

A Regal Invitation 10-30-05

Matthew 22:1-14 (NIV)

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 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, both good and bad, 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 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. ¹³ Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie his 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."

This is the third parable Jesus taught in response to the Pharisees demand to know about the source of Jesus' authority. (Matthew 21:23) Each increased in intensity as Jesus painted a picture for those who were willing to hear of just what was happening. The first parable was the tale of two sons in which Jesus showed it is more important to do what God asks than it is to just say you will. In answer to the question of authority, Jesus was saying, "I'm the command of God." The second was of the tenants that rented the vineyard. In that parable he showed how hardhearted the religious leaders were to kill the son of the landowner. Jesus was saying, "I'm the Son of God, heir of all, who you will kill." In the parable for today, He compares the history of Israel to an invitation to a wedding banquet. It tells us who will and who won't accept the invitation and what you need to be a guest. In this parable, He was declaring that He is the Bridegroom, Son of the King. To turn down God's invitation is rebellion. Remember that in just two days after telling the parable, Jesus would be hanging naked upon a cross.

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. The kingdom of heaven is not relegated to time or location or nation. (Luke 17:21) It is everywhere at any time when people have come under the reign of the King of Heaven. (John 12:26) Since the Jews had a distorted teaching on this topic, Jesus often helped to correct their false impressions by starting a parable in this way. "The kingdom of heaven is like ... a man who sowed good seed in his field." Matthew 13:24 (NIV) "... a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field." Matthew 13:31 (NIV) "... yeast that a

Commented [notes1]: 23 Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"
Matt 21:23 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."
Luke 17:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.
John 12:26 (NIV)

woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." Matthew 13:33 (NIV) "...treasure hidden in a field." Matthew 13:44 (NIV) "...a merchant looking for fine pearls." Matthew 13:45 (NIV) "...a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish."

Matthew 13:47 (NIV) He will share a few more kingdom of heaven parables before the crucifixion. Each one had its unique teaching that corrected a misunderstanding in their perception of the ways of God. It is similar to others in that it tries to relay the greatness of what is being offered. It is unique in that it declares this great invitation is to a wedding banquet for the Son and speaks of the required covering.

³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. To catch the fullness of what Jesus was saying, we have to understand what an honor such an invitation would be. The crowd could only imagine the greatness of such a feast. In Jesus' day the wedding was the feast. It went on for seven days. (Judges 14:10-12) The guests stayed at the home of the bride and were entertained and wined and dined to the best of the host's ability. You may recall the wedding feast that Jesus attended in Cana, and how they ran out of wine. (John 2:1-3) That would be quite a shame for the host. But the one who is throwing the feast in this parable is the king. His resources are much greater than any wedding feast the listeners had ever attended. The groom was his son, the prince, and their future king. They could only dream of the greatness of such a banquet. What an honor to be invited! It was a once in a lifetime opportunity, a story you would tell your grandchildren.

Such is the magnanimous invitation from God to every one who will hear when He says, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) We hear that and think on the things we must forsake, the changes that must take place in our lives as though it was some great disaster. (Matthew 19:29) Friends, it is an invitation to something beyond your wildest dreams. (1Corinthians 2:9) At the feast there is no concern for daily details. At the feast there is no sorrow or loss. It is filled with joy and optimism and the presence of the One whose love is better than life. (Psalm 36:8-9) I hope that changes the way you hear that saying from the lips of Jesus, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Our response shouldn't be "Oh no!" It should be "Wahoo!" It is His invitation to let go of a life of destruction and enter a life filled His presence.

