

Parable of the Marriage Feast

1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, *2* “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. *3* “And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. *4* “Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.”’ *5* “But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, *6* and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. *7* “But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. *8* “Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. *9* ‘Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.’ *10* “Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

11 “But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, *12* and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And the man was speechless. *13* “Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw 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.”

This is now the 3rd of three parables that address the questions that the rulers of Israel asked Jesus about authority in Mt. 21:23

By what authority do you do these things, and who gave you this authority.

The second parable, we looked at last week, was aimed especially at the rulers of Israel. This one is more general, and to me, more frightening than either of the others, although they were very stern.

These parables go far beyond just the ruling class in Israel in their

indictments. The principles apply to every generation, every age.

Religion that is all talk and no substance in the first parable, is just as useless today as it was then.

Violence against the Kingdom of God and rejection of the Son of God in the second parable are just as damning today as they were then. These apply to us, if the shoe fits, just as it did for them.

But especially this one we will look at today has far reaching application to us today. There's a lot here, so let's dive in.

1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared

We've taught many times in this pulpit that this word "kingdom" goes beyond what we think of when we might say it today.

We think of kingdom as real estate. An area with a wall around it, ruled by a king. And that's OK as far as it goes, but the biblical use of the word would be better translated as an "authority to reign".

In this case, it's the authority to reign of God (kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are interchangeable). And it's the authority to reign of God, on this earth, as opposed to Satan, who is the ruler of this fallen world.

The disciples prayer (The Lord's Prayer) reminds us that God rules everywhere else except here. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. He owns earth. He will rule here, but right now there is an evil tenant ruler who must be deposed. The book you hold in your hands is the story of that event. Everything in that book will take place: in God's time.

So the kingdom of God is a comparison. Here's what the world looks like under Satan's authority. Here's what it will look like under God's authority.

So when Jesus says; *“The kingdom of heaven may be compared*
He's explaining some facet of what it will look like when Satan is
deposed, and God is ruling on His rightful throne.

They asked about authority, and Jesus is going to show them yet one
more facet of the authority His father has over men.

So we could begin again and state it this way; 2*“The authority of God*
to reign may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his
son.

3*“And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the*
wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.

Right from the start, the situation is impossibly bizarre. This is non-
sensical and it's going to get worse.

The highpoint on any Jewish calendar was a wedding feast. That social
event trumped all others. Work stopped and it was party time for a
week.

Add to that, this isn't just any wedding, it's the King's Son's wedding
feast. This would be the blow out of the century.

We can imagine the lavish spreads at the wedding of Prince William and
Catherine Middleton. Like nothing seen before or since. People are
mesmerized just thinking about such a fairy tale event. Books are
written. You Tube video's are watched over and over as people dream
of even just being a fly on the wall at one of those events.

Even I have listened to some of the musical performances at that
wedding. The chorale's. It's simply the most extravagant beauty
humans can achieve. No stops. No holds barred. Everything must be
the best of the best. The pinnacle of what men can achieve.

What an honor it must have been to have received a royal invitation to
that wedding feast. You would have to be in the who's who of the world
it seems to me.

That's what we've got in front of us here. The most gala feast of the century. Yet this King is not of this world. The best that men can achieve will be far far surpassed by this King. Eye hath not seen. Ear hath not heard the glories of this feast! They are unimaginable to us. We have no basis of comparison!

3“And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast,

Everything's ready! Come to the feast!

Who are the invited here? Obviously Israel is the intended recipient. God's chosen people are those who are the invited.

and they were unwilling to come.

Unwilling to come!! Are you kidding me!!?? Unwilling to come to the feast of the century! The King's feast! That's crazy talk. Insanity.

But...this is an unusually forgiving and gracious King. Crazy as that first rejection was, He'll overlook it and keep asking.

4“Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.”’

My mouth is watering. I'm picturing huge hunks of cow on a rotisserie over a fire. The most savory food. The best wine. Limitless produce and baked finery. It's all ready and waiting, come to the wedding feast.

5“But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business

Told you. Bizarre. This is uncanny behaviour. The King's slaves are announcing the invitation. The party is ready. Just come. You don't have to bring anything. Everything is prepared. Come!

And it's like these people are automatons. zombies or something. They are deaf. They go about their daily routine as if the King and His Son, did not exist. One to his farm. Another to his business.

Like dead men plodding through their so-called lives. Deaf and blind and dumb as the dead. They neither hear nor consider the slaves invitation. Was Paul thinking of this parable when he wrote; Eph. 2:1 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

The greek word here that is translated by the NAS as "paid no attention" might be better translated as indifference.

That is the root problem. The core sin here, is indifference. The King, in this case, God, has prepared every good thing imaginable and invited everyone to the feast, and the citizens of the realm are indifferent.

They wouldn't walk across the street to honor this King. They won't even acknowledge Him, or His Son. Their droll existence is far more important than feasting with this King, or His Son.

