

Matthew 22:1-14 – “The Parable of the Wedding Feast” – Oct. 6, 2024

1. I am glad that we are sticking with verse by verse preaching where the text dictates the content
 - a. It is in God’s wisdom that the narrative of Matthew has slowed way down in Holy Week
 - b. A casual reading may leave us thinking that the pace of this gospel is relatively even, but as we’ve seen, Matthew has taken
 - i. 2 chapters to cover 30 years
 - ii. 18 chapters to cover 3 years
 - iii. 8 chapters to cover one week
 - c. This should help us in prioritizing our own emphases
 - d. In the case of Jesus showdown with the priests and Pharisees in Jerusalem, it is also important for us to see the cosmic significance of what’s happening
 - i. Evangelicals correctly emphasize the importance of personal conversion
 - ii. Occasionally we underemphasize the themes of cosmic significance
 1. Jesus died and rose for my sins
 2. He also died and rose to deliver the new covenant and to change the trajectory of the world
 3. Cosmic governance changes; the old covenant giving birth to the new covenant very literally means that, just like Noah built the ark in one world and stepped off the ark into another world (2 Peter 3:6), so Jesus was born in one world and was resurrected in a different world

- a. This is what I mean when I say that we live in a different world than John the Baptist did
 - e. When Jesus uses parable after parable in this final confrontation, He is using different forms of imagery to explain this transition from one world into another world
 - i. Jesus condemned the temple a second time to show that the old house must be torn down, brick-by-brick
 - ii. He condemned the fig tree and spoke of the mountain being swallowed by the sea to vividly describe the end of Jerusalem and the old covenant age
 - iii. When His authority was questioned by those who had no legitimate authority, He started to answer in parable form
 - 1. The two sons
 - 2. The wicked tenants who were going to be put to a miserable death so that the vineyard could be taken from them and given to another
 - 3. A cornerstone that was rejected by early builders so that those who come later could pick it up
 - f. Jesus summarizes all these parables in 21:43 when He tells the priests that the kingdom is about to be taken away from them and given to people bearing its fruit
 - g. In today's text, Jesus is going to tell yet another story which illustrates the same thing
2. *VV.1-4 – “And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 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.”’

- a. Here we have a king who is preparing to celebrate his son
- b. These guests have already received an invitation earlier, but were not coming, so the king sends servants to remind them
- c. This is setting up a lot like the parable of the tenants in the vineyard
 - i. However that parable had to do with the stewardship that the tenants were given; this one has to do directly with the glory that the father wants to honour his son with
- d. So these guests have been initially invited, and now they are being reminded after they don’t come
- e. Notice once again that the servants don’t initially come offering threats, but are inviting and reminding the guests of the honour that awaits them
 - i. The king has slaughtered his fat calves and everything is ready
 - ii. These are warm and inviting terms
- f. It is not hard to see the characters that Christ has set in the story
 - i. The king is the Father, who wants to bestow a royal honour on His Son
 - ii. The guests are the Israelites
 1. They have been invited generations ago when God made covenant with Abraham and Moses
 2. But because the people were slow to come, God sent the prophets with terms of peace

- a. A good faith invitation to the feast
 - b. It is in their own interest to come; God has prepared everything for them and has called them to come and share in the joy and in the glory of the celebration of the Son, who is clearly Jesus Christ
 - g. These Israelites are invited twice
 - i. Once by virtue of God's covenant
 - ii. Second by reminder from God's prophets
3. VV. 5, 6 – *“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.”*
- a. The people of the kingdom clearly have no interest
 - b. One is too interested in the new herd of cows he bought, and another has a board meeting
 - c. In our own time we might add that a lack of interest may just as well be due to comfort and leisure as to attending to business
 - d. There are many things which keep us from worshipping the Son as we ought
 - e. The parable of the tenants was a pretty believable story
 - i. We can all see how people would grow accustomed to living as tenants on a beautiful farm and not sharing the harvest with the owner
 - ii. But here in v.6 this parable seems to take a very unrealistic turn
 - iii. We can understand that we get so caught up in our own affairs that we don't respond to an invitation

- iv. But why did this escalate into killing someone who has invited you to a feast?
- v. The short answer is that this is a political wedding
 - 1. The wedding of a king's son is a reminder of this son's inheritance
 - 2. The prince's wedding is a step along the son's way to full maturity and the taking of the throne
 - a. One area that shows a major separation between historic Christianity and the evangelical world today is its posture towards political authority
 - i. Some turn the political sphere into an idol, as though this is the primary expression of Christianity
 - ii. Many others retreat, and think that politics and religion shouldn't meet
 - iii. But if Christ is Lord of all, that means that He is Lord of all
 - 1. If He has been given all authority on heaven and on earth, that means He has all authority on heaven and on earth
 - a. The government shall be on His shoulders, and of its increase there shall be no end (Isaiah 9:6, 7)

iv. Christ's claim to all of life remains abrasive to many today, and they should be warned by this parable