For you who know Him let me make it even plainer. The groom is Christ; the banquet is Christ (Psalm 16:5); the joy is Christ (John 17:13); and the peace is His as well (John 14:27). As we sit at that feast, beholding Him, clothed in Him, feasting on the Bread of Life, eating from the tree of Life, we are transformed into His likeness. (2Corinthians 3:18) "Wahoo! Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

In verse three they said, "Oh no!" or as the protestors used to chant during the Vietnam war, "Heck no, we won't go!" (toned down for sensitive ears) What? Well, maybe they didn't get it. So the king, in the joy of the celebrative circumstances patiently and generously spells it out kind of like I just did for you. ⁴ "Then he sent

Commented [notes4]: 10 Now his father went down to see the woman. And Samson made a feast there, as was customary for bridegrooms.
11 When he appeared, he was given thirty companions.
12 "Let me tell you a riddle," Samson said to them. "If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes.
Judges 14:10-12 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.
3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."
John 2:1-3 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."
Matt 4:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.
Matt 19:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"--
1 Cor 2:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 8 They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.
9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.
Psalms 36:8-9 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 5 The Lord himself is my inheritance, my prize. He is my food and drink, my highest joy! He guards all that is mine.
Psalms 16:5 (TLB)

Commented [notes11]: 13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.
John 17:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.
John 14:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
2 Cor 3:18 (NIV)

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.'

The king clarifies the honor of the invitation. Sometimes you get one of those deceptive ads in the mail. You have won a million dollars and a world tour. You keep reading and the fine print says IF the numbers assigned to you happen to match the ones they pick, a one in ten gazillion chance. So just in case they are thinking the first invitation couldn't possibly be true, the king sends the servants out to relay his clarification. "I'm not kidding. You are invited! The royal chefs have been busy preparing a royal dinner. The Kobe beef is slaughtered and the rib eyes are on the grill. All the fixins and fine wine are ready to serve. Come enjoy! It's on me!"

How could you say "no"? What an insult it would be to say something else was more important to me! How ungrateful it would be to ignore such an honor offered by the one whose protection I enjoy. But they didn't just politely decline. 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.* The first group declared by their actions that their thing was more important than the king's. They were so wrapped up in their attempts to increase their wealth that they couldn't enjoy the wealth of the king.

The worst indictment is that they paid no attention. Can you imagine Condi Rice knocks on your door to invite you to the Presidential Ball and while she is speaking you just walk away like you never heard a word? Throughout the book of Jeremiah you will find the same sad indictment, "they paid no attention." (Jeremiah 7:24) Worse yet, the second group killed the messengers.

The meaning is obvious. The great king is God. The Son is Jesus. The servants are the prophets and apostles. Those first called were the nation of Israel. Listen to what Stephen said just before they stoned him. ⁵² *Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him--* Acts 7:52 (NIV) Such is the destiny of the servant of God. The world is under the influence of the Prince of this world. (1John 5:19) God's servants preach what the world does not want to hear. The people killed the messengers because they were in rebellion against the king and didn't want to hear about his generosity.

I was wondering about this outright antagonism that some people exhibit against the name of Jesus or mention of the Bible. As I was reviewing Romans 8, the answer popped out at me. *"The sinful mind is hostile to God."* That is the only way you can explain the animosity some people show. They don't want to go to the party because they want to do their own thing. They are offended that the king would ask a second time. They said no and they mean no! They don't want to have anything to do with the king, let alone go to a celebration for His Son.

Commented [notes14]: 24 But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward.
Jer 7:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.
1 John 5:19 (NIV)

I'm pretty hard on you. I'm not satisfied with the way we are because God isn't satisfied with the way we are. I challenge you week after week to grow in Christ, to change, to be transformed, and that means to crucify the flesh with its desires. Some day you might get tired of it and reject me. That would be the normal course for a servant of God. I hope that we all grow together in Christ likeness and that it doesn't come to rejection. I hope we are an exception because our minds are not the sinful mindset but minds that are being renewed, transformed, to kingdom thinking. (Romans 12:2) That would be the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Please remember that I challenge you with the things that God challenges me. We are all in the same boat going through the same storms. I have one plea; don't be apathetic. I'd rather see you throw me out because of conviction than so hardhearted that you no longer care about what is being preached. I thank God that you do respond and that we are growing together!

