

Please turn in your copies of God's Word to Matthew chapter 22. This morning we come to the table of our Lord and partake of His body and blood as a corporate body. This Supper is but a foretaste of that which awaits us in glory. While it is an incredibly blessed thing to gather together, to sit round about this table, and to partake of the bread and the wine of this Supper, that which awaits us in the age to come is infinitely more a blessed thing. We will one day sit round about the Lord's table and partake of this meal in His immediate presence in glory as we take part in that marriage supper of the Lamb. Here this morning we have a foretaste of that marriage supper, and we will consider the Lord's call to come to the wedding. With that in mind please give your attention to the reading of the holy Word of God from Matthew chapter 22 beginning at verse 1.

Read Matthew 22:1-14

Pray

I'm sure most if not all of you here have been to a wedding before or at least have been invited to a wedding before. These are joyous occasions in which we celebrate with our friends and family the making of a covenant between two loved ones. Here in our text this morning we are given a parable by the Lord Jesus Christ that likens the kingdom of heaven to that of a wedding, or more accurately to a wedding feast. In our modern times we don't really emphasize the feast aspect of weddings like was done in the ancient times. Of course, we do have wedding receptions, but this is but a sliver of the grand events that wedding feasts were. These were spectacles, events that could last even multiple days depending on how extravagant and wealthy the people were who were getting married. We see that a wedding feast is where Christ Jesus chose to perform His first miracle as He began His earthly ministry. It seems obvious that wedding feasts hold an important role in the life of a believer, especially when we factor in that which awaits us in glory with the marriage supper of the Lamb. Here in our text we are not given an historical account of an event that took place, but instead a parable with the purpose of instructing and convicting. And in this

parable it is not just some ordinary wedding feast that is seen, but it is the wedding feast of the son of the king. This a royal wedding and a royal feast, and there is a royal summons to all to attend. As we consider this we do so in light of the feast which we are about to partake of. And we will see here that the invitation is given to you this day as well. So the exhortation for you this day is to respond to the King's invitation and come unto the wedding feast. We will see this exhortation in our text by considering the three types of people to who were invited to this wedding and what their responses were. We will consider first, the wicked; next, the hypocrite; and finally, the sincere.

Let us first consider the wicked. Look again at the first six verses, "And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." Just as when we have a wedding we send out invitations to those whom we are closest with, our friends and family, those who have been chosen to be guests, so too does the king send out the invitation to the wedding to his chosen. These were the Jews, God's chosen people, those who had a distinguished honor and for whom the table of the Lord's bounty had been prepared. And so He sent forth His invitation to them. And yet we are told that they would not come. And so he sends his servants once again to invite these people to the wedding, telling them that everything has been prepared, the feast is ready, and yet they still did not come. We are told that they made light of it. In the parallel passage to this parable in the Gospel of Luke we read that they made excuses. Here we see that those excuses were that they went back to their farms to tend to their

flocks and crops. Others went back to their merchandise, to the profession that they had. They saw the things of this world, the busyness of life, as an excuse for not answering the invitation of the king to come. Friends, how often is this the case with us. We hear the Lord's call to us, His invitation to come unto Him, whether it be here at the Supper or His general call to appear before Him in private, family, and corporate worship, and we let our lives, our responsibilities, our duties, to become excuses for not answering His invitation.

But then there were others, those who didn't just go back to their farms or their merchandise, but instead responded in hostility toward the servants. We are told that they "entreated them spitefully, and slew them." How wicked these men were who when given such a gracious invitation to come to the wedding feast of the king's son turn around and beat and killed the messengers. There were those Jews who were devoted to the worldly and earthly things who simply did not accept the invitation of the Lord, but here these are those Jews who took it upon themselves to seek to stop the invitation from going out. These aren't those who worked on farms or dealt in merchandise, but instead these were those religious men, the scribes and Pharisees, who sought the destruction of the true religion at all costs. Where before the servants, those prophets of old, were simply rejected, here the servants go again, this time those men like John the Baptist and the Apostles, and these Jews not only rejected them but sought to kill them. And so we see that there was a consequence for this. The king would not let such a heinous act go unpunished. We read in verse 7, "But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." Here we see the wrath of the king poured out upon those who had done this wicked act. It is one thing to refuse an invitation to a wedding feast; it is an even worse thing to refuse an invitation to a wedding feast of the king's son; it is the height of wickedness to murder the servants of the king who is inviting you to that feast. And this is just what those Jews did, they killed those servants of the Lord, and they deserved their just

reward for their wicked act. This is a prophetic uttering of the Lord Jesus Christ about the destruction of Jerusalem that was to come. Just forty years later the Lord would send His army, utilizing the pagan armies of Rome, and they would enact His vengeance, destroying those murders, and burning up their city.

