

November 7, 2004 by Steve Brandon



You Are Invited!

Matthew 22:1-14

1. Some are indifferent (verse 5)
2. Some are defiant (verse 6)
3. Some are dishonoring (verse 11)
4. Some are chosen (verse 14)

Our text this morning is found in Matthew 22:1-14. It's the story of a certain wedding feast. Now before we get into the details of it, I want to tell you that I love weddings! I love seeing a man and a woman come together in the ceremony of holy matrimony. I love watching the face of the groom, as he sees his bride come down the isle, dressed in white! I love beholding the beauty of the bride coming down the isle. I love hearing the vows being repeated, the pledging of their lifelong love and fidelity to one another. I love how all of this pictures the church of Jesus Christ! And, I love the banquet afterwards. I love the food. I love the cake. I love the fun!

About a week ago, I had the opportunity to attend a wedding and to be reminded of all of these things that I love. At the reception, they had noise makers consisting of balloons and blowers. When you blew up the balloon and let the air release, there would be a noise let out by the balloon. When somebody did this, you know what was supposed to happen? The groom was supposed to kiss the bride! I love that part too.

Did you know that there is a wedding feast awaiting believers in Jesus Christ? But, this wedding will be far greater than any wedding that you have ever seen or ever attended! There will be far more in attendance. There will be far more joy. There will be far more meaning. It is described for us in Revelation 19 as a great event and is called, "the marriage supper of the Lamb." It is when the church of Jesus Christ, comes together with the Lamb of God to be joined together forever in a heavenly marriage that will last for eternity! And, the best of all, you are invited! You are invited to come and be part of this wedding? Do you want to come? Do you?

It's difficult for me to conceive why anyone would not want to come. It will be the greatest party ever thrown! There will be joys there that will far surpass your greatest pleasures here upon the earth! I love how John Bunyan put it in his famous allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian was on his way to the Celestial City. He had just met Pliable, who joined him for a season. Along the way, they had this conversation, ...

PLIABLE. Come, neighbour Christian, since there is none but us two here, tell me now further, what the things are, and how to be enjoyed, whither we are going.

CHRISTIAN. I can better conceive of them with my mind, than speak of them with my tongue; but yet since you are desirous to know, I will read of them in my book.

PLI. And do you think that the words of your book are certainly true?

CHR. Yes, verily, for it was made by Him that cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

PLI. Well said. What things are they?

CHR. There is an endless kingdom to be inhabited, and everlasting life to be given us, that we may inhabit that kingdom forever (Isa. 45:17; John 10:27-29).

PLI. Well said. And what else?

CHR. There are crowns of glory to be given us, and garments that will make us shine like the sun in the firmament of Heaven! (2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 3:4; Matt. 13:43).

PLI. This is very pleasant. And what else?

CHR. There shall be no more crying, nor sorrow; for He that is owner of the place will wipe all tears from our eyes (Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:17, 17; 21:4).

PLI. And what company shall we have there?

CHR. There we shall be with seraphims, and Cherubims, creatures that will dazzle your eyes to look on them. There, also, you shall meet with thousands and ten thousands that have gone before us to that Place; none of them are hurtful, but loving and holy, everyone walking in the sight of God, and standing in His presence with acceptance forever; in a word, there we shall see the elders with their golden crowns; there we shall see the holy virgins with their golden harps; there we shall see men, that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, drowned in the seas, for the love that they bare to the Lord of the Place; all well, and clothed with immortality as with a garment (Isa. 6:2; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 7:17; 4:4; 14:1-5; John 12:25; 2 Cor. 5:2-5).

PLI. The hearing of this is enough to ravish one's heart; but are these things to be enjoyed? How shall we get to be sharers thereof?

CHR. The Lord, the Governor of the country, hath recorded, that in this book, the substance of which is, if we be truly willing to have it, He will bestow it upon us freely (Isa. 55:1, 2, 12; John 7:37; 6:37; Psa. 21:6; 22:17).

PLI. Well, my good companion, glad am I to hear of these things; come on, let us mend our pace.

You are invited to such a place. I trust that it is your heart's desire to want to come. I trust that you too would like to "mend our pace" on the way there.