Commented [notes16]: 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.
Romans 12:2 (NIV)

⁷ *The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Judgment was executed. They rebelled and committed murder. They were punished justly. What a warning to the religious leaders and to any of us who would persecute God's servants. (Zechariah 2:8)*

Commented [notes17]: 8 For this is what the LORD Almighty says: "After he has honored me and has sent me against the nations that have plundered you--for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye--
Zech 2:8 (NIV)

⁸ *"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'* Does anyone deserve to come? Only Christ Jesus and those who are clothed in Him as we will see in a moment. In verse 9 we have the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:19-20) Invite anyone you can find. That is our role as servants of God. We are supposed to be inviting anyone we come in contact with to this great honor. They don't deserve it anymore than we do, but it is the King's will, and He has made provision for us. (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5) Anyone includes Jew and Gentile, anyone who will receive the invitation.

Commented [notes18]: 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
Matt 28:19-20 (NIV)

¹⁰ *So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. Good and bad guests, all were welcome. I think that is a relative term. Some people who accept the invitation are good folks by the world's standards. Others are bad, by the world's standards. It doesn't matter. All are as unworthy as the first group who were called. The only difference is that they accepted the invitation and considered it an honor. They are all welcome, and the next verses explain why.*

Commented [notes19]: 3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.
4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.
5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.
2 Thess 1:3-5 (NIV)

¹¹ *"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' 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.'* Kings often provided festive dress for those they invited to banquets. That must have been what Jesus was referring to here, for the all were invited and all could not be expected to have proper attire. When they arrived at the gate, they were handed the festive covering and expected to put it on before going in.

One man decided he would do his own thing. He might have reasoned one way or another, but it was an insult to the king who provided it for him. The rabbis had some similar parables in which the clean clothing represented righteous acts. The Lord Himself used that figure of speech. (Revelation 19:8) But how could the "good and bad" be expected to be clothed in righteousness? Only if it was given to them at the door could it be expected of them. So to refuse to put it on would imply coming in your own good works, which Isaiah calls filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6) To refuse the covering provided is just as bad as refusing the invitation. Both insult the king's gracious provision.

Commented [notes20]: 8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Rev 19:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. Isaiah 64:6 (NIV)

You are all called. Never forget that should emote a great big "Wahoo!" in your heart. It is crazy not to accept such an opportunity. It is really rebellion against the king. It is saying you are more important than God. Persistent refusal will end in animosity and even violence toward God's servants. Should you accept this great opportunity, a robe of righteousness is waiting for you at the door. It is the Lord Himself. That is why the Apostle Paul wrote, *"Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."* Romans 13:14 (NIV) God gave His only Son to clothe you in righteousness that you might join the feast. But if you refuse to wear that gracious gift, don't expect to be welcome at that feast.

¹⁴ *"For many are invited, but few are chosen."* Everyone was invited. Only those who accepted the invitation were chosen. Let me set aside the picture and put it simply in Biblical terms. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come". (Revelation 22:7a) Jesus says, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden." (Matthew 11:28) You can come just as you are, but you can't stay just as you are. You must put on Christ. You must hide yourself in Him. A child of God begins to look like their Father as they mature, and so you too should look increasingly like Him.

Commented [notes22]: 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" Rev 22:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]:

Are you trying to get by in your own clothes, without being in Christ? Are your works your own strength and design, what will make you look good instead of glorifying God who freely gives you His righteousness? If so, you will be cast out of the feast. The focus of the feast is the Son. The wedding is about Him, not you. Unless you repent, you will not see the kingdom of heaven. What an invitation is before us! What a great provision in this robe that is being handed to us! Are you willing to be covered in Him, to set your own dirty comfortable clothes aside and be clothed in Jesus?

³ *Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you."* Zechariah 3:3-4 (NIV) You can stand in Joshua's place today and have those filthy clothes removed, but even better still, you can be clothed in the rich and beautiful clothing of Jesus Himself.