Friends, this is not simply something only about what happened during the first century; it applies to us as well. Calvin writes, “The same destruction which Christ denounces against the Jews awaits all the ungodly, who violently oppose the ministers of the Gospel. Those who are so entirely occupied with earthly cares, as to set no value on the divine invitation, will at length perish miserably in famine and want; and therefore, whenever God calls us, let us be prepared and ready to follow.” So I ask you, how will you respond to the invitation from the King? He has invited you to His Son’s wedding feast. Will you say that you are too busy with the things of this world, with your employment, with your responsibilities and duties, to be able to attend? I would venture to say that if any one of us were to receive a personal all expense paid invitation to a royal wedding we would do whatever we could to make sure that we were there. Why would you not do the same when it is the King of the universe who is personally inviting you to His Son’s wedding? There are countless men and women in this world who have heard the invitation of the King and yet this is their response, to ignore it and go about their own business. And then there are others who follow in the footsteps of those scribes and Pharisees. There are ministers of the Gospel, servants of the King, all around the world who are being killed for spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. And here in America this is not such a common thing, but there are still ministers who are treated spitefully, who have their names and reputations murdered in the public square for the sake of the Gospel. And if that turns out to be you, I will tell you now that what awaits you is the very same destruction that found those Jews out. If God did not spare the natural branch, His chosen people, the Jews, then the same

punishment will be inflicted upon us, the wild branch that was engrafted, if we reject His gracious invitation.

And because this invitation was rejected by those for whom it was meant, the king told his servants to go out and invited everyone else. Of those who came, we see that there were those who were hypocrites in responding to the invitation. Look with me at verses 8-14, “Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither 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.” They went out and they “gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good.” The invitation now was indiscriminate. All were invited to come to the wedding feast of the son. But there was one who came who at first glance seemed to be part of those who were meant to be there, but it was quickly discovered that he was without a wedding garment. This is the hypocrite, one who we believe has received and answered the invitation of the Lord, but in reality He is a fraud. He is there to receive the benefits of being a guest in the King’s house, but he has no intention of being part of those whose loyalty belong to the King. Friends, not all who have once entered the Church will become partakers of everlasting life, but only those who are found to wear the garments suited for the heavenly palace.

And what are these wedding garments which are missing from this man? Revelation 19:7-8 give us the answer, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted

that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” It is the holiness without which no man will see the Lord, as the book of Hebrews tells us. It is the evidence of one who is truly in Christ, who has put on Christ and been clothed in His righteousness. Without this God finds nothing in us but wretchedness, and nakedness, and abominable filth. But He is the one who clothes us in the glorious wedding garments that are required to be a guest at this feast. And so we see that this hypocrite, this fraud, is quickly found out and he too receives his just reward, “And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither 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.” Here we see Christ do something He does not normally do. He switches from a parable to reality. Those who are found out by the King to be hypocrites are bound up and cast into outer darkness. They are cast into the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. They are cast into hell. And notice, it is the King who does the search of the guests and exposes the hypocrisy of this man. It is not your duty to scrutinize everyone else’s life to see if they truly are a welcomed guest at this feast. That is the Lord’s duty. And one day He will come with the winnowing fork in His hand and will separate the wheat from the chaff. They will then be cast into the everlasting fire of hell.

