

THE TRIUMPH OF GOD ENSURES A FULL HOUSE

Matthew 22: 1-14

Please review this week's catechism.

Did you meet a new person this past Sunday after the worship service?

INTRODUCTION

What is the best invitation you've ever received (apart from God's invitation to trust in Christ.)? Why was it so great?

In Matthew 22:1-14 Jesus uses a parable about a king who invites people to the wedding feast for his son to teach about the nature of God's kingdom. This is the finish of a conversation that began back in 21: 23 with the crowds of people and the Jewish religious leaders while he was in the temple teaching and healing. He tells the parable as a final appeal to the religious leaders to come to God's wedding feast and he tells it to show that despite the rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders and their followers, God's wedding feast is still going to be full of people.

STUDY

1. Begin by identifying what the various significant parts of the parable represent.

- The king
- The wedding feast
- The invited guests
- The servants
- The people "found" along the roads
- The outer darkness

The king is God, the wedding feast represents God's kingdom which will be fully experienced at the 2nd coming of Jesus (see Isaiah 25: 6-9 and Luke 14:15 for a similar metaphor), the "invited" guests are all the unbelieving Jewish people through the centuries and now

represented by the Jewish religious leaders and their followers, the servants are the OT prophets with John the Baptist and Jesus as the final ones, the people along the roads that are invited to the feast are all those Jews and Gentiles that the apostles preach to after Jesus leaves, the full wedding feast stands for the kingdom of God with all God's people dwelling in it and the outer darkness represents hell.

2. What makes the invitation so amazing in vv. 1-4?

It is amazing first of all because of who it is that is making the invitation, the king. Jesus is saying that the greatest of beings, God himself, has invited you to a party. He wants you to come and spend time enjoying his presence and his hospitality. The second thing that makes this invitation so amazing is because of what the celebration is about. It is the wedding celebration for the son of the king. The prince of the kingdom, the heir to the throne is getting married and you are invited to the wedding and to the reception. This is a momentous occasion in the life of the kingdom and in the life of the king's family. It is a history-making event. Everybody who is anybody will be at this wedding and you are personally invited to it. Finally it is amazing because of the abundance of the feast. This is an eternal feast. It will never end. It is an infinite feast. The pleasures of this feast can never be completely experienced. You can never consume all the delights that are freely offered to you. There will be no disappointments in the feast. The food will not run out, the music will never stop. The conversation will always be pleasant and not forced. Everyone at this celebration will be taken up with the excellencies of the host and his son and rejoicing in the kindness and abundance that is made available to all.

3. Do you often feel about belonging to God's eternal kingdom like you feel about going to a party or celebration you have long wanted to attend? Why or why not?

4. Why did the invited guests turn down the invitations in vv. 5-6? How would you describe their response?

They had more important things to do than to attend the wedding of the king's son and they didn't like the king. In fact, they hated him as

can be seen by how they treated the king's emissaries. The refusal and hostility of those who were invited is astounding. They refuse the invitation of the king. They do not consider an invitation by the king at all remarkable. They are not overcome with amazement that the king would invite them to his son's wedding feast. They exhibit proud and haughty hearts that treat the king's kindness and generosity with contempt. They are not honored by the king's invitation but scornful. Additionally they are not afraid to refuse the king. Even if you don't like the king, you still do not refuse him because it is not a safe thing to offend the king. They believe that visiting a field or going to work is more pleasurable than attending the prince's wedding. They hate this king who has done nothing but care for them and offer them exquisite pleasures in this wedding feast. These people are so foolish and so evil. They have received this amazing invitation and yet they prefer work to the pleasures offered. They have been treated with such kindness and yet they repay the kindness with such disrespect, hatred and cruelty.

5. Does the response of the king (v.7) seem extreme to you or the correct response? Why? (Compare to any portion of Jeremiah 1-7 and to Paul in Romans 2:1-5.)

This is perfect justice. These people are getting exactly what they deserve. Just like the nation Israel when God destroyed them for their many sins, so these men deserve to be destroyed for their evil hatred and disdain for this king. Paul says the same thing to a broader audience in Romans 2 where he says that people who reject the kindness of God are storing up wrath against themselves for the day of God's wrath.

6. What event(s) does v. 7 refer to? (Compare to scores of OT passages describing God's judgment on wicked people, both Jew and Gentile, see Jeremiah 44: 1-6 as an example, 2 Thess. 1: 1-9 & Revelation 18 & 19. Know that in A.D. 70 Jerusalem was taken and burned to the ground by Titus the son of the Roman emperor, Vespasian. It is believed that more than a million Jews died in this destruction of Jerusalem.)

It is possible that Jesus is predicting the destruction of Jerusalem here as it is clear that the "invited" guests refer first to the Jewish nation. After the destruction of Jerusalem the nation of Israel ceases to exist. However, the emphasis in the parable isn't the destruction of the city but the rejection of the invitations, which leads to the destruction of the city. The main reference is the rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders and all their followers. Not all Jews rejected Jesus and his invitation to be a part of God's kingdom. Therefore the city that is destroyed is unbelieving Israel. All those Jewish people who believe that they are part of God's kingdom automatically because they are Jewish and they are "obeying" the Jewish laws. While it may refer to physical Jerusalem, its ultimate reference is the destruction of every unbelieving Jewish person in hell. Then also it stands as a warning and an example for every person who refuses Christ's invitation of the fate that awaits them. However the main reference is to all those Jewish people through the ages and now exemplified by the religious leaders who refused to believe the promises of God now fulfilled in Jesus.