The sad thing is that not all who are invited want to come! There are many who receive their invitation and discard it. There are many who receive their invitation and have no desire to come at all! It is an amazing reality, but it is reality! It's the reality that Jesus told in His third parable speaking against the religious leaders of the land of Israel! In the context of this story, Jesus has already told the Pharisees two other parables which condemn them as being guilty of failing to follow their God, resulting in their rejection of the Messiah. The first of these parables is found in Matthew 21:28-32. It describes two sons, one who was willing to obey His father and one who was unwilling. The second is found in Matthew 21:33-46. It describes the wretched vine-growers who killed the son of the owner of the vineyard. Both of those parables were indictments against the religious leaders of Jesus' day.

This morning, we see the parable of the Marriage Feast. Let's read it, ...

Matthew 21:1-14

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. 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."' But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' 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. But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. 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.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

In this parable, Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast which a king gives in honor of his newly married son. He sends out his invitations, but no one comes. What a discouraging thing! But, it gets even worse. Some are so hostile to the king that they kill the ones inviting them to the feast. Finally, the king is compelled to go to the streets to find people who will come. Of the people who are persuaded to come, some show up in a way that dishonors the king.

In many ways, this parable is exactly like the one that we looked at last week (i.e. Matthew 22:33-46). It describes a gracious and patient man, who is hated by those to whom he extends his kindness. A benevolent man is rejected. Eventually, those who reject him will be destroyed for their own wickedness. The actions of the people involved in the story almost borders on being irrational. But that's the point: Israel's disobedience to God is practically irrational in light of his unbelievable kindness to them. In the parable of the landowner, it is almost inconceivable to understand why the vine-growers were so hostile to the slaves who had come to collect from some of the harvest. Their hostility wasn't simply a one-time event. They killed other slaves and even the son of the landowner. But, that's the point of the story. You have a kind and benevolent landowner who is hated by those to whom he has extended his kindness. Just like Israel! And this morning in the parable of the wedding feast, we will see much the same thing. We will see a king showing his tremendous kindness in inviting so many people to share in the celebration of the wedding feast of his son. But they refuse to come and celebrate. Even after several invitations, the people are unwilling to come to the feast. Just like Israel! How many times has Israel been invited to share in the bountiful blessings of God? How many times did Israel ignore God or even display hostility against Him? It happened time after time!

In both parables, there are clear indications that the disobedient will be destroyed. "He will bring those wretched [vine-growers] to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers" (21:41). "The king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire [and invited others to come instead]" (22:7-9). This morning, I would like for us to look at this parable through the lens of the different reactions of the people who were invited.

1. Some are indifferent (verse 5)

We see their reaction in verse 5, but let's work through the parable first to get there. Verse 1 sets the stage: Jesus responds with another parable that begins in verse 2, "the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son." Jesus introduces this parable with a royal wedding. When the king's son is getting married, it is a big event! When Prince Charles was married to Princess Diana, it was literally the attention of the world! On July 29, 1981, 600,000 people lined the streets of London to catch a glimpse of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer on their wedding day. They were married at St Paul's Cathedral before an invited congregation of 3,500. It was declared a national holiday in Great Britain. It was estimated that 750 million people watched the event on television. Certainly, the kingly weddings in Jesus' day were not as large and popular as this one was, but it would certainly be a day of celebration for all to enjoy!

When the day of the feast had come, we read in verse 3 that the king "sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come" (verse 3). It is almost unfathomable that the people rejected the king's invitation! Just imagine with me that you hear on the news that one of President Bush's daughters, Barbara or Jenna, were to be married. And then, imagine that you received an invitation in the mail to attend the wedding. Later, you receive a phone call and were told that everything was ready. Would you go? I think that you would go. I don't think that it would matter whether you were a Democrat or a Republican, you would go and see the President's daughter being married.

It is almost unbelievable what Jesus is here describing. People actually turn down the opportunity to come and feast at the wedding feast of his son! This is the opportunity of a lifetime. The celebration will be tremendous! Do you think that you have seen a spread of food? I guarantee you that when the king's son is married, the spread is larger than any you have seen. Do you think that you have seen a party? I guarantee you that when the king's son is married, the party is grander than any you have ever attended! But, we read that "they were

unwilling to come."

In verse 4, we see the tremendous patience and kindness of this king, "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'" (verse 4). Think about it. This is actually the third time that this king has extended his kindness to these people. First, he sent them an invitation (it says in verse 3 that they had been invited). Then, he sent his slaves to personally request their presence. Finally, he sent out his slaves a third time to request that these people would come to the feast.

