

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

To be invited to the wedding of the king's son is no small thing. The most highly favored of the king will be in attendance. It will be a "who's who" of the kingdom, the inner-circle of those chosen personally by the king to join him for his most joyous feast. It is not that those who are invited are better or richer or stronger or more famous than others in the kingdom. They are simply chosen, elect, favored ones of the king. It is a manifestation of the king's grace, of his love and kindness and mercy.

The wedding is ready. The King has prepared everything. There is nothing left for you to do. He has invited you. In His invitation is a Promise, a Promise to all who hear and believe. So His invitation works faith, faith that desires His Gifts, faith that desires His Food, faith that hungers for His Feast, faith that yearns for His Wedding Feast.

The marriage is arranged. In our day that seems archaic. We're a people who demand their rights; a people who want a trophy for everyone who plays, not just the winner; a people who have come to believe they deserve more than what they need; that they're entitled to it; we are a people who believe that they should have everything we want.

And when we don't get what we want, when we don't get what we believe we're due - not by merit or work but simply because we're offended that others have it - when we don't get what we want we feel slighted, jealous, and even angry at those who seem to have more. And we even get angry at the King, the very King that has extended His gracious invitation.

So you find yourself, every fallen man finds himself, standing with those who think they have a better offer than the King makes. The business of the world seems more concrete, more tangible, more believable than the Promise of the Invitation. A bird in the hand, as they say. Like the men in the Lord's Parable, farm and business seem like surer bets than a promise to be fulfilled sometime in the future.

So you order your life, your schedule, and your finances around the things of the world rather than the things of God. Which is, of course, to order your heart according to worldly things rather than the things of the Kingdom of the King of Grace. You, like the men in the Lord's Parable, have made light of His Invitation each time you've given God the back seat in your life, each time you've tried to make Him your co-pilot. God is no man's co-pilot.

The King's servants, the Prophets, the Apostles and the Evangelists, were seized, treated spitefully, and they were killed. Their blood wets the sands of the Way of Righteousness. But it is not their blood that earns righteousness. Nor is it yours. It is the Blood of Christ, the Blood of the Son, the Blood of the Groom, the Master of the Feast. In His Blood is righteousness, forgiveness, and life. The Groom died to pay the bride-price for you - the price was His life. He bought you back with it. By it, by His Blood, He won your admission to the Wedding Feast.

The dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. But the Groom is not dead. He died, but He defeated death. He is the Sacrifice, the perfect once-for-all offering rendered that all things be ready. And He is the living Groom, your Lord, the only-begotten Son of the King who is the

Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. In Him is the greatest Promise: victory over sin, victory over the fallen flesh, victory over doubt and worry and anxiety and jealousy, victory over the devil, victory over hell, victory over death.

His Invitation is the preaching of the Gospel, that Blessed Report, that Saving Word that works the faith it requires. It is not that those who are invited are better or richer or stronger or more famous than others in the kingdom. They are simply chosen, elect, favored ones of the king. It is a manifestation of the king's grace, of his love and kindness and mercy.

His Invitation converts the elect, bringing salvation to His chosen, the invited, those who will fill His Wedding Feast as the Bride enters that heavenly hall to meet Her Groom. That is His invitation to you. That is His Promise to you. You are His Betrothed, those who believe in Him, you who await in faith the return of your Groom that the Promise be fulfilled.

By His Gospel servants He has scoured the highways, bringing in the bad and the good. In this way the Lord describes the visible church, the Church Militant. And for a time, the bad and the good remain together awaiting the beginning of the Feast. In grace He has invited unworthy guests. His visible Hall is filled now by both the bad and the good. And in mercy, in His Kingdom of grace, in this time He works through His called and ordained servants to impute righteousness to the bad, making sinners into saints.

Many are called, but few are chosen. Now the bad and the good are mixed. But soon the King comes, the King who alone can see the wedding garment, the vestment of imputed righteousness. Those so vested, you, elect of God; you who have the Deposit of the Holy Spirit, you baptized into Christ, you will enjoy His feast and banquet there for eternity, not as guests, but as His Holy Bride.

Against those who reject His invitation the King is furious. The wrath of God is to be feared. As armies destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C., as armies destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., so too will all those who reject the Gospel will be destroyed. But for you, dear Christian, there is no wrath left. Your Lord, your Groom, stood before God bearing your sins. God's full wrath was poured out upon Him. What is left for you, you who believe in Him, is only grace, mercy, forgiveness, and the Promise of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom which will have no end.

Until that day, in this time during which the Spirit of God works in the world through His Word and His Mysteries, in this time when you live by Promise, until that Day when you feast with your Groom, the same Christ makes Himself your Feast. He bids you eat His Body and drink His Blood, to have Christ and His Promise poured into you, that you cling to that Gospel Promise, that you cling to your Groom.

For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the Way of you, His saints.

The King has prepared His Dinner. The Sacrifice has been made. All things are ready. The Gospel calls. The Promise is for you.

St. Matthew 22:1-14
The Second Sunday after Michaelmass, 2016 A.✠ D.

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