1. The king's son is not to be rejected in any sphere of life

3. The invited guests are already busy living for themselves, but to stop and celebrate the king's son is an additional reminder that they should be honouring one greater than themselves

4. So even though the feast is beneficial for all, it is still a reminder of the supremacy of the son, and these people aren't interested

5. They are comfortable with their lives and they are not prepared to participate in helping to give glory and honour to one who is greater than they are

a. Absurdity of "*cutting off your nose to spite your face*"

i. These people get choice meat and wine if they show

ii. They stand to benefit

iii. But the spirit of covetousness, indifference, and autonomy is willing to harm itself, as long as someone else gets harmed too

f. At bottom, it is a love of comfort, a love of personal autonomy, and a desire to not give honour to another that keeps these people from being interested, and which gets some of them so worked up that they kill the king's messengers

4. VV.7-10 – *“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.”*

- a. Just like in the parable of the tenants, the king here has had enough
- b. Christ mixes in a prophecy to this parable when He speaks of sending his troops and burning their city
- c. God will send the Romans to make waste of Jerusalem, and here that burning of the city is explicitly tied to the fact that this is the city of murderers
 - i. They have killed the prophets
 - ii. They are about to kill Christ
 - iii. Some have made much of Martin Luther’s comments about the Jews
 1. Luther has been accused of antisemitism
 2. We must note that Luther said nothing in half-measures; he’s very direct and very colourful no matter the topic
 3. Luther’s impatience with the Jews was not based on ethnicity, but on their continued rejection of Christ
 4. Their entire city is destroyed because the vast majority of the Jews in Jesus’ day were very literally antichrist
 - a. 1500 years later in Luther’s time, nothing had changed, in fact, Judaism had become worse, as it is today

5. To this day, the Jewish people go to the wailing wall, still desiring the temple to be rebuilt, and still waiting for Messiah to come
 - a. They don't see that the reason that the wailing wall is all that is left is because Messiah already did come, but they refused to attend the wedding feast
 - b. A blindness covers their eyes to this very day
- d. *Vv.7-10 show the transition from one covenant to the next; from one world to the next*
- e. V.7 says that the reason for the city being burned is because it is a city of murderers
 - i. Instead of giving honour, they turn in on themselves and kill anyone who reminds them that they owe loyalty to the king and to his son
- f. Once the city is gone, so is the old system
 - i. Those who were originally invited were not worthy
- g. The new covenant is made up of those who desire to be there
- h. The invitation now goes out promiscuously
 - i. It's not just for those who were formerly invited, but to as many as the messengers can find
 - ii. The problem with the first group wasn't that they couldn't come, but that they didn't want to
 1. The second group comes willingly, and they stream in so abundantly that they fill the wedding hall
- i. V.10 shows that this is a mixed bunch of people, some good and some bad

- i. No doubt some were decent people who could see that the king's son deserved honour, and they themselves would receive a great honour by attending a feast that was put on by the king himself!
 - ii. Some others will have been prostitutes and beggars and Gentiles
 - 1. People so worn down by life that they were more than happy to take up the offer of fellowship, celebration, and good food
 - iii. Now that the invitation was open to all, some may very well have been from those who were first invited, who had a change of heart
 - 1. It is not that the Jewish people can't be saved; it is that they can't be saved apart from entering the new covenant
 - 2. Just like Hosea is willing to go to the prostitute auction and buy his wife back, so God continues to extend His invitation to these first people, but it must happen under the new terms
 - j. In this new covenant era of widespread evangelism and proclamation of the gospel to all who will listen, Matthew Henry comments "*Ministers, in casting the net of the gospel, enclose both good fish and bad*"
 - i. To this very day, people come into the church from all walks of life
- 5. VV.11-14 – "*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.*"
 - a. At the close of this parable, the king comes to inspect

- b. After the messengers have gone to the highways and byways to get everyone in, we might be reminded of the parable of the tares, where the tares and the wheat have grown together
 - i. This is a concept that we all must reckon with
 - 1. Visible vs. Invisible church
- c. The wedding garment here would most naturally seem to be the imputed righteousness of Christ, since this righteousness covers and is spoken of as a robe (Zech. 3:3-5; Rev. 3:18; 6:11; 7:13, 14; 19:8).
- d. It could also be a reference to the fruitful living that flows out from the covering that Christ gives us, since Christ has been very concerned with outward fruit in these parables
 - i. Ultimately, imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness are like links in a chain, one naturally follows the other
- e. In either case, the king finds a man who is part of the great crowd in the wedding hall who does not belong
 - i. This man is there, but he has not truly come to the saviour
 - ii. He is part of the visible church, but not of the invisible church
 - iii. Perhaps he came for free food; perhaps for entertainment; perhaps to join his friends
 - iv. But it is clear that he does not possess the righteousness he needs to stand before the king
 - v. As a result, he is bound up and cast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth

1. This is the fate of all who will not receive Christ
- f. With this, the story ends and Jesus looks at the crowd and summarizes that “*many are called but few are chosen*”
- g. This is most certainly a reference to election
 - i. You see two groups here
 1. The called
 2. The chosen
 - ii. The “chosen” are a subset of the “called”
- h. A few things must be said here
 - i. One criticism of Reformed theology and of the doctrine of election in particular is that some get the mindset of “the frozen chosen” as though a grand total of 38 people will be saved through church history
 1. This is the impression one gets from certain Calvinists as well as from many Arminian critics of the doctrine of election
 - ii. Yet the mainstream of those who have held the Calvinist or Reformed view of election have been very optimistic in terms of how widespread the kingdom of God will be by the close of history
 1. Early Fathers like Augustine and Athanasius
 2. Reformers like Calvin himself
 3. Puritans as a whole
 4. Princeton men like Hodge and Warfield
 - iii. Does this verse undermine an eschatology of victory?

1. No. Remember who Jesus is confronting. He is confronting the priests and the Pharisees who assumed they were in because of their misunderstanding of the terms of the old covenant.
2. What is jarring here is that Jesus has given them multiple parables in a row to kick the chair out from under them.
 - a. They were all called as Israelites, and yet very few were chosen.
 - b. The number of the elect in Jerusalem who actually received Christ by faith was very small
 - i. Jesus has already said in 7:13, 14 that few found the gate
 - ii. That is not at all contradictory with Jesus' kingdom parables in which the kingdom starts as small as a mustard seed or as a pinch of leaven and ends up covering everything; or of Jesus letting His followers know that the gates of hell would not be able to withstand the barrage of the kingdom of God
 - c. In fact, this widespread rejection of the gospel is the *very reason* that this condemnation falls on Jerusalem and the gospel goes out to the highways and byways
 - i. The transition happens inside the parable itself; nobody or next to nobody is responding to the invitation, and as a result the program changes and the hall fills up

- j. Yet even here there is a word of caution to keep us in the new covenant age from the same kind of presumption and indifference that marked Jerusalem
 - i. Even after the hall fills up, the king finds a man who doesn't belong
 - ii. The picture is improved
 - 1. Here we have an apostate in crowd, earlier the crowd itself was apostate
 - 2. But the fact remains that even here, not everyone who is called is chosen
 - a. Not everyone in the visible church is part of the invisible church
 - iii. External call vs. Internal call
 - 1. If you've ever heard the gospel message, you have heard the external call – you're hearing it right now! Come to Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins!
 - 2. If your heart is soft to that call, that is the work of the Spirit, regenerating you and calling you from the inside
 - iv. How do we know if we're chosen?
 - 1. You're trusting in Christ!
 - 2. The elect are all those who truly put their faith in Christ
 - 3. Spurgeon – *“If God would have painted a yellow stripe on the backs of the elect I would go around lifting shirts. But since He didn't I must preach “whosoever will” and when “whosoever” believes I know that he is one of the elect.”*

4. *“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you. Many persons want to know their election before they look to Christ, but that is not possible; it is only to be discovered by “looking to Jesus.”*

- k. So even amidst the turn here where the offer of the gospel goes out to every tongue, tribe, and nation, the fact that the king finds this man wanting is a strong warning for us to not sin like Jerusalem did and presuming that the fact that we’re in church means we’re saved
- l. That’s where I want to leave us this morning – Christ has called all who are willing to come
 - i. are you wearing your wedding garment?
 - ii. Are you covered in the righteousness of Christ?
 - iii. If not, then perhaps this is the morning in which you will hear the call and live. If that is you and you are unsure what to do next, gladly come talk to one of us elders or a mature believer in this church
 - iv. If so, then welcome to the wedding feast that the Father has called for His Son

6. CHARGE

- a. *It is a great joy for a father to host a feast in honour of his son. The Father sent Jesus Christ to save the world. The reunification of heaven and earth should be cause for the most joyous banquet, yet the people who were to receive their Messiah were too busy with their trivial day-to-day affairs, too caught up in themselves, and too impressed with their self-sufficiency to show up. Others*

became so indignant that their autonomy was being threatened that they killed the messengers who were inviting them. The city that murdered God's messengers is about to be burned to the ground, and their invitation given to outsiders who are glad to come. We are those outsiders – Gentiles, prostitutes, tax collectors, and outsiders who have been taken in by grace. And yet we too need to be reminded of the graciousness of the King, lest we become complacent ourselves. God calls us to come as we are, but we must not stay as we are, as we can see in the man without a wedding garment. If we truly want to belong, we must come to Christ in faith to receive the covering of righteousness that only He can provide.

7. BENEDICTION

- a. *Hebrews 13:20, 21 – “Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*