

## The Wedding Feast

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Psalter 53: all  
Matthew 22:1-14  
Psalter 65: all  
Psalter201:1-4  
Psalter 204: all

You begin sorting through your mail. “Free vacation—five days, four nights to...” into the garbage it goes. “Come to such and such resort...”—more garbage. “Grand opening of new museum”—interesting, but I don’t have time.

Normally people don’t feel bad tossing advertisements from strangers. Most companies expect a fair amount of their ads to be thrown away. They know only certain people will be attracted enough to follow up.

But what if a wedding invitation came to you from a dear friend? Do you think you would as quickly cast it into the trash unopened? How do you think the persons getting married would feel if they knew you tossed away their specially prepared invitation unopened? We all agree there’s quite a difference between junk mail and this, right?

At one time Jesus told a parable, a story, in which He taught that *God* sent a personal, a very special invitation to man. Many to whom it was sent despised and rejected it. Can anything compare to *that* kind of insult, considering how unworthy we are to receive an invitation from God, and considering how great and merciful God is to send it?

It is this surprising invitation and *our* response to it

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that we want to consider at this moment from the words of Matthew 22:2, 3, 10, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.... So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.”

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1. The wonder of the feast
2. The invitation to the feast
3. The rejection of the feast
4. The celebration of the feast

By the time the events in Matthew 22 took place, the Jewish leaders were nearly exasperated with Jesus. He had told parable after parable with a few of the latest ones particularly directed against the unbelieving leaders. After talking about the two sons—the one doing the father’s will and the other not—He concluded by saying, “Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.”

The very next parable was about the householder sending first his servants and then his son to receive fruits from his vineyard. The servants were mistreated, even killed, and the son was murdered as well. Jesus ended this parable with the application, “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

We read the leaders’ response in Matthew 21:45, “They perceived he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude.” They wanted to remove Jesus (much as the wicked servants in the parable wanted to destroy the owner’s son) but they felt paralyzed by the presence of the listening

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multitude. Jesus began yet another parable, this one about a wedding feast.

**I. The wonder of the feast**

This would be no ordinary marriage feast. It was for a king's son! What an honor it must have been to be invited to such a marriage! The king personally arranges everything, overseeing all the details. He carefully considers what privileged persons would be invited and directs his servants to bring them the invitation.

Finally the day comes. It's time! Send forth the servants with the glad tidings! Congregation, friends, we are the ones who have been invited! Perhaps you think, "Me? I've received no such invitation. First of all, I don't know any kings. I've not seen anything like an invitation in the mail, not received any phone call concerning it. No king's servant came to our door with such an invitation!"

This may all be true enough, but you've been invited nevertheless. I think you know just what I mean, what *Jesus* meant in this parable.

The King, children, is God Himself. The Son whose marriage is being celebrated is the Son of God, Jesus. But who is Jesus marrying, you ask? He marries the vilest of sinners, total outcasts, wretched persons.

"What?" you respond. "God's Son marry such rabble? I hardly think so." In Luke 19:10 we read, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick" (Ezek. 34:16). Are you perhaps still doubtful? Consider Hosea 2:19-20: "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD."

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Why, some of you are holding the very invitation in your hands! I dare say each one of you has the invitation lying about in your homes. It's right in God's holy Word and it is written in letters of love!

I don't know if you fully realize how astounding such an invitation is. To be invited to a formal dinner by a president, a prime minister, a king would be quite something. We might be tempted to doubt the reality and authenticity of such an invitation if we received it. But now to be invited by God Himself, the Almighty of heaven and earth, and not only invited to *witness* the wedding and the feast, but to actually *be* the bride of Christ.

Before we finish considering the wonder of the feast, there are a couple of other very important things we ought to realize.

First, consider the *cost* of this wedding feast. Today, especially in some localities, some pay exorbitantly large amounts of money for a wedding and the wedding reception. We can only imagine what kings spent for their feasts. But the King of heaven and earth, God, who prepared all things for those who have nothing, paid for the entire wedding Himself. He gave up the most precious thing He had—His very own Son.

If the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, had not come down, if He had not left the glory He had with His Father in heaven, there could be no feast. All sinners would be forever lost, forever estranged from the God who made them.

But then consider the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ—the King's Son. In some countries, the bridegroom must pay a large dowry for his bride. But this Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, paid for His bride with His life. Every drop of His precious blood had to be spilled in death in order that His sin-stained bride could appear in the white-robed righteousness of God Himself. May the wonder, the tremendously amazing wonder of this all abide with us, astound and humble us, and influence our lives toward godliness.

