming back till Tuesday...I mean, what am I going to do, right?" Or, "You know, I was coming and I had that deal under my arm and a guy went by me in a cart and the thing fell in...I mean, it's a sad thing, but I'm..." Or he could have said, "This is all I have," played the pious deal, you know. He was speechless. Why? He had no what? No excuse. Had no excuse. Which means that everybody could have had a garment, including him. He just didn't do it. I mean, he came in there saying, "I'm just going to be myself," see. "I mean, I'm not going to do anything different than I normally do, I'm just going to come to the party just like I am." Very proud, very insulting, very thoughtless.

"So, the king said to the servants, Tie him up hand and foot, take him away." You say, "Why did they do that?" Because if they didn't do that, he'd come back again. So they tie him up so he can't come back in again. "Put him in outer darkness." Apparently the lights had been turned on in the middle of the festival, it was evening by now, put him out...put him out. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He'll have great regret, oh, he'll have great regret to miss the celebration. Oh, he'll be so sad...weeping...gnashing his teeth, put him out.

You say, "Well, what is this saying?" It's saying that there's going to be people who try to crash the Kingdom. And they come in and they hang around and they join the church and they get involved and they're a part. I mean, they've been out there on the highways and byways and the preachers go out and they call them to come and they come in...and they come in and they don't have the proper garment, but they want to stay. And in order to keep them out, you've got to tie them up, put them out.

You say, "Who are these people?" Oh, they're sort of like the people in Matthew 7 who say, "Lord, Lord, have we not cast out demons, have we not done many wonderful works in your name? Lord, Lord, we preached. He says, Out, I never knew you, who are you?" These are Kingdom crashers, these are tares among the wheat. They're not properly garmented.

You say, "What's the garment?" That's easy. Go back to Matthew 5:20 for a moment, I'll show you the garment. In Matthew 5:20 it says, "For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven." What is it that is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven? What is it? Righteousness. And a righteousness different than the Pharisees which was a self-righteousness, a God-given righteousness. It's just what Hebrews 12:14 says, "Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." You don't go into God's presence without manifest righteousness, without manifest holiness. Job 29:14 the text says, "I put on righteousness and it clothed me."

The Jews would understand this who were listening to Him because they would remember one of the most beautiful texts of the entire Old Testament. It would be very familiar to them. It is Isaiah 61:10 and it says this, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." They knew that. Righteousness was the robe.

And the king looked at this man, he saw no righteousness. That is no right living, no right thinking, no right speaking. He saw no holiness, no godliness. He said you don't belong in here, you can't crash the Kingdom on your own terms. "That which proves you belong is manifest righteousness." Beloved, this is a repeated truth in the gospel of Matthew over and over and over and over. That which marks a true believer is manifest righteousness, not that he hangs around other believers, not

that he identifies externally with the ongoing activity of the Kingdom.

And you know, it would be easy to read this text and say, "Boy, we condemn Israel for what they did..." but listen, we're past that when we get to this part. And what we're looking at here in verses 11 to 14 is us. We're looking at the Gentiles. Yes, Israel treated Jesus Christ with indifference and hostility. Yes, they too were set aside of the judgment. Yes their city was destroyed and their nation and they've never yet been able to rebuild their temple. And yes they've lost for all the time since that their sacrificial system. Yes they've been set apart. And yes we've been brought in by the gracious preaching of the salvation message that extends to every one everywhere. But at the same time, if they have been guilty of indifference and hostility, then we have been guilty of gate crashing. And in Christianity we have a lot of people who hang around and who push their way in and who want to belong but they have no manifest holiness which is the robe of salvation. You understand? And some people say here, "Well, this means the imputed righteousness of Christ." Don't get too Pauline on me here, we're still talking about the parables of Jesus. It's talking about yes imputed, but yes imparted righteousness. It's talking about internal righteousness and external manifest righteousness. For the only way that a person is ever marked out as a member of the Kingdom is by manifestation of holy living.

And so, if the Jew has been guilty of hostility and indifference, and so have many of us, so have many of us, for the world is filled today with people who in their secular pursuits are utterly indifferent to Christ, true? And there are others in their religious persuasions who are utterly hostile to Christ. But there are a myriad of people who on the outside identify but have no manifest holiness. They've tried to come on their own terms, on their own ground, on their own self-righteousness and be okay and it isn't so.

You say, "Well, John, how do you get that righteousness?" I believe that that's what Jesus would wish they had asked. How do you get the robe? Because in 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says, Jesus Christ is the one in view, "He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made...what?...the righteousness of God in Him." When we come to love Christ and receive Christ, we receive the righteousness of God. And that's our robe, isn't it? That's our robe. Good and bad people come but once you come in, you have a robe. And you could be a moral person, without a robe you'll be thrown out. You could be a formerly immoral person, clothed in the holiness of Christ, welcome to stay. That's the issue.

Jesus is saying to these people, "God rejects you because you've rejected the celebration in honor of His Son." And then He says, "And to all of the rest of you in the world, come, come." But don't think you can come on your own terms. You must be clothed with His righteousness by faith in His death and resurrection.

And the whole thing closes with a very simple statement, "For many are called but few are...what?...chosen." The call goes out to so many, but only a few are chosen. Paul often talks about the call in Romans and when he does so, it is an internal call, it is the true call to salvation. Don't confuse Paul's discussion there with this. Obviously, from the parable and the context, the call referred to here is an external call. The gospel invitation is sent out to everywhere. Some are indifferent, some are hostile, some try to crash the Kingdom on their own terms. But few...oh my...are chosen. And with the word "chosen" we're introduced to the sovereignty of God. Yes there is the will of man in receiving the invitation. Yes there is the will of man in rejecting the invitation. But the perfect balance to that is that God is sovereign. And those who come choose to come, the Bible says, because they're chosen by Him. That's a mystery we'll never fathom. But we believe it. So many are called, few are chosen. The broad road, many go in that way. The narrow, few there by that...what?...find it. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we know that the Gentiles who dare to come before the King while still defiled with all their pagan sin are condemned as decisively as Israel who persistently refused to come at all. May we not think better of ourselves. And may we know that Jew and Gentile can come...any and all...on God's terms--faith in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

While your head's bowed for just a closing moment, I know that you have understood the parable if you've listened and the Spirit of God has taught your heart because it's so simple. And its application historically is very clear, so is its application to our contemporary moment. There are people in this church this morning who are indifferent, who are hostile, who are inside superficially clothed in the rags of their own unrighteousness, their own self-righteousness which are but filthy rags, says Isaiah. And the call today would come again from the King and the King would say, "Come, please accept the invitation, it's open to everyone, everywhere, Jew or Gentile." But when you come, you must be clothed with the robe of righteousness provided as a gift of God to those who believe in Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

The heart of Christ, the heart of God still reaches out in a loving invitation to a world of men and women that He wants in the celebration. He's not inviting you to suffer here in this parable. He's not inviting you to pain. He's not inviting you to deprivation. He's not inviting you to a monastic existence. He's not inviting you to self-immolation. He's not inviting you to some kind of arduous work. He's inviting you to a celebration of all celebrations, the glorious and eternal royal feast that is all that the best of life could ever ever be imagined to bring. And it's all in Christ. Won't you come?

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