

Parable of the Wedding Banquet

October 15, 2017, Children's Sermon

Gospel: **Matthew 22:1-14** “¹Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. ⁴Then 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.’ ⁵But they paid no attention and went off - one to his field, another to his business. ⁶The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. ¹³Then 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.’ ¹⁴For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

We've talked before about why Jesus often used stories about everyday life (called parables) to help his followers understand something about God's kingdom. This parable has two parts -- an invitation, and special clothes. Let's re-imagine **this** parable to look for its meaning for us.

Hmmm, a modern-day parable!!

Let's say you are invited to a VERY NICE birthday party for a special person at your school. You don't need to bring a present, they're going to GIVE YOU a present! Not only that, but you will be picked up in a limousine (you're seriously getting VIP treatment). They're even going to give you a gift-certificate so you buy something new to wear. Sweet...chill...COOOOL!

How would you respond?

TO THE INVITATION>>> Would you say ‘... next Saturday? ...I don't know... I was planning to go check the yard, I think the grass needs my attention. I'd better pass.’

TO THE SPECIAL CLOTHES>>> ‘Nah...no thanks!’ Then you decide to go to the party -- but instead of putting on nice clothes, you just wear you had on ...when you were showing hogs ...or maybe your uniform or swimsuit from a recent sporting event. **Really??**

Then we consider what's what in the parable ...

- The person giving the party is God
- The party is God's Kingdom on earth.
- The party is to celebrate God's Gift of His Son, Jesus.
- And the new clothes...they represent **our** response to God. The Bible often uses new clothes as a symbol for our new life in CHRIST.

Now, tell the story again ... God invites us to join His family and celebrate His Gracious Gift of Forgiveness through Jesus. Out of respect and love for His GIFT OF FORGIVENESS, God expects us to change from our sinful ways (our everyday clothes) - to live more like the saints we've become.

THINK ABOUT THE INVITATION >>> It's a ‘no-brainer’ to choose heaven - an invitation for a reward to be held *sometime in the future*. Accepting the invitation doesn't inconvenience us in any way and it **is** an honor to be invited.

Oh, but the ‘CLOTHES’ >>> It’s something entirely different when an invitation includes changing out our old habits for new ones. We may find it inconvenient to accept the expectations that following Christ include -- going to church on Sunday, being kind to people who are not kind to us, loving people who are different from us, not saying unkind things about someone who has made us angry?

We want to do what we always do, our own way.

Sometimes even good things distract us from offering our **THANKS TO GOD!** They aren’t excuses, exactly. They are very real, personal concerns that (*we are implying*) are more important than God’s invitation ... we have chores to do, homework, errands to run, rooms to clean, babysitting, cooking, dishes, lawns to mow, or a flat tire to repair. Where can we find room on our “to-do” list for God?

... we can use Sunday morning as an example.

Think about it. This isn’t a story from the past - we see it happening all around *and to* us, every day, The King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Almighty Creator of the universe invites all of us to a party every Sunday. A feast, a banquet, the celebration of the union between God’s Son and the church (that’s you and me) on earth ... and we offer excuses.

- I work hard all week and Sunday is my only chance to sleep in!
- I don’t want to miss the opening kick-off...
- What a beautiful morning for fishing...
- The family is coming over and I have to get ready...

When we don’t particularly want to do something, it’s easy to find an excuse.

Let’s consider a sort of mini-parable. Using some familiar reasons for not going to church, apply them to an every-day activity - like TAKING A BATH. For example ...**I DON’T TAKE A BATH BECAUSE:**

- I only TAKE A BATH on special occasions like Christmas and Easter.
- I used to TAKE A BATH, but it got boring, so I stopped.
- None of my friends TAKE BATHS.
- I’ll start TAKING A BATH when I get older and dirtier.

What do you think the *real* message behind these words is?

In review ... A successful invitation has two parts: it is given and it is accepted, or not.

God’s invitation to faith is free (no strings attached). BUT, like all invitations, we need to accept it.

In our accepting, God’s requires us to “put on” something appropriate to that calling. We do that by **what** we do – and **by the ways that we do it**. God has laid out a path ... it’s up to us to follow it.

Think about the Bible as an invitation and as a road map. God uses the Bible to speak to us about kindness and forgiveness...about sharing and love. When we pass on that kindness and forgiveness ... that sharing and love, we show our acceptance of God’s invitation. Just because we say we accept this invitation doesn’t mean that our work is done ... in fact it’s just beginning!

Will you accept God’s invitation this week?

Let’s say a prayer ...

Dear God, we know that You have invited us to be part of Your family. Help us to accept Your life-changing invitation by living lives of love and caring. AMEN