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Matthew 22:1-14 “Will You Accept God’s Invitation?”

Intro. At the close of today’s parable, Jesus made a statement that should concern many, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” The call to accept God’s salvation has gone out now to billions of people, but only a comparatively few will enter into God’s Kingdom. It’s likely that in my audience today there are at least some who have been called upon to trust in Christ as Savior, but who haven’t responded. It’s not because God hasn’t called you, but you haven’t chosen Him, and His way of salvation. I hope by the end of my message everyone who hears me will examine your heart and make sure they are among the few who have responded to God’s call.

Well in our text today, we are going to see why so many do not accept God’s gracious invitation to enter into His kingdom. We are also going to review what our mission is as a church. The same invitation we have received we are to extend to others. We are to invite people to come to Christ and enter the blessings of the kingdom of God. I am going to challenge our church to participate in the mission that is defined for us in this text of Scripture.

Once again we consider one of the parables of Jesus. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Obviously, the king in our story is God the Father, and “his son” is the Lord Jesus. I will explain the other characters of our story as we go along. So let us now consider what truths we can glean from this parable. First of all:

I. GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A ROYAL INVITATION

We’ve all been invited to something special, perhaps a birthday party, a wedding, or an anniversary celebration. Well imagine this. God, the King of the Universe, has invited you to participate in something really special. Basically, He invites us to enter into His eternal kingdom, and partake of the blessings of His salvation. And there are 4 truths about this invitation to salvation that I see here.

A. You Are Invited to Partake of Great Joy – I think it’s very interesting to what Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven. As we see beginning in v.2, He likens it to a wedding celebration. He tells a story of a king who arranged a marriage celebration for His son.¹ Then he invited many guests. Now we all know that weddings are joyful occasions. The occasion is to be joyfully celebrated. And they are made even more joyful when a big spread of good food is offered to the guests. We read about this in v.4, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”² There was to be a grand feast for many people.

¹ The HCSB says, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.” It is literally “made a *gamos*,” and *gamos* can refer to a marriage (Heb. 13:4) or more often to the marriage celebration, which include both the ceremony and feast (vv.3-4, 8-9; 25:10; Luke 12:36; 14:8; John 2:1-2; Rev. 19:7, 9).

² We have to be careful about interpreting the details of a parable. Sometimes the details are only there to complete the story. But at other times, there are parables where the details are clearly meant to illustrate spiritual truths. I believe this is one of those parables.

So what is this parable telling us? Well, the blessedness of the Messianic kingdom in its final phase is often pictured under the symbolism of guests reclining together on couches at a table loaded with food. And Jesus affirms that picture. He likens His kingdom to one of the most joyous occasions on earth. And I want you to know that He is not just talking about the joys of heaven or the coming kingdom. We can begin to experience heavenly joy now in this life. Jesus said in John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” The Bible says that joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). I have experienced this abiding joy in my own life and in this church we have many Christians who know the joy of the Lord. We get together and have a great time, and we don’t need booze, or the sinful, temporary pleasures of this world. Listen, the Christian life is not likened unto a funeral dirge but to a wedding celebration, with lots of good food and fellowship. Don’t you think for a moment that if you give your heart to Jesus that life will become dull and drab.

Another truth about God’s invitation is this:

B. God’s Invitation Is Freely Given – Have you ever been invited to a wedding celebration, and they charged admission? No! Guests may attend the wedding and enjoy the food and festive occasion freely. Even so, from this story and elsewhere we know that salvation is a free gift from God. The King has abundant resources to provide a lavish meal. And our heavenly King has provided everything you need to enjoy His priceless salvation. He has provided the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of His Son. He has provided eternal life to all who ask. He has provided an abundant life to all who will receive it (Jn. 10:10). Even the Old Testament gave this invitation. Isa. 55:1 says, “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; and you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Now there’s another truth about God’s invitation that I see here:

C. God’s Invitation Was First Offered to Israel – This was God’s plan (Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:16). And this historical fact was illustrated by the parable. In v.3 we read that the king “sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding....” Those who received the original invitation clearly represent the people of Israel. Unfortunately for them, most in Israel rejected God’s invitation, as we see in the last of v.3. They even rejected repeated appeals from God’s servants as we see in v.5.³ Oh, the patience and forbearance of God!⁴ Why, some of the Jews persecuted and even murdered God’s servants whom He sent to invite Israel to receive His salvation. God sent prophets, John the Baptist, and even His own Son to Israel. By the time of Christ there was probably not a nook or cranny of the Holy Land where that invitation had not been heard. And yet, most rejected the invitation given by them. And even though the leaders of Israel crucified God’s Son, our patient Lord still sent the apostles to give Israel yet another opportunity to repent, and trust in Christ.