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**II. The invitation to the feast**

Let us now consider more carefully the *precious invitation* of which Jesus speaks. In the third verse we read, “And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.”

God sent His servants. Who were they? They were and are His prophets, apostles, gospel ministers, missionaries, and believers of all sorts. What are they to say? “Come to the wedding”—a very simple message. Repent and believe the gospel, turn from your own ideas, your own ways, and embrace by faith the good news that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners.

Though we’ll consider the response to the invitation more particularly later, we see in verse 3 that those invited would not come. The king invites them. They say “no.” Just on the face of it that seems incredible. Don’t they realize what an enormous privilege this was? What an honor to feast with the king himself? But the king doesn’t become angry with them. “Ah,” he must have thought, “I see there must have been a misunderstanding. Perhaps those who were invited thought they themselves would have to bring something to the feast. Perhaps they feel themselves too poor to come, or that they don’t have anything worthy of bringing.”

Why do we speculate this way? In verse 4 we read that he sent forth other servants, modifying their message somewhat to tell them which are bidden, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.”

There would be no misunderstanding now. All things are ready. You need not bring anything along—I have provided it all. The food is prepared ahead of time—all is in readiness. You need only come.

Beloved congregation and friends, this is the simplicity of the gospel. God knows we have nothing with which to earn our salvation, nothing to contribute to it since we already owe Him perfection. Yet this is the good news,

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that He has done for us that which we could never have done for ourselves. He prepared all things, eternally decreed that Jesus would come, the Son willing to lay down His life as a ransom for sinners. Throughout the history of the world, the King sends forth the glad tidings; both in picture form through the sacrifices and other symbols and then in reality when Jesus Himself came to obey, suffer, die, and rise again. We do not need to add anything to His perfect work, nor bring anything to Him.

It is true that as saved sinners we will willingly give Him our whole life. It will be our desire to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves, all out of loving gratitude to Him. But this will be a sacrifice of thanks and praise, not of payment.

Why did this invitation come to us, to me? Think in your mind of the many, many people—neighbors, co-workers—so many of whom show not the least interest or concern about the things of God and of eternity. Think of the many nations of the world, so many people never having read a Bible, never having heard this precious, invaluable invitation. Think of so many others who are being deceived by a false, superficial gospel. Just sign a card, say a pre-printed prayer, and you're saved, as if salvation was nothing more than following a recipe. Why did the invitation come to us? We can only conclude it was God's goodness, mercy, and sovereign good pleasure. Yet let us beware lest we think receiving the invitation is the same as coming to the feast.

Those who were invited, even for the *second* time, did not come. The king made a second, more detailed and compelling appeal, yet this was also rejected.

### III. The rejection of the feast

The Bible says, "But they made light of it." What does that mean, children—to make light of the invitation? They didn't take it seriously. They shrugged it off. "So

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what?” “Who cares?” “Why should I go to some wedding feast?” Some thought they had more important things to do. One got busy with his farm work. Another absorbed himself in his goods—his merchandise. Perhaps he was a shopkeeper, salesman, or maybe even one who doted on the goods he purchased for himself. Whatever the case, each thought little of the invitation.

Adding injury to insult, we read that some who perhaps were not so busy took the king’s servants and treated them spitefully and slew them. Children, can you imagine such a thing? What did these messengers ever do to deserve such treatment? They were bringing *joyful* news of great mercy and kindness. They were being obedient to their king. They probably anticipated a gladsome reception from those invited. But it was not so. They were shamefully treated and then killed. What is Jesus saying here, dear friends?

Look over the vast history of mankind. Man falls away from God, turns his back on Him in Eden. God responds with severe chastening, but also the first gospel promise (Gen. 3:15). As we continue to search through Scripture, we find God continuing to send messengers with the good news of salvation. How were most of them regarded? With disdain, mockery, or ignored. Think how God’s prophets, speaking on God’s behalf to the wayward, were so often treated just like the servants in the parable. The very invitation to repentance and faith which should have been gladsome tidings was almost always rejected. The messengers were despised, even killed by the very ones to whom the glad tidings came.

Is this not madness, dear friend? Is not man truly evil by nature? Who but those not in their right mind would reject their rescue?

The king in the parable sent no more servants. He sent his armies to destroy those miserably sinful men. This, of course, points to what shall become of those who obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ and perish under the

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just wrath of God. Yet similar to the parable of the vineyard, God, who superabounds in mercy and goodness, sent His own Son Jesus into this wicked world to proclaim the gospel invitation and command. Jesus, just like His servants before Him, was mistreated and finally killed. “He came unto his own, but his own received him not” (John 1:11). “He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him” (Isa. 53:3).