As these slaves came the third time, they explained the urgency of why these invited guests needed to come now! Everything was ready! The oxen and fattened livestock have been slaughtered. In the Greek text, the word "oxen" is plural. The word "livestock" represents a group of cows. So, we are talking about multiple cows being slaughtered. I did some research this week. When a cow is slaughtered, you get some 600 pounds of meat to eat (not including the bones). We are talking here of a thousands of pounds of meat prepared for thousands of people to come and enjoy! And it's ready now! You need to come now! There was no refrigeration back then. The food needed to be eaten

In verse 5, we see the reaction of the first group of people: some are indifferent. Listen to verse 5, "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business." They say, "The party is good for the king. Let him have a good time. But, for me, I have other things to do." One had his farm that needed his attention. Another had a business that needed his attention. These things took priority over the wedding feast with the king! What lame excuses! The king of the land has invited you to the wedding of his son, and you prioritize the regular affairs of your life over the invitation?

When you think of the nation of Israel, indifference is a good word to describe them. They liked God when they had great need. They liked God when He helped them in battle. But, there were many occasions when Israel was simply indifferent to God. When Manasseh was on the throne of Judah, we are told that "the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention" (2 Chron. 33:10). The people of Israel ignored God to the point that they no longer used their Bibles. In fact, it got so bad that they had lost all copies of the Bible. When you don't use something for a while, you misplace it. That's what happened here. Later, along came the boy king Josiah who finally got around to cleaning the temple. Eighteen years into his reign, the priest Hilkiah found the book of the law (2 Chr. 34:14). They had ignored the law for years! They were indifferent.

When Nehemiah looked back upon how the people responded to the LORD, he confessed to the LORD, "[You] admonished them in order to turn them back to Your law. Yet they acted arrogantly and did not listen to Your commandments but sinned against Your ordinances. ... However, You endured with them for many years and admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets. Yet they would not give ear" (Neh. 9:29, 30). Though God called out, though God entreated, though God pleaded with them to come back, they simply ignored God.

In Luke 14, Jesus gave a similar parable, where three different people gave three different excuses for not coming to the feast. One said, "I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused" (Luke 14:18). Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused" (Luke 14:19). A third said, "I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come" (Luke 14:20). In the minds of these people, their land or animals or wife were of more importance than the wedding feast. But, all of these are incredibly lame excuses! When the king's son is getting married, you can take some time off of your daily activities. The land will be there tomorrow. You can test out your new oxen tomorrow. Your wife can come with you. When God invites you to join in His feast, you come. The activities of life will always be there. But God ought to have a priority in your life.

How many there are today who make excuses for their lack of spiritual interest! I remember speaking with a man who said that he didn't believe the Bible because of all of the errors in it. But, I know that it is all smoke and mirrors, because I asked this man, "Can you give me an example of what you are talking about?" He couldn't come up with any. He quickly dismissed me and sent me on my way. I've spoken with people who have said that they weren't interested in religious matters, because of all of the hypocrites who attend church. Such an excuse is only a cover-up. If you think this through, you can easily determine that such an excuse isn't an excuse at all. Just because there are religious hypocrites doesn't have any bearing upon whether or not you should follow Jesus or not yourself. In fact, the existence of a hypocrite demonstrates the reality that the real thing exists. It's just an excuse.

I've spoken with many people who dial-up our church phone number looking for help of some type. The first question that I try to ask them is usually the same. I ask them, "Have you called your own church, seeking help from those who know you?" Almost always I get the response that they don't really attend church. They often give me some type of lame excuse for why they haven't gone to church. They say, "I can't get a ride to church." Or, "I don't know of a church to go to." In more cases than not, as I continue to discuss things with them, it comes out that they really aren't interested in spiritual things. I often encourage these people to find a church, where they can get to know and love a group of people who can help them in distress. I tell them that Rock Valley Bible Church is one such possibility. They have been indifferent for a long time. A present crisis suddenly stirs an interest. However, the interest is usually the free handout, rather than a genuine interest in God.

The offer here is on the table for people to come and enjoy a wedding feast! But, they have no interest. They create for themselves excuses for why they ought not to go to the feast. Though the invitation comes once, twice, three times, they still aren't interested at all. The amazing thing in this parable is that these people have a clear understanding of the festivities that will take place at the banquet. There will be feasting, which often means drinking and dancing. There will be joy and merriment! It promises to be a great time. But they aren't interested. They chose to involve themselves in the regular things of life (e.g. their farms and business) rather than to enjoy a season of fun, excitement, and joy of the feast! We ought not to be surprised, then, when we describe to others of the joy that await us in heaven, only to have them be disinterested.