Now because of the refusal of Israel to accept God’s invitation, we see another development in the story. Beginning in v.8 we see that:

D. God’s Invitation Is Now Offered to All – Look with me at vv.8-9, “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into

³ This second invitation could refer to the appeal of the apostles after Pentecost.

⁴ See Jer. 7:13, 25; 11:7; 25:3, 4; Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:1.1; Luke 13:6-9; Rom. 2:4; 9:22; I Tim. 1:16; I Peter 3:20; II Peter 3:15.

the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.” Since the first invited guests did not come to the wedding, the king decides to invite everybody, just to make sure that the banquet hall is filled. This reminds me of the words of Paul in Acts 13:46, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.” Indeed, just like Jesus predicted in this parable, the Gospel invitation was given to the Gentiles, and they responded by the thousands, and many poured into the Church of the first century. And ever since, the Church has been made up primarily of Gentiles from many different nations.

This was a shocking reversal to many Jews. They envisioned themselves at a great banquet in the coming Kingdom of God (Luke 14:15; 22:30), and most Gentiles excluded. But here we see most Jews excluded, and many Gentiles in the coming Kingdom of peace and joy (cf. Mt. 8:11-12).

Now on the basis of vv.8-10 I can assure you that God’s invitation has been extended to each of you. No one has been excluded. It doesn’t matter what your race or nationality is. It doesn’t matter if your life has been upright or immoral, as we see in v.10. God loves you, and wants to include you in His kingdom of joy.

So we have seen that God’s invitation to enter into His kingdom of joy has been freely extended, and extended to all. Now the second main truth of this parable is this:

II. WE ARE TO SHARE THE KING’S INVITATION TO ALL

This is not the main point of the parable, but I feel I must interject this point. Since most in my audience have already accepted God’s invitation, that is the part of the parable that has the most application to us. I want us to sense the heart of God for a lost, sad, and dying world. He wants all to be saved, and He calls upon us to extend His invitation to others. So I want to share with you 3 truths about our mission. First:

A. Go to Where the People Are – In v.9 Jesus says, “Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.” Jesus is literally describing going outside the city where the country roads converge near the city gate. Everyone going into the city or out of the city would tend to pass by such locations.

Even so, we should go out into our world, to where the people are, and invite many to believe in Christ. We cannot wait for people to come to us. We must go to them. We must not isolate ourselves from unbelievers. Let us carry God’s invitation to people where we work, at school, where we play, eat, or shop. This also means that we need to send missionaries to other countries to share the gospel. In fact, I preached this same message last March in South Africa. Operation Christmas Child is one way we are getting the gospel to the children of the world.

B. Exclude No One – Jesus says in v.10, “So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good.” This “bad and good” has reference to human standards of judgment. The gospel reaches “bad” people, and that word literally refers to evil (*poneros*) people, including the law breakers of society. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance (cf. 9:12-13). The gospel also reaches “good,” moral, upright, religious people. All kinds of people are called and many kinds of people respond. We’ve got all kinds of people right here in our church! We have some that were at one time bad to the bone. And we

have some like my wife who have lived by high moral standards all her life. But either way you're lost and bound for hell without Jesus Christ!

Now we need to make sure the "bad" among society are not excluded from our appeal. Don't be among those who say, "Oh, we don't want *those* people in our church." When was the last time you invited an immoral person to church? When was the last time you invited a young person full of nose rings, earrings, and tattoos to church, or to Christ? Christ says that all are to be invited, for all can be forgiven and transformed.

C. Seek to Fill God's House and God's Heaven – Only a few Jews responded to the invitation. It just would not do for the King's son to have only a few guests at His wedding. So this parable illustrates the truth that it is the will of God that many, many people enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ. As we see in the last of v.10, God wants heaven *filled* with people. The book of Revelation describes the end of time, when a multitude will inhabit heaven which no man could number (Rev. 7:9). For nearly two thousand years the inviting has been going on and the banquet hall is filling up quickly. But still there is room. But the day is coming when the banquet hall will be filled, and there will be no more opportunities to accept Christ.

