

They Would Not Come to the Feast!

SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2023

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 22:1-14

1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' 5 **But they made light of it and went off**, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the thoroughfares and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' 10 And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so, the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

Meditation: What can a royal wedding party tell us about God's kingdom? One of the most beautiful images used in the Scriptures to depict what heaven is like is the wedding celebration and royal feast given by the King for his newly wed son and bride. Whatever grand feast we can imagine on earth, heaven is the feast of all feasts because the Lord of heaven and earth invites us to the most important banquet of all - not simply as bystanders or guests - but as members of Christ's own body, his bride the church! The last book in the Bible ends with an invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb - the Lord Jesus who offered his life as an atoning sacrifice for our sins and who now reigns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. *The Spirit and the Bride say, Come!* (Revelations 22:17). The Lord Jesus invites us to be united with himself in his heavenly kingdom of peace and righteousness.

Whose interests come first - God or mine?

Why does Jesus' parable of the marriage feast seem to focus on an angry king who ends up punishing those who refused his invitation and who mistreated his servants? Jesus' parable contains two stories. The first has to do with the original guests invited to the marriage feast. The king had sent out invitations well in advance to his subjects, so they would have plenty of time to prepare for coming to the feast. How insulting for the invited guests to then refuse when the time for celebrating came! They made light of the King's request because they put their own interests above his. They not only insulted the King but the heir to the throne as well. The king's anger is justified because they openly refused to give the king the honour he was due. Jesus directed this warning to the Jews of his day, both to convey how much God wanted them to share in the joy of his kingdom, but also to give a warning about the consequences of refusing his Son, their Messiah and Savior.

An invitation we cannot refuse!

The second part of the story focuses on those who had no claim on the king and who would never have considered getting such an invitation. The "good and the bad" along the highways certainly referred to the Gentiles (non-Jews) and to sinners. This is certainly an invitation of grace - undeserved, unmerited favour and kindness! But this invitation also contains a warning for those who refuse it or who approach the wedding feast unworthily. God's grace is a free gift, but it is also an awesome responsibility.

Cheap grace or costly grace?

"Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves... the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance... grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate... Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life."

God invites each of us as his friends to his heavenly banquet that we may celebrate with him and share in his joy. Are you ready to feast at the Lord's banquet table?

Daily Quote from the Early Church Fathers: *A guest with no wedding garment*, by John Chrysostom (347-407 AD)

"But since you have already come into the house of the marriage feast, our holy church, as a result of God's generosity, be careful, my friends, lest when the King enters, he find fault with some aspect of your heart's clothing. We must consider what comes next with great fear in our hearts. But the king came in to look at the guests and saw there a person not clothed in a wedding garment. What do we think is meant by the wedding garment, dearly beloved? For if we say it is baptism or faith, is there anyone who has entered this marriage feast without them? A person is outside because he has not yet come to believe. What then must we understand by the wedding garment but love? That person enters the marriage feast, but without wearing a wedding garment, who is present in the holy church. He may have faith, but he does not have love. We are correct when we say that love is the wedding garment because this is what our Creator himself possessed when he came to the marriage feast to join the church to himself. Only God's love brought it about that his only begotten Son united the hearts of his chosen to himself. John says that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for us' (John 3:16)." (excerpt from *FORTY GOSPEL HOMILIES* 38.9)

OPENING PRAYER: - **Lord Jesus**, may I always know the joy of living in your presence and grow in the hope of seeing you face to face in your everlasting kingdom. **Amen**

CLOSING PRAYER:- **"World Peace"** Lord, we pray for the victims of the recent Earthquake in Marrakesh Morocco and that they have the resolve to rebuild their lives and homes after the forces of nature have turned against them, also the war in Ukraine and now Israel with Palestine that those effected have the strength to go on and the leaders of these countries find a peaceful resolution to these wars. **Amen.**