7. What does the king do after destroying the city of the "invited" guests? Why does he do this?

He commands his servants to go out into the roads and to invite everyone they find to come to the wedding feast. He says that he wants to have the wedding hall full of people. Apparently he is eager to have a willing and joyful company of people enjoying his hospitality and honoring his son's wedding.

8. What happens when the servants go out and do as they are told?

They gather everyone they find and so the hall is full of people.

9. Is there anything surprising about v. 10?

There are three things that are surprising. First, the success of the servants in gathering everyone they found in light of the lack of success they had in gathering the original invited guests. It raises the question as to why was this invitation so successful when all the previous ones failed? Second, the wedding hall is full of good and evil

(literal translation) people. Third, the wedding hall is full of strangers. The original guests would have been the friends and relatives of the king, these people are complete strangers to the king and yet they are gladly welcomed and get to enjoy the pleasures of the wedding feast without the benefit of knowing the king.

10. Describe what happens in vv. 11-12. How do you explain the king's violent reaction to this man?

The king comes into the wedding hall for the purpose of seeing the guests. He observes a man who was not wearing wedding clothes. When he inquires of the man why he is not wearing the proper attire, the man is speechless. He has nothing to say because he knows he is wrong. Then the king commands that he be tied up, hand and foot and thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The king's response seems out of all proportion to the fact that the man is not wearing wedding clothes. The language that Jesus uses here is the language of eternal judgment. This is one of six times Jesus uses this language in the gospel of Matthew and it always refers to sending people to hell. Therefore, not wearing wedding clothes is a very serious offense. Why is that?

While we are not told explicitly how it happened it is obvious that everyone knew that they could not enter into the wedding hall without being properly dressed. Also, given the rapidity of the servants filling the hall it would seem obvious that the proper attire was not something that was possessed by the guests but something that was provided to them upon entering the wedding feast. In other words, each invited guest, upon entering the wedding feast was given a set of clothing to put on. The king provided to each person the clothing that was appropriate for the wedding. What happened in the case of the man without the wedding clothes is he refused the wedding clothes, choosing instead to wear his own clothing. We see in him, just as we saw in those who refused the invitation the pride of self-righteousness. He was unwilling to submit to the king's requirements. His clothes were just fine. When confronted by the king he knew that he was wrong and so he had no defense. The king justly refused to accept him into the wedding feast because he refused the king's clothing.

11. Why does Jesus include this strange little scene in his parable? What is the point of the wedding clothes? See Isaiah 61:10, Galatians 3:26-27 & Romans 13: 12-14.

The answer lies in v. 10. Jesus says that the servants, by the power of the word proclaimed, gathered all they found, both good and evil into the wedding hall. On one hand that verse is such good news for people like us. God does not invite people into his wedding feast based upon race, economic status, religious performance or moral behavior. His invitation is for all who will accept it. His invitation is for everyone who views it as good news. However, by accepting both the good and the evil God's justice and holiness are called into question. How can it be that evil people are permitted into the wedding feast of the king? How can it be that the great banquet that Isaiah predicted is attended by the wicked? Verse 10 is clearly a claim that God forgives and accepts evil and guilty people into his eternal kingdom. How can that be right?

We see hear the grace of God. He is the one who has done all the work. It is his son's wedding feast. He is the one who provides the abundant feast. He is the one who sends out his word, by his servants, to bring the guests in. He is the one who provides the necessary clothing for attending the feast. There is no work of man here. The only way to be excluded is to refuse the invitation or to try to get in without putting on the clothing the king gives you. I don't think that Jesus is trying to give any hints as to what the clothing represents, it is enough to see it is something the king provides and is necessary to wear to be part of the wedding feast. However, it is hard to resist the many references in both the OT and NT to the "clothing" that must be worn in order to come into God's presence. It seems to me that it is not inappropriate for us to see that the clothing that God gives to all who enter the wedding feast is Jesus Christ. We are clothed in his righteousness as a gift from God. We are clothed with actual deeds of righteousness that God has given to us, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

12. Jesus ends his parable by giving the ground or reason for the truth contained in the parable. In other words, v. 14 is saying, "The

kingdom of heaven is like this story because many are called but few are chosen.” Why does he say this?

The story emphasizes human choice. Humans reject the king’s invitation. Humans reject the wedding clothes. It appears that humans are in control of who gets into the wedding feast and not the king. So Jesus states the ultimate cause behind who is accepted and who is rejected. The invitation goes out into the whole world but only those whom God has chosen respond to it. The way you know that you are chosen is by accepting the invitation and by putting on the wedding garment provided by the king. You must accept and you must put on the wedding clothes but everyone who does this recognizes that it was God’s choice that is the ultimate explanation, not their inherent goodness or wisdom or virtue.

13. Where are you in relation to this invitation that Jesus makes to you to come to the wedding feast and to put on the wedding clothes? Have you accepted the invitation and put on the wedding clothes?

14. How does it feel to be a part of the wedding feast of the king?