Friends, let this be a warning to you against hypocrisy. Your disguises will one day be stripped off, and you will appear in your true colors. You may have entered into the wedding feast by manufacturing a fake wedding garment. You may have even fooled everyone else. But the King knows the true wedding garments, and He will not be fooled. Or you may have not even taken the time to try to craft your own clever disguise, but instead entered into the wedding feast still wretched and wicked and filthy. The Lord will not let the wicked stand in the midst of the congregation of the righteous. Thomas Manton writes, “It is a disgrace to a wedding

feast not to come with a wedding garment; to take the Christian profession, and continue in their pagan sins and practices. Repentance and reformation of life is the new garment of the soul; that only will become the gospel feast.” Those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, that have a Christian temper of mind, and are adorned with Christian graces, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom He is all in all, have the wedding garment. If that is not you then you know what awaits you if you continue in your sin. You must repent and be clothed in the true wedding garment. If you are a hypocrite do not come to this table and feast on this sacramental meal. You have been invited, but if you have not put on the wedding garment then this meal is not for you. To eat and drink of this Supper would be to eat and drink damnation upon yourself. You would be heaping judgement upon judgement, damnation upon damnation. And you too will be bound up and cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Friends, flee the wrath that is to come. Call upon your Savior, Jesus Christ, the one whose wedding feast it is, and be washed of your wretchedness and wickedness and filth, and be clothed in that fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints. Then you too will be made partakers of this great wedding feast.

As the invitation went out it fell on the ears of many. We have seen the response of the wicked and that of the hypocrite, now let us turn to consider the sincere. “Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.” The invitation has gone forth unto all people, to the bad and the good alike, and they have been bidden to come unto the wedding feast. This is the Gospel which has gone forth unto you. It did not matter if you were the most upright worldly man there is or if you were the most vile and evil man there is, if you were elderly, an adult, a teenager, or even an infant. This Gospel does not discriminate. It is for everyone. You

have been invited to that blessed wedding feast, and if you are in Christ then you have accepted that invitation and been given that true wedding garment. Now you are part of that marriage between Christ and His Bride the Church. This Gospel covenant which have been made part of, which you have made your own, which you renew here in this sacramental meal, is the marriage covenant between Christ and His Church, and it is a marriage of God's own making. It is not like the marriages that we see all around us, full of strife and conflict, riddled with separations and divorce. No, this marriage covenant is an everlasting one. As Christ says in Matthew 19:6, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." And dear saints, what a joy it is to know that no man could ever put this marriage covenant asunder.

And so friends, the feast is set before you. The King has made it ready just as He prophesied by the mouth of Isaiah in chapter 25 and verse 6, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." This feast is a token of God's love towards you. He has shown His good favor towards you in reconciling you and inviting you to partake of this blessed meal. This Gospel, this covenant, this feast is given to fill your hungry soul and to nourish you with every good and gracious thing that the Lord offers in it. So come and feast on the fat things. Feast on the wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. Fellowship with, commune with, your risen Savior in this wedding feast, for He is that which is offered to you this day. Christ is not only the bridegroom in this wedding, but He is the feast Himself. Matthew Henry says, "The provision made for believers in the covenant of grace, is not such as worthless worms, like us, had any reason to expect, but such as it becomes the King of glory to give. He gives like himself; for he gives himself to be to them El shaddai—a God that is enough, a feast indeed for a soul." This is what is offered to you this day in this sacramental feast. Jesus Christ offers to you His body broken for you and His blood poured out for the remission of your sins. His fatlings are killed, his

wines are mingled; the crucified body of Christ, and his blood shed for the expiation of sins and procuring eternal life; this is meat indeed, and drink indeed. There is in it all that we can expect in a feast. So will you answer His call? Will you respond to His invitation? Friends, today hear His gracious invitation and come unto the wedding feast.

Brothers and sisters, do not refuse the invitation of the Lord. Do not make light of it, thinking that it is unimportant or that it is something that you can do when you get around to it. Today is the day of salvation. Come unto Christ. And if you are the hypocrite here today, do not flatter yourself with an empty vain faith. You must all examine yourselves to see if you truly are a lawful guest at this wedding feast. If you profess the name of Christ you must depart from your iniquity and be clothed in that true wedding garment. And if you are the sincere, then the call to you today is to come unto the wedding feast. The table is ready for you to come and partake of it. This is what this parable is about, not merely coming to the sacrament only, but coming to Christ Jesus Himself, and to the fat things in the sacrament. So the invitation is given to you this day. How will you respond?