Will you help to fill up this church, and have a small part in filling up heaven? Before the coronavirus we could sure fill football stadiums, basketball arenas, and movie theaters. Why can't we fill up God's house?

So those of us who have already accepted God's invitation have a mission. Let us go and invite many people to Christ before it is too late. But I'm sure there are some here today, and some watching by television or the Internet, who have not yet responded to God's invitation. So my third main point is this:

III. DECIDE HOW YOU WILL RESPOND TO HIS INVITATION

God invites you to enter into His banquet hall. How can you refuse the gracious invitation of the king? Accept His offer of forgiveness, eternal life, and the abundant life in Christ that is full of joy. What will *you* do? Well as you consider this important decision notice:

A. Salvation Is a Choice of the Will – In v.3 Jesus gives the real reason so many reject God's invitation, "...and they were not willing to come." The imperfect tense may indicate a persistent, stubborn refusal. They kept saying "No". Isn't that the way it is so often. I've known of people who have heard the Gospel many times, and they keep saying "no" over and over again. That is a dangerous response because your heart tends to become hardened to the gospel invitation.

Listen, if you do not accept Christ today, even though the power of the gospel and the power of the Spirit is tugging on your heart, it is simply because you don't want to. Salvation begins with a choice. You must choose Christ. Furthermore,

B. Don't Treat God's Invitation Lightly – This is such a problem with so many people. We read about this in v.5, "But they made light of it and went their ways...." They treated his invitation as unimportant, of no consequence. Literally, they had no concern for the king's invitation. This is the most common response, rather than hostile rejection.

But how can an invitation to a royal wedding be treated lightly? An invitation by a king is a serious matter.

Oh friend, no longer treat the Gospel as a matter worthy of indifference. You may make light of me, but you must not make light of God. Heb. 2:3 says, “how shall we escape if we neglect (*ameleo*, same word) so great a salvation....”

C. Don't Choose Worldly Pursuit over Christ – In the last of v.5 we see why they made light of the king's invitation. One was too interested in his farm. Another was too interested in his business. Wedding celebrations in that day and culture lasted for several days. They didn't want to give up that much time from the task of making money. Yet this wasn't just any wedding, but the wedding of the king's son.

There are multitudes that feel they have no time for God, or His church, or the pursuit of His kingdom. They're too busy working, or playing, or pursuing their hobbies. Are you one of those people? Nothing that the world has to offer has more value than the kingdom of God. Jesus said in Mt. 16:26, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

Now let me warn you of something else:

D. Don't Imagine that Outward Acceptance Is Enough – As we move on down to v.11 we see an interesting twist in the story. We read of one individual who outwardly responded to the invitation. He came to the wedding celebration. But he did not have on the right garment. Have you ever been invited to a special occasion, only to find that you were either overdressed or under dressed?

Now in the case of the man in our parable, he was not properly dressed. But his failure was not due to poverty. It's not that he could not afford a wedding garment. You see, in those days, when a king hosted a royal feast, he would present each guest with a special festive robe to be worn on that occasion. That way *everyone* would be properly dressed to fit the occasion. But for some reason this man did not accept the festive robe that the king provided. Perhaps he felt that his own garments were good enough. But it is clear from v.12 that a failure to wear the wedding garment was totally unacceptable to the king.

Even so, the garment of our own righteousness is unacceptable to God. Only the righteousness of Christ is acceptable to God. And the good news is that such a robe of righteousness is freely supplied to all who believe. And keep in mind that salvation is personal and individual. We must accept what God gives to us.

So Jesus makes it clear that some of those who respond to the Gospel call are not truly saved. Judas was such a man. Indeed, among the multitudes of people who have come forward in evangelistic campaigns, there are thousands who have never been saved at all. Why? Some just went through the outward motions. Some never repented of their sin, and they have just continued in their sin as before. They are just nominal Christians, in name only. They consider themselves good persons who do not really need the righteousness of Christ.

Are you sure that you are saved? You need to give heed to 2 Pet. 1:10 and “give diligence to make your calling and election sure....”

E. *Truly* Accept God's Invitation – Many in v.10 accepted the King's invitation. They put on the wedding garment. Will you be among those who accept God's invitation? Jesus warns in v.14 that “many are called, but few are chosen.” Indeed, many will hear the Gospel invitation,

but only a comparatively few will demonstrate that they are among God's elect⁵ by accepting God's invitation. The invitation is far wider than those who truly accept.