I've described to others what heaven will be like. I've described how it will be a glorious place. I've described how Jesus is at the center of it all, and how His radiance will enlighten the entire city of the new Jerusalem. I've described how we will be fully satisfied in worshiping Him all the day long. I have often found that some people just aren't interested in these sorts of things. They would rather have the pleasures of this life, and a false hope of heaven later.

Here, we see that some are indifferent. We also see that ...

2. Some are defiant (verse 6)

This comes in verse 6, "and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them." Again, the interpretation of this passage is straightforward. Jesus is saying the same thing here that He said last week in the parable of the landowner. The landowner was kind and reasonable and patient with the people. And in the parable of the landowner, "the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third" (Matthew 21:35). They were unthankful and obstinate against the owner. It's a reflection upon how Israel treated the people of God.

This has always been the case. Last week, I gave you a few instances of how Israel hated her prophets. Let me give you a few more this week. When the righteous king, Hezekiah came to reign, he did much to reform the worship of Israel, which had degenerated. He re-instituted the Passover and planned on celebrating it for the first time in many years. He sent couriers out to announce the celebration to all Israel. And there were some "laughed them to scorn, and mocked them" (2 Chron. 30:10).

Shortly before Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon, the summary statement is given in 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16, "The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets."

For centuries, God had extended an invitation to them to come and enjoy God. Isaiah has called out, "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ... Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David" (Isaiah 55:1, 3).

Jeremiah said it like this, "Thus says the LORD, 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know. ... I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me, and by which they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to Me a name of joy, praise, and glory before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear of all the good that I do for them, and they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it'" (Jer. 33:3-9).

You could go on and on and on through all the prophets and they are constantly calling wayward Israel back to enjoy the blessings that God will give them. Think of all the things God offered that we just read: wine and milk and honey without cost; forgiveness of sins; peace with God and peace with others; joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth! And what did God get in return? He got a rebellious, disobedient, arrogant, and hostile people! This is how it has always been.

People have always been antagonistic to the truth of God and to His messengers. The early church knew many persecutions. When the Reformation came to full bloom, there were many who persecuted the Reformers. And many lost their lives. Several of us men in this church have been reading a book entitled, "Five Pioneer Missionaries," which gives details of five men who were sent to pioneer a missions work. In recent days, we have been reading about William Chalmers Burns. Just a few days ago, Yvonne and I were reading about the tremendous persecution that this man received. In 1844, He crossed the Irish Channel to make the gospel known to the Roman Catholics, who were in Ireland. His biographer writes,

"It requires no small amount of courage, and tact, and temper, as everyone knows who has made the trial, to address an unsympathetic or hostile Irish mob. Mr. Burns was exposed to many opprobrious (i.e. disgraceful) salutations, derisive questionings, vehement denials of the statements which he made; sometimes the uproar was so loud and long-continued that he was obliged to desist altogether; often his clothes were torn; not seldom the chair on which he stood was broken" (Five Pioneer Missionaries, p. 123).

In many ways, the people are no different today. There are many today who are hostile to the truth. Every month, Steve Belonger stands in front of this congregation and tells us of persecution that is taking place all around this world, that we might pray for them and help them in whatever way we can. Voice of the Martyrs is a ministry that has done a tremendous job in informing us of the persecution that is taking place today. People are regularly beaten and killed by others today. Why? Because those doing the beating and killing are defiant to the truth.

And even in our country, there are plenty of people who are defiant to the truth. This week it came out in the papers, as President Bush was re-elected. There are many John Kerry supporters who are lamenting the potential influence that President Bush may have on the U. S. Supreme court. They are fearful that he will use the abortion issue as a "litmus test" and are preparing today to do what they can do to halt any such judicial appointments. The homosexual movement today is a movement strongly antagonistic to the truth of God. They will use everything in their means to intimidate others and press their agenda upon us all. People have always hated God and turned their back on Him. Why? Because they are defiant! (verse 6).

Earlier, I mentioned the thought of attending a wedding for one of President Bush's daughters. Only your intense hatred for the President would cause you not to go and attend the wedding. Perhaps you like president Bush, and so this decision is easy. Perhaps your feelings for former president Clinton isn't so strong. Suppose that his daughter, Chelsea Clinton, was getting married. If you were invited, would you go? It might be a matter of debate. However, suppose Osama Bin Laden's son was getting married. Would you go? Probably not. Why? It is only your hatred for the man and what he stands for that would keep you away.