6and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them.

This is the same group as last week. Murder the slaves.

So, let's talk about this. The last number I heard for any kind of census for Tonopah Nevada was 2500. There are 25 or less in this room. That makes the math rather easy. 1%

Out of every hundred people, 1 acknowledges the God of the Bible.

Of the 99% who reject the invitation of the King, there seems to be 2 groups. Some who ignore the King and go on about their business, and others who are abusive to even the messengers associated with the King.

Some who are like, *I can't be bothered with this King's merriment*. I've got my own stuff to do that's more important than acknowledging this King.

Others who are like, *I hate this King so much, I'll mis-treat and even murder anyone who is associated with Him somehow*. Those 2 possibilities are spelled out in the parable, and I think we see the same thing today.

So, if we went out and canvassed Tonopah and knocked on the doors of all 2,475 people who do not worship the God of this book, what would we find. Would we encounter both of the groups described in this parable.

Perhaps. Years ago I was part of something called evangelism explosion. One night a week we would knock on doors of people who had made at least some kind of contact with the church involved. It wasn't really even cold canvassing. The church had a contact card from somewhere.

Even at that, we had doors slammed in our faces. We encountered people who were aggressively against us. Adversarial, grumpy people. Angriily non interested. Like those phone calls you get at dinner time.

But that was rare. I'll stick my neck out and say, maybe 1% of the 99% is adversarial. Combatively anti christian.

Fair enough, that leaves an enormous number who fall into the first group in the parable. They are indifferent. They don't have time for the slaves, or the King. They're simply indifferent. They're like, we just want to be left alone. Why can't the King simply ignore us the same as we're ignoring Him. Live and let live.

7“But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.

This doesn't play well with modern people who re-invent god in their own image. If I had a nickel for every time I've heard someone say,

"my god would never act like that", I could make a house payment. This God who spoke this parable to us; does act like that.

And we could do a doctrine review;
Every act He does is righteous.
Every act He does is just.
Every act He does is perfect.
Every act He does is for our good.

Americans are very spiritual. VERY spiritual. But they hate this God who says if you reject my wedding invitation, I'm going to burn your house down, with you in it.

So, let's look at this. Because this may seem a little foreign and offensive to even people in this room.

7“*But the king was enraged,*

Why? Why is the king enraged with people who are simply indifferent. Thank you very much, but my grand daughter has a baseball game which your feast would be a conflict with. Fill in the blank for the excuse.

Luke outlines some of the excuses in his parallel passage; *The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.’* 19“*Another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’* 20“*Another one said, ‘I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’*

Now, if Pam and I gave a dinner party and you all RSVP'd with those excuses, we'd just shrug and say "hope the freezer doesn't quit this summer, because it's going to have a lot of steak in it that we'll eventually eat ourselves. And that would be that.

Tweak it up a little. Suppose when Pam's dad died we rented a hall and bought a couple of cows worth of steaks and threw a dinner in honor of her dad and invited every friend of his that we ever knew of; people he

worked with in his career, wine tasting people that he knew for 50 years, we invited 100, and one showed up. Same excuses.

We might go, wow, that's a huge dishonor to Fred. One person in a hundred. Wow.

Tweak it up a little more. Pick someone with a name that's a household word. Say Antonin Scalia. Honorable man. Lifelong servant. President Obama gives a feast in his honor. 10,000 people are invited. Halls are rented. The best chefs from all over America are engaged. Invitations go out. Everything is ready. 100 people show up. The rest are like, "I had a tire appointment at Costco I didn't want to re-schedule." etc. etc.

You see where I'm going. 10,000 invitations ~ 100 people. The honor for Antonin Scalia becomes a dishonor. Would the president be pleased?

Now, suppose the God of the universe throws a wedding gala for His Son. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. **And nobody can walk across the street to have anything to do with Him or His Son.***

The dignity of the person snubbed has everything to do with the offense caused. So when the God of the ages invites you to His Son's wedding, and you can't be bothered because you want to watch American Idol, you're more impressed with the people on that show than you are with either Him or His Son; He is righteous and true when He rains down fire on your city.

Indifference is an offense to a Holy God. Indifference is idolatry. You've just said; You're at the bottom of my list of things I want to do God.

7. But the King was enraged and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.

Has anyone here read Pilgrim's Progress? John Bunyan's classic. Do you remember why Christian goes on pilgrimage? He was fleeing what? The city of destruction. He fled his home and even his family. They thought he was insane. All of his friends thought he was unhinged. What are you running from. But he understood this verse.

7. . . the King was enraged and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. This world with Satan as tenant king and all of it's inhabitants who are indifferent to a Holy God, who ignore his invitation and dismiss His Son, are dwelling in the city of destruction.

8 "Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

Stop right there for a minute. Worthy? Unworthy? Let me state emphatically that worthiness or unworthiness has nothing to do with any value we possess in ourselves.