Will you be among the special few who honor God by accepting His invitation to believe in His Son Jesus Christ, and enter into the joy of the Lord, and into eternal life?

Let's suppose that you have heard God's invitation to enter his blessed kingdom and yet you haven't responded. Perhaps you think you are too busy to follow Christ. Or you think that you do not need the salvation Christ offers. Well I want you to consider the last point of my message which is this:

IV. CONSIDER THE HIGH COST OF REJECTING HIS INVITATION

In this parable Jesus gives a warning to all who fail to give heed to the king's invitation. I hope this will motivate each of you to be diligent to make sure you are saved. Notice what this parable teaches us:

A. The King Will Surely Examine You – This is illustrated in v.11, “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.” As the king entered the banquet hall, his eye scanned the audience and he saw the one man without a wedding garment. He was astonished at the rude boldness of the man who came there, knowing that he did not have the proper dress. So he confronted him. Even so, the day is coming when you will stand among the multitude of souls on Judgment Day, and God will examine each and every person. And He will look for one thing: are you clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ?

The Book of Revelation describes the scene on Judgment Day like this. Each person will stand before God, and the Lamb's Book of Life will be open (Rev. 20:12). That book records the name of every person who repented of their sin and chosen to rely solely upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ for their salvation. And God will search the book for one thing: Is your name written there? If not, make sure your name is added this very day!

B. There Is No Excuse for Any Failure to Accept Christ – Notice in v.12 that the man who was caught without a wedding garment was “speechless” [literally “muzzled” (*phimoo*)]. What could he say? He had no excuse to offer.

Even so, if you make light of God's invitation to trust in His Son Jesus Christ, and you stand condemned before Him at the Judgment, you will be without excuse. If salvation were by works, then we could try to claim that if we didn't measure up, it was because we were at some disadvantage. But since salvation is freely offered to all at such a great cost, how can you defend a refusal to accept such an offer? And if you dare to defend yourself, claiming that you lived a good life, that is why the book of Revelation also says that “the books” will be opened. Every sin you have ever committed is recorded in those books; thousands of them. And God's universal moral law will convict you, as Romans 3:19 says, “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

C. To Reject God's Invitation Invites Serious Judgment – We see this truth illustrated in 2 different places in the parable. First, the Jewish nation that rejected God's invitation suffered

⁵ The fact that we are “chosen” demonstrates that salvation is ultimately the work of God's sovereign grace. He is to be praised!

the judgment of God. In v.7 we read, “But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.” This kind of punishment was used only in case of the most serious treason in revolt against a king. Well, 40 years after Jesus spoke those words the Romans came into Jerusalem and did exactly what v.7 says. It is believed that more than a million Jews, who had crowded into the city,⁶ perished. As a political unit Israel ceased to exist for almost 1900 years!

Then, in v.13 we see what will happen to those who may outwardly accept God’s invitation, but who fail to rely upon Christ for their salvation, “Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” The darkness is in sharp contrast with the light that fills the wedding hall. And the weeping and gnashing of teeth describes utter sorrow and despair. Jesus used that description of hell a total of 7 times.⁷ What a contrast to the joy of heaven!

If there is anyone who is hearing this message that hasn’t responded to God’s invitation to enter His kingdom, don’t you want to do that lest this happens to you?

Conclusion: Because of our sin man lives in a world of sorrow, sadness and death. But God is good. He invites us to partake of His joy. He has prepared an eternal kingdom of joy, which will be inaugurated by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Will you be seated at the table? You can be. The invitation is open to all people, Jew or Gentile, white, brown, yellow, or black. Eternal life is a gift that has been provided by our gracious King. Will you accept God’s invitation? All you need to do is turn from your sin, and trust in God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for your sins on the cross. Don’t make light of this invitation. Don’t be diverted by worldly pursuits. This is the most important invitation you will ever receive. Say “Yes” to Jesus today. Don’t be among those who are not willing to accept God’s invitation.

Most of you have already accepted God’s invitation. We need to renew our commitment to share God’s invitation with others. God wants all people to be saved. Let us go out to where the people are and invite them before it is too late!

Sources: Charles R. Erdman, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Westminster, 1966); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2020; William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture, Vol 6* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); John Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Loyal: Matthew* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1980); Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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⁶ Yet if they had given heed to Jesus (Mt. 24:15-18), their lives would have been spared.

⁷ Mt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:26, 30.