

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

Matthew 22:1-15

March 24, 2019

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INTRODUCTION: A few week ago, I spoke about the parable of the two sons. Both were told to go to the vineyard and work. One said no and later went. Another said yes but never went. The first son represented the Gentiles who rejected Christ and later accepted him. The second son represented the Jews who longed for the Messiah someday, but when he came, they rejected him.

Last week, I spoke about the Parable of the Tenants. A vineyard was leased to people who didn't live up to the lease. Jesus used this parable to point out the failure of the religious leaders he was confronting at the time.

Today's parable is about a wedding banquet. Here are the three points to my message:

- The king was the ultimate wedding planner.
- The would-be guests were distracted by other things.
- The man who crashed the party wasn't so clever.

First off... here's the spoiler!

- The king represents God, the son represents Jesus.
- The wedding banquet represents the return of Christ.
- The servants represent preachers.
- The people who declined the king's invitation represent those who say no to the Gospel.
- The man without wedding clothes represents a self-righteous person.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ² "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴ “Then 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.’

⁵ “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business.

⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸ “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰ So 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.

¹¹ “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

¹³ “Then 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.’

¹⁴ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

THE KING WAS THE ULTIMATE WEDDING PLANNER

EXPLANATION: The king made every provision to have a flawless wedding banquet. Let’s look back at how weddings happened in ancient Jewish tradition. Two couples arranged a marriage between their children. Whatever conditions were agreed upon were considered firm and non-negotiable. The couple was considered betrothed, completely committed to each other like a married couple, but they didn’t live together. The bride-to-be lived with her parents while they put the finishing touches on their rearing of her. And she would wait. Meanwhile, the groom-to-be went to prepare a home for him and his bride. Over a period of time, he worked to create an expected level of economic security. Then, without notice, he would return to get his bride. In a short while, a wedding was planned, and the celebration sometimes would last for days.

So the meaning behind this parable is that God is preparing a wedding feast because his son Jesus will return without notice to take his bride.

THE WOULD-BE GUESTS WERE DISTRACTED BY OTHER THINGS

EXPLANATION: Guests were invited but instead, one went to his field, another to his business. The other ones mistreated and killed the servants who invited them.

There is no doubt these people represent those who've heard the Gospel. Some turned an indifferent ear while others reacted violently. And it is exactly the same today. People turn an indifferent ear, others react violently.

There tend to be two reactions from those who do not want the truth of the Gospel. The first one is indifference.

ILLUSTRATION: "I have other things to do." "I am busy." "Maybe later." I saw a meme on social media that had a photo of a child playing baseball. The statement said, "There is very little chance your child will grow up to play professional sports. There is a one hundred percent chance your child will meet Jesus. Get your child in church." Many of us grew up playing sports. If anything, we need more after school games in neighborhoods – but occasionally, I'll meet a family that's too wrapped up in sports for their own good. Their kids know what to do with a ball but couldn't tell you the first thing about the Bible, scripture, Jesus, or anything having to do with the Lord. I wrote a letter to the TSSAA, the organization that governs school sports in Tennessee, and expressed my concern that school sports and practice times were happening during traditional church times. A friend of mine told me I was wasting my time writing such a letter and he must have been right. Do you know how that could change? If parents stood up to it.

Indifference to the Gospel – diversions - come in many forms. In today's world, there are so many church options and meeting times and small group Bible studies going on in colleges and neighborhoods - even online churches that are live - that a person has to blatantly turn away from the Gospel. Don't be like those in the parable who were indifferent.

EXPLANATION: The second reaction from those who don't want the Gospel is violence. In the parable, the men killed those who invited them to the banquet, and we know they represent the people who killed the prophets. I do not know anyone personally who has been killed sharing the Gospel, but it is happening in many parts of the world. I do know people who have received violent reactions when they've attempted to witness.

THE MAN WHO CRASHED THE PARTY WASN'T SO CLEVER

EXPLANATION: Let's look at the man who wore the wrong wedding clothes. A king would have provided all the wedding clothes for his guests to wear. There was a man who didn't bother to put them on. He decided to wear whatever he wanted. He thought his own clothes would be good enough. The fact that he didn't wear what was expected was an indication of his disregard for the requirements of the king.

This parable might be difficult for some Americans to understand because we've become so casual. People who can do better dress like bums on purpose and dare anyone to judge them. No one showed up wearing shorts and a t-shirt. No one showed up wearing sweat pants or a hoodie. You must remember, Jesus spoke this parable in a day when all weddings were formal occasions. To not wear the wedding garments would have been unthinkable and an intentional insult.

Now let's put this man in the context of the parable. Since the king represents God and the wedding banquet represents the entry to heaven, it is clear that those who are there must follow the requirement. The clothing represents putting on Christ. Those who gather at the heavenly father's wedding banquet must put on Christ. There is no other way to enter that banquet than through Christ.

Jesus hammered the religious leaders with the most condemning of all his parables. In his storytelling way, he told they would never see the Kingdom of God unless they set aside their religious snobbery and took on the faith of simple people. And what was their reaction?

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 22:15

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.

The man who didn't put on the wedding clothes represents the person who tries to get to God by any means other than Christ Jesus. I can hear him now: "What I wear will be good enough, and if they don't like it, they can just throw me out." He represents the person who thinks his or her own self-righteousness is good enough. He represents the person who disregards the scripture's explanation that Jesus is the only way.

He represents the person who is caught up in false religion. He represents the person who believes he can make it on his own merits. In fact, he represents the most common example of those who believe goodness, benevolence, and even a form of righteousness – without Jesus - is good enough for God.

Notice that the king asked him how he got there without wedding clothes and calls him “friend”. You see, the king was kind enough to ask how he got there. This illustrates God’s patience. There are many scriptures about God’s patience and Second Peter 2 verse 9 sums it up well: *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

Those who had the required clothing weren’t questioned. But this man was questioned and was speechless. He had nothing to say. When you stand in the righteous presence of God, no excuse will matter, nothing you can say will make up for not following God’s requirement.

APPLICATION: There are no party crashers in heaven.

As best as I understand the scripture, salvation offered through Jesus is not forced upon anyone. In the parable, the king could have forced people to come to the wedding banquet. In fact, in this day it would have been unheard of for a person to refuse the invitation from a king. Declining would have likely been a death sentence, because subjects of the king were basically owned by the king.

Heaven is going to be filled not with the religious intelligentsia but with those who come humbly as sinners, seeking forgiveness. Those who have put on Christ.

You know, we’ve gone quite some time without anyone being saved or baptized. Is it because everyone here is saved? I don’t think so. Is it because the Gospel is watered down when it is preached? Not on my watch.

Let’s bow our heads for a moment of prayer and ask that God would move in the lives of those lost without Christ and that they would respond positively.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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