In our parable here, the people must have stayed away from the wedding because they hate their king. And their end will be the same as the end of Israel. Look at verse 7, "But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire." You can only refuse God's invitation to come and enjoy His wonderful presence for so long. As we saw last week, there reaches a time when God's patience will run out.

God will pay back those who are defiant against Him. In this instance with Israel, the events came about exactly as Jesus had here told. The Roman army came and destroyed those in Israel who had killed their Messiah. Josephus tells in his "History of the Destruction of Jerusalem" how the temple and the gates and some of the dwellings in Jerusalem were set on fire in the Roman attack upon Jerusalem (see chapter 4). Such is the fate of those who are defiant against the Lord!

Our parable takes a turn in verse 8. Those who are indifferent are not coming to the feast (verse 5). Nor are those who are defiant coming either (verse 6). We now see Jesus turn his attention upon those who are willing to come. Jesus describes the king as inviting others, who didn't initially receive invitations.

"Then [the king] said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' And 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." (Matthew 22:8-10)

The wedding feast is ready. You have thousands of pounds of meat, which needs to be eaten. So, the king calls upon his slaves to bring anybody to his feast. "As many as you find!" All are invited to the feast. Verse 10 tells us that these slaves did a pretty good job filling the wedding hall with dinner guests. Many different kinds of people came! The good came. The bad came. I believe that Jesus is here referring to the Gentiles, just as he did in chapter 21, saying, "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it" (Matt. 21:43). When the Jews demonstrated that they "were not worthy" of the wedding feast (verse 8), the Lord focused His attention away from the Jews to the Gentiles.

Throughout the Bible, this is how it always goes: to the Jew first and also to the Gentile (Romans 1:16). The whole Old Testament is about the good news of a Saving God being brought to the Jews. Ultimately, they proved themselves to be unworthy, so the gospel came to the Gentiles. Even when the message of Christ crucified was proclaimed in the early church, it was still the same pattern: to the Jews first and also the Gentile. When Paul came and brought the gospel to a new city, it was Paul's custom to enter the synagogue first and preach the gospel to them (Acts 17:1, 10, 17; 13:5; 14:1). They often proved themselves unworthy. Like I said last week, we get in because of their disobedience! There is no reason to boast. There is no reason to relax and think that we have it made. Even at the wedding feast, the king identifies one who ought not to be there.

In verse 11, we find another category of people, ...

3. Some are dishonoring (verse 11)

"But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matthew 22:11)

This is a puzzling twist to the story. There is a man who gets into the feast. But, when the king notices that he came in without his wedding clothes, he cast him out. All types of discussion center around the meaning of these verses.

- How could this man get into the feast without these clothes?
- How can he be kicked out of the feast once he is in?
- What are the clothes?
- Why was it such a wicked thing to come without wedding clothes?
- Does it deserve this big of punishment?

I think that the best way to take this is at face value. Let's imagine that you are invited by President Bush to join him and Laura down at the ranch at the wedding of one of their daughters. How would you dress for such an occasion? Certainly, you would come dressed nicely. Men, I'm guessing that you would probably wear your finest clothes hanging in your closet. Ladies, I'm guessing that you would wear a nice, pretty dress. Now, just imagine that you come dressed in a T-shirt and shorts and sneakers. What would that communicate to President Bush? I believe that it would be tremendously dishonoring to him. I believe that it would be an insult to him. He might even kick you out of the reception.

However you interpret the clothes here, I believe that somehow they represent a dishonor to the king! Why else would this man be kicked out of the feast? When you apply it to us, I believe that it is best to take this as a life that dishonors the Lord. I believe that Jesus is teaching us that there are some who will respond to the wedding invitation, but will not respond appropriately. They may be **unthankful** that the king has invited them to join in the wedding festivities. They may be **proud**, thinking that they deserved to be there at the feast in the first place. They may act **wickedly**, expressing their hatred to the king. Sure they'll come because of the free meal, but they'll continue in their rebellion against the king who they hate. It's these types of things (and certainly many others) that would dishonor the king and cause him to cast you out.

Of all people, we ought to be the most **thankful**! We need to understand that we can only come to the feast because of God's great grace and kindness to us. For this, we ought to be expressing our thanks again and again to the Lord! "Thank you for inviting me, Mr. President. Thank you! I so much appreciate your kindness to us. We barely know you and yet you extended an invitation to us. You are so kind!"