Every man made religion has men jumping through righteousness hoops trying to be righteous enough to stand before a Holy God. Do this stuff, and you'll be worthy of God. Do these prescribed sacraments and you will be worthy of God.

NO. We are all bankrupt before a Holy God. The reason Israel was unworthy was because they had rejected the only person who could make them worthy.

9 'Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.'

What do we have here? Obviously we benefit from 20 - 20 hindsight.

Israel was removed from it's place as God's special elect people. They are set aside. Unworthy of their privilege. How sad and terrifying is that. Not forever, but for at least 2000 years we know about.

Was Peter thinking of this parable when he wrote his letter to dispersed

christians everywhere. He uses all of the proper nouns that once would have only applied to Israel. Now Peter applies them to christians of every place from every nation, dispersed, yet one body.

*1Peter 2:9,10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 10Once you were not a people, but now you are **the** people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

The King tells his slaves, go outside the city, out into the well traveled roads, anywhere you can find anybody, and call them to the wedding banquet. Fill up my banquet hall!

Israel is set aside. These foreigners and wayfarers from every nation, are; US. This is the church. Called to the feast that Israel was unworthy of.

10“Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

"both evil and good". That's curious. Did Jesus make a mistake here and include both evil and good? Did He mean to say that?

We could re-write verse 10 without that, and the parable would be over. Nothing else to say.

10“Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

But Jesus has more to teach us in this parable. He adds a twist with the inclusion of 'both evil and good'.

There is this theme that runs throughout the gospels and then the epistles and finally in the 7 churches in Revelation. The church is always a mixture of good and evil. Always.

The wheat grows along side the tares. The enemy always has his tares. The soils produce some plants that bear fruit, and others that do not. The church is a pure lump of dough and someone adds leaven. The leaven spreads throughout until it is all leavened. The church is a tree and the birds of the air nest in it's branches.

Good and evil. As long as we're in Satan's realm, this is going to be the case.

Let's think about this another way. If "good" is those without sin, and "evil" is those with sin, how many of us came into this deal as "good"? None of us. Right. *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no not one.* We're all born with the same cancer.

Jesus has tagged a remarkable bit of teaching onto this parable, for us. The church.

11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes,

Wedding clothes?? What's that?

Let me show you the wedding clothes. Revelation 19:5b - 9 *"Give praise to our God, all you His slaves, you who fear Him, the small and the great."* *6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying,*

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." *8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

9 Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

None of us were in our own fine linen, white and clean when we responded to the King's invitation. All of us were filthy. Our own righteousness was nothing but filth stained rags. How did we get the wedding linen, white and clean?

The King supplies the wedding garments. Let me show you how this works. Zechariah 3:1 - 5

*1Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" 3Now Joshua was **clothed with filthy garments** and standing before the angel. 4He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." 5Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by.*

We appear before Him in His presence with a righteousness, not our own. He takes our sin to the cross. He gives us His righteousness. That's our fine linen, white and clean. That's our wedding garment.

The Holy Spirit who indwells believers is our down payment for the righteousness we'll receive when we are changed. In the twinkling of an eye. We have this confidence, because we have Him, living inside our hearts.

But . . . not all of us.

11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?'

This is no different from the guy in Matthew 7. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who

does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

Same idea. A guy who was part of the church, somehow, but who never had an intimate relationship with Jesus. Jesus says, I never knew you.

The idea is the same, except that guy was full of excuses. This guy is speechless.

And the man was speechless.

There's nothing to say. Everyone else is standing around in fine linen, white and clean, and you're wearing excrement. At the wedding feast.

Romans 8:9 *If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.* This man was a church attender, but he was never an indwelt believer.

2 Cor. 13:5 *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?*

Remember in the parable of the wheat and the tares? The slaves ask if they should root out the tares?

27“The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ 28“And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ 29“But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30‘Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”””

Two pictures of the same thing. Non-wheat that looks like wheat.

Wedding feast would be attenders who are dressed in excrement.

13“Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

This formula is familiar. It frightens us. Because it speaks of everlasting torment. Never ending torment.

The people who mistreated and killed the slaves, and the people who were simply indifferent and couldn't be bothered with the King and His feast, and these folks who for whatever reason, hung around the church, played church, but never had a relationship with the King, will all end up here.

And finally, this closing statement from our Lord and Master. *14“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

This is unexplainable truth. This is God, sharing a little bit of His world, that He knows, our brains are too small to understand.

Everybody's invited to the wedding feast. 99 out of 100 don't respond. The ones who do, are clothed by the King, in His righteousness, and not only did they not bring anything to the party, they can't even take credit for answering the invitation.

It turns out, if they're there, it's because the King chose them to be there. It's all of Him. None of us.

*Ephesians 2:8,9 For by grace you have been saved through **faith**, and **that** not of yourself, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Paul*

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace;*

Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die. Toplady 1776