Is it any different today, friend? How many still make light of the gospel offer? Who needs the gospel? I have my house, my car, health, wealth. What do I need God for? Who is God anyway?

How many others, claiming to be Christians, comply only with the most obvious demands of the law (“I don’t kill, commit adultery,” etc.). Such do not realize the depth of the law nor the corruptness of their heart—that to even look upon a woman lustfully is adultery in the heart, that unrighteous anger against another, even in our heart, is murder, etc. (Matt. 5:21-22, 28).

God the King sent His only-begotten, well-beloved Son with the good news. He still sends His messengers to a lost world with the message of hope. But the reactions are still largely the same today as ever—rejection.

What will become of them who do reject the invitation? What about those who do come?

Verses 7-10 speak of the reaction the king had to this rejection. In verse 7 the king in his wrath destroyed those who rejected him, and in verse 8 he called those “not worthy” who had been invited but rejected the invitation. You might ask, “If they were unworthy, why did the king invite them in the first place?” The king is saying they make themselves unworthy by their very rejection.

You see, the gospel doesn’t come to worthy people. It comes to sinners, offering through Christ to make them worthy of God’s blessings and salvation, even inasmuch



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as they are united to the Savior by faith. By means of our unbelief, we remain in our unworthiness. By rejecting the worthiness of Christ Jesus, we are therefore judged worthy of everlasting destruction by God the King.

Verse 7 is but a picture of God's final judgment of all unbelievers. Verse 9, however, is central to this parable. Why? Verse 9 teaches us that God remains good and gracious and merciful despite the sin and rejections of man. Though some reject the gospel message, God sends it to others. His house, heaven, shall be filled with worthy guests, saved sinners. Though for the most part the Jews in Jesus' day rejected the Savior, the wonderful work of salvation which He accomplished didn't end with that rejection. On the day of Pentecost and ever since, the gospel has been spreading out across the earth to sinners of every nation and kindred and tongue and people.

**IV. The celebration of the feast**

In verse 10 we read, "So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." See here that the quality of the ones invited was not an issue. It was the quality of the *invitation* that makes all the difference. In other words, it should be no comfort to you that you are better, at least in your own eyes, than other sinners around you. Your comfort should be in the certainty and trustworthiness of God's invitations, promises, and Scriptures. The comfort is in the fact that God is good and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Him (Ps. 86:5).

The wedding was furnished with guests. The sin of man will not prevent heaven from being filled with people. The bad as well as the relatively good are both called by the gospel. In the ending verses of this parable, treated in a separate sermon, we find that God, as it were, makes sinners altogether good by clothing them in

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the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ His Son—the wedding garment. Where are you in this story, friend? How many times have you been sent this precious invitation? What has your response been? Are you too busy, too young, and too careless? Do you make light of God's Word, His invitations, His commands, His service? Would you rather attend to your farm, shop, pleasures, entertainments, etc.? Do you despise God's servants, even if only in your heart? Do you wish sometimes that you could be left alone—no more warnings from others in your life about repentance and seeking God? Be very careful, dear friend. You may get your wish after all.

Perhaps you are among the second group. Maybe you were one of the bad ones, found, perhaps, by Him on some highway of sin, living without God and without hope. It could be the gospel arrested you on the highway of indifference, foolishness, coveting material gain, lust, substance abuse, pride, selfishness, or carnality.

Or maybe you were one of the "good" ones who, though perhaps very civil and decent, were also on the broad road that leads to destruction. Perhaps you were brought up in the church, never lived a worldly life. Maybe you never rebelled against your parents, always did your duty (or so you thought) toward God and others. Maybe you thought that based on your decency and obedience God would just let you in heaven on good behavior—that you really didn't need the gospel or perhaps thought you somehow earned entrance to celestial bliss.

The servants of the King are calling each of you—"All things are ready." All must come to this feast or be destroyed. You either honor the King or you insult Him. Ignoring His invitation is counted by Him the same as rejecting it. He destroyed all His enemies who did not obey, who despised Him, His invitations, and His servants.

Blessed be God if you may turn in faith to Him now, at last, tasting for yourself the goodness and mercy of the Lord, joining countless others who love and serve

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Him now and who will hereafter feast throughout eternity in His presence.

If you, dear friend, have long since obeyed the invitation by faith, thank God afresh this day for that. Do what you can to make His service, His invitations, our God as wonderful and worthy as you can in the eyes of others. Live like one going to a tremendous feast. Honor the King! Amen.