

RECEIVE THE INVITATION, THE PARABLE OF THE
WEDDING BANQUET
MAUNDY THURSDAY

MATT 22:2-14
APR 2, 2015

² “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ ⁵ But they paid no attention 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 feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ ¹⁰ And those servants went out into the roads 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. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Again we are looking at a parable which is a picture Jesus uses to show us what he is doing for us,

When you take picture, have you ever said, “OK, one more.”?

Of course! And sometimes you may display two pictures side by side, showing two angles or view of same thing to give more complete picture of what it is like.

This parable is like that. It is one my favorite parables because it includes the two basic parts of every parable:

a picture of God and his grace - his free gift of love

and picture of us & how we should respond in faith

and also a third element found in some parables:

the negative result for those who do not respond rightly,

But then it has a second part which shows all three again.

In this parable, as in the Lord’s Supper...

WE ARE INVITED TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
WE ARE INVITED TO RECEIVE GOD'S GIFTS
WE ARE INVITED TO RELY ON GOD'S GRACE

WE ARE INVITED TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

² “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ ⁵ But they paid no attention 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.

Jesus was telling this parable to Jewish religious leaders
who knew well how God Made special covenant in O.T.
inviting Israel to be his special people,
calling them to special festivals at the temple
which were reminders of what he had done for them.

But Israel often rejected God's invitation.

The ignored him and worshiped idols instead.

They abused and killed his messengers the prophets.

So God allowed enemies to defeat & destroy them.

But God always sent his invitation again to another generation.

Finally he sent Jesus himself, but things hadn't changed.

Jesus knew they would reject and abuse him & kill him.

But he still keeps on inviting. God invites us to be with him,
to spend time with him in his word, prayer & worship

a foretaste of his ultimate invitation to heaven,
wedding feast of Jesus & bride, church, including us.

This means God wants an intimate relationship with us.

Holy Communion is our most intimate connection with Jesus
this side of heaven - he gives us here his very body & blood.

But today too, the response is often thanks but no thanks.

People may respond to an invitation to worship
like invitation to dinner with neighbor they don't like much
or invitation to meal at restaurant followed by sales pitch
for something we are not really interested in.

We may even find ourselves responding to Jesus' invitation
to receive Holy Communion often

with excuses that sound silly if applied to other invitations:

A birthday party for me? Thanks,
but I already had one the other day.

Thanks for the invitation to dinner, Grandma,
but I haven't done much lately to make me hungry.

Not tonight dear,

If it is every week, it won't seem special any more.

Another ball game? I went to one last week
and sometimes it seems like it goes so long.

People today, including us, also have business to attend to
which makes accepting this invitation seem inconvenient.

But God never really intended our relationship with him
to be matter of convenience

It is meant to interrupt our self centered way of life.

God wants to change our agenda & monopolize our time.

This is why Jesus dropped what he was doing in heaven
to come spend one on one time with us on earth.

The reason God invites us to spend time with him
is because he loves us dearly and because...

WE ARE INVITED TO RECEIVE GOD'S GIFTS

⁸ Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' ¹⁰ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

God's instructions in O.T. for eating the Passover
were that nothing was to be wasted or left over.

If you can't eat a whole lamb, invite the neighbors.

So with this king's wedding banquet. He wants' everyone there.

He says of those invited at first: They weren't worthy.

So the servants gather all they find, both good & bad.

They weren't worthy either!

The point is not to invite the worthy but to invite the needy.
the more poor and hungry the better.

When Israel rejects God's invitation,

through the prophets, through Jesus, through apostles,

God invited and welcomed the gentiles,

Rahab the harlot, Ruth the Moabite, Nebuchadnezzar,

Samaritan woman at the well, Gadarene demoniac,

Centurion at Capernaum & thief on the cross.

The Ethiopian Eunuch, Cornelius,
the Macedonians, Greeks & Romans
The English, the Germans, the Scandinavians,
The Asians, African refugees, Hispanic migrants,
Everybody come, he says, to the great feast of salvation.,
It is free and there is plenty for all.

There is a seat saved for you, he says, at the Lord's Supper
where God serves personal forgiveness for your sins.
Don't hesitate with doubts about needing or deserving it.

Thinking, "I must become a better person first."
or, "If I go too often, people will think I am pretty sinful."
Don't be like Peter in Gospel reading,
"Lord are you going to wash my feet, no, don't bother."

This invitation to everyone off the street
would surprise those who heard this parable
because in the Bible eating a meal together is a sign
of a special close relationship,
But God invites us into this relationship not because
there is something good about us but because
this is the only way we can be made good.
So, now that we have seen a picture of God's love for us
and the proper response of receiving it,
we have a second picture of God's gifts
to better understand what it means to respond to them.

WE ARE INVITED TO RELY ON GOD'S GRACE

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. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

When we lived in Glencoe, whenever there was a wedding,
there was a public dance at the local ballroom.
But if you were invited to the wedding, you got a free ticket
to get into the dance & another free ticket for a drink.
The free ticket showed that you had been invited.
When Jesus told this parable, when nobleman sent invitation
to a wedding, he also sent special clothes to wear to it.
If you had no special outfit, you had no invitation.

We are told everyone was invited, but this man
seems to think he is just fine in his own street clothes.
This would be like waltzing up to head table with your own
folding chair, pot-luck plate & homemade name card
Throw the crude wedding crasher out!
We have God's invitation given to us in our baptism,
engraved "Admit one free," & signed with Jesus' blood.
There God covered us with white robe of his righteousness.
But some will still say, I expect to go to heaven
because I have lived a pretty good life,
or always go to church, or read Bible & pray a lot.
Trusting in what we have done
is like going to wedding banquet in our work clothes
rather than dressed in righteousness Jesus gave us.
Everyone is invited but not everyone is admitted
if they don't really want the whole package God gives.
At this table we share unity as members of Christ's body,
with accepting whole faith in God's truth which unites us.
Here Jesus' true body & blood shows he truly died for us
which comes with faith that it is what he says it is.
Here God takes away our sins which ruin our lives
with repentance which lets go of those pet sins.
Here God is filling us to overflowing with his love and mercy,
with the forgiveness that flows from us to others.
If we expect to come on own terms "I'll take this but not that"
the host may say, "What are you doing here?"
Like the wedding clothes the king was looking for,
Rather than being obstacles to keep us from the sacrament,
these are things God gives us so we can
fully participate in the blessings of the sacrament.
Since we are so graciously invited to God's banquet of gifts,
let us not depend on our own goodness or reasoning
or feelings or desires
but rely completely on God's gracious gifts of
his true word & promises & righteousness and love.
WE ARE INVITED TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
who wants to fill the whole life he has given us.
WE ARE INVITED TO RECEIVE GOD'S GIFTS
which we do not deserve but desperately need
WE ARE INVITED TO RELY ON GOD'S GRACE
which has provided all we need to celebrate with him.