Furthermore, we need to come into the kingdom **humbly**. I don't think that description of those finally invited to the wedding feast is too far out there. I think that it explains us Gentiles very well. We are those on the street. We are those on the highways. We are nobodies. We have

no right to think highly of ourselves. We weren't included on the list of the initial invites. We came only when Israel rejected the invitation. Paul said it this way, ... "at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). And then, the good news comes, ... "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

We also need to come in **purity** before the Lord. The Bible is very clear, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). Certainly, this speaks of the righteousness of Christ that clothes us by faith. Certainly, the only way that we will ever ultimately enjoy the feast is to be sanctified through the blood of Jesus. But, the Bible also speaks of holy character and conduct. When God saves us, He changes us and prepares us for His work. There are good deeds that God prepares for us to do (Eph. 2:10). When God saves us, "He redeems us from every lawless deed and purifies for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14).

Perhaps you have responded to the Lord's invitation. Are you coming to the feast in a manner that is honoring to the Lord? Or, are you dishonoring the Lord? Will He throw you out, because your life has never been changed by His grace? Again, we aren't talking about perfection here. But, we are talking about a life that is honoring Him! We are talking about a life that is thankful, humble, and lives righteously. We are talking about a repentant life that confesses sin and constantly looks to the cross for strength and help in the time of need.

We have one last verse to deal with in our text. I believe that it answers the question, "Why won't people come to the feast?" "Why won't people come and celebrate with the King's Son?" They know the wonderful atmosphere that will be there. How do you explain that they won't come? The answer is in verse 14, "many are called, but few are chosen." Many are called. Some of them are indifferent (verse 5). Some of them are defiant (verse 6). Some of them are dishonoring (verse 11). But, ...

4. Some are chosen (verse 14)

It's the chosen ones who come and enjoy the feast. When people don't come, it's not because they weren't invited. It's not because they didn't have an opportunity to come. It's because they didn't want to come. Why didn't they want to come? The reason is because they weren't chosen to come.

This is the reality of the age in which Israel lived! This is the reality of this present age! The invitation of the gospel has gone out far and wide. It even goes out today! In the times of Israel, the call to return to God came many, many times! Today, many have heard the call of Christ to come to Him for salvation! And yet, there are only a few who have responded to that invitation and have actually desired to come to the feast. God is not at all surprised by these reactions. Though God calls many, there are a few that He chooses. And thus, there are a few that actually come and enjoy His feast.

When many people hear this doctrine taught, they begin thinking. They begin thinking about God. They begin thinking about how unfair God is. They say, "Who does God think that He is, choosing only some and not others?" They ask, "What right does God have to do this?" They express doubt, "I thought that God was a God of love?" They question, "Is God really fair?" They begin thinking about other people as if they were puppets in the hand of God.

This parable doesn't teach that people are puppets, as if they were totally passive agents pulled here and there by strings. No, this parable is clear. The reason people don't come to the feast is that they don't want to be at the feast! There is no reason at all in this parable to accuse the king of being unrighteous in his dealings toward any! Some are indifferent and interested in other things like farms and businesses. They have willingly ignored their invitation to come. Some are defiant against the Lord. They have willfully rebelled against the king and his servants. Some of those who come aren't interested in honoring the king! They are dishonoring the Lord! It isn't an unrighteous thing for him to throw them out of his party.

Rather than asking God about those whom He didn't choose, may I encourage you to ask God about those whom He did choose? Then, your questions take a totally different angle: "Why, O Lord, did you choose me? Why, O Lord, did you extend your grace and kindness to me? Why, O Lord, did you give me the desire to come to you?"

When you do this, you will discover, what a God of love we have! And when you realize that, it ought to make you more **thankful**. God is the one who is doing the choosing here! Your desires to come came from His electing love! It ought to make you more **humble**. We weren't anything special. It's not because of good in us. In fact, some of us were evil when we were invited (verse 10). There ought to be no pride in us. It ought to give you a **desire to please** the Lord with every part of your being! Your face ought to be in the Bible, reading and discerning the Lord's will for your life. You ought to offer up constant prayers of trust. We owe our lives to His kindness. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that Christ "died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. ... We have as our ambition ... to be pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:15, 9).

This picture of the wedding feast is so appropriate for us. We aren't trying to please God to get anything. Rather, we are seeking to please the Lord because He has given us everything to enjoy! You are invited! Have